

History 342: Stalinism
Spring 2023: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:50

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Office hours: Tues. 10:30-
11:30; Fri. 2-3; or by
appointment

Course Description

Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili—the Georgian revolutionary and politician more commonly known as Joseph Stalin—is best remembered as one of the most brutal dictators in world history, an important leader of the Russian Revolution who went on to preside over the Great Terror of the 1930s and the Soviet victory in World War II. Extending from the end of the post-Lenin succession struggle to the dictator’s death in 1953, the Stalin era was noteworthy not just for the repressiveness of its politics, but for a dramatic series of economic and social transformations that almost completely reshaped Russian society. Over the course of 25 years, the USSR’s government launched a far-reaching program of industrialization, forced the country’s peasants to abandon their individual holdings for larger collective farms, pursued policies of discrimination and persecution against the supporters of Russia’s old regime, and attempted to reforge each of the country’s citizens into the New Soviet Man.

This seminar will examine the social, cultural, and political history of the USSR during this period, with a particular focus on the 1930s. Like most Grinnell history seminars, it will begin with a series of common readings on the main themes of its subject; in the second half of the term, students will complete a roughly 20-page research paper on a subject of their choice, most likely involving work with an oral history project known as the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. In this way, the seminar will function not only as an introduction to Stalinism, but as an opportunity to pursue the craft of historical writing through the production of a major research paper.

Course materials

All of the readings for this course will be available online, through Pioneerweb. Some will be available in the documents section and some will be linked through announcements on the main course page.

Students who want more detail on the Chicago Style of formatting a research paper should consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Grading and Assignments

There are three main requirements for this course:

- **The seminar paper** (50% of your final grade.) This paper will be a 20-page research paper based on work with primary sources on Russian history during the Stalin period. Most often, I recommend that you work with the oral histories in the Harvard Project on

the Soviet Social System—a source that covers a lot of ground and is available in English. Your paper will be due by email on Thursday, May 18, at midnight.

- **Class participation** (35% of your grade). This part of your grade will be based on attendance, the regularity and insightfulness of your participation in discussion, your participation in peer review sessions in the weeks after break, and your timely completion of a series of preliminary assignments connected to the seminar paper.
- **Document analysis and preliminary paper assignments** (15% of your grade). You will be required to write a five-page analysis of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System (or another primary source), to complete a proposal for your seminar paper, and to complete a preliminary assignment leading to the project proposal. (Note that if a student performs better on the seminar paper than on these preliminary assignments, I reserve the right to weight it a little more highly. I give these assignments because they increase the odds that you will complete a successful seminar paper, so I am likely to weight the paper more heavily if your paper grade is two notches better than your earlier assignments.)

Important notes

My goal is to create as inclusive a classroom as possible and to meet the needs of all of my students. I therefore encourage students with documented disabilities, including invisible or non-apparent disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, Jae Hirschman.

I will also, of course, excuse absences related to religious observance and will be flexible with deadlines that conflict with any religious holidays. Please let me know early in the semester if you expect to miss class because of a religious observance.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Tuesday, January 24: Introduction to the Course

Reading: Golfo Alexopoulos, “Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man” [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, January 26: Stalinism: The Beginnings

Reading: David Hoffmann, *The Stalinist Era*, intro and chapters 1-3 [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, January 31: What was Stalinism?

Reading: David Hoffmann, *The Stalinist Era*, chapters 4-5 and conclusion [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, February 2: Everyday Life under Stalin

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 1-114 [Pioneerweb]
David Brandenberger, “A Background Guide to Working with the HPSSS

Online” [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, February 7: Stalinist Social History

Reading: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 115-229 [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, February 9: Intro to the Harvard Project

Reading: 1-2 interviews from this site (see Pioneerweb for details):
<https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/static/collections/hpsss/index.html>

Tuesday, February 14: Harvard Project Investigations

Assignment: Spend 90-120 minutes investigating the Harvard Project. Make sure you spend some time getting to know an interview in more detail; spend some time looking at possible topics for a paper.

Thursday, February 16: Theories of Stalinism

Reading: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject” [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, February 21: the Harvard project

Assignment: submit your 5-page Harvard Project analysis by noon; be ready to discuss its main themes (following instructions posted online) in class

Thursday, February 23: Diaries in the USSR

Reading: Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, pp. 1-114 [Pioneerweb]

Tuesday, February 28: Hellbeck and Soviet diaries

Reading: Hellbeck, pp. 115-347 [Pioneerweb]
(everyone read ch. 5, ch. 8, and 1 other, to be decided in class)

Thursday, March 2: **no class (working differently day), though we may have individual meetings**

Friday, March 3: **Preliminary assignment is due**

Tuesday, March 7: The Gulag

Reading: Steve Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]
Alan Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town: Forced Labor and its Legacy in*

Vorkuta, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Thursday, March 9: Networks and Institutions in Stalinist Politics

Reading: Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship: Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union*, pp. 1-115 [Pioneerweb]

Friday, March 10: **Expanded proposal is due (including a tentative bibliography, a two-page description of your project, and a list of HPSSS quotations)**

Tuesday, March 14: The Great Terror

Reading: Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-1938" [Pioneerweb]
James Harris, "The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals Region" [Pioneerweb]
Wendy Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, excerpts [Pioneerweb]

Thursday March 16: **individual meetings with instructor**

SPRING BREAK
MARCH 18 to April 2

[Note: feel free to meet with me at any time; I'll turn our unused class meeting times into extra office hours for members of the seminar]

Week 9

Tuesday, April 4: individual meetings with the professor
Thursday, April 6: meeting of entire seminar to discuss progress

Week 10

Through the week individual meetings as needed
Friday, April 14: send your peer-review group a 10-page section of your paper and a 1-page outline of the paper (with the thesis for the whole paper, a list of sections, and the thesis for each section)

Week 11

Early in the week meetings of peer review groups (with me, in my office)

Week 12

Tuesday, April 25: individual meetings with the professor
Thursday, April 27: meeting of full group to discuss introductions (and to discuss short reading assignment on intros)

Week 13:

Tuesday, May 2: meeting of full seminar to discuss progress
Friday, May 5: a full draft of your paper is due by 5:00 PM to the professor and your peer review group

Week 14

Tuesday, May 9: meetings of peer review groups

Thursday, May 11: meeting of full seminar (EOC evaluations, discussion of progress)

Exam week

Thursday, May 18: **the final version of your paper is due at midnight**