

History 575: Fall 2014
W 3:30-6:20 MHRA 3208

READINGS IN SOVIET HISTORY

(www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/russia)

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Office Hours: M 11-11:50; T 1-2:15; F 9-9:50 and by appointment

Course Description

This course will examine the historiography of the Soviet period from the Stalin era to the end of the Soviet Union. The class is divided into two parts: 1) The Stalin era; 2) The Post-Stalin period. We will focus on the Stalinist 1930s; World War II and postwar reconstruction; the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras; the Soviet-Afghan War and collapse of the USSR.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to ...

- Comprehend that history is not just the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past.
- Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures.
- Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing.
- Analyze the key terms, facts, and events in Soviet history and thereby exhibit an informed historical perspective.
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and clearly express their own interpretations.
- Critically read and distinguish between different types of historical sources and “read between the lines” of differing points of view.
- Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view.

Course Activities

Undergraduate Students:

Participation	30%
1-2 Book Reviews	30%
Final Essay	40%

Graduate Students:

Participation	30%
2-3 Book Reviews	30%
Final Essay	40%

Readings & Films

- Dobson, Miriam. *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009; ISBN: 978-0801447570.
- Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010; ISBN: 978-0465031474.
- Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton University Press, 2006; ISBN: 978-0691121178.
- Additional material identified below

- OPTIONAL titles: Brown, Kate. *Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005; ISBN: 0-674-01949-0; Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006; ISBN: 978-0-674-03231-6; Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon*. New York: Scribner, 2006; ISBN: 978-1-416-54026-7.
- We will also see four films in class: “Burnt by the Sun”; “Thief”; “Forgotten Melody for a Flute”; and “Cargo 200”

Course Web Page

The course web page is at www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/russia It includes a bibliography, the syllabus with active links to course readings (also on Bb), and other features relevant to the course. Grades will be posted on Blackboard and students are encouraged to keep up with their participation grade and their overall course grade.

Participation

Student involvement and participation in the course is *very* important and will take a variety of forms, including oral reports (5-10 minute summaries of students’ final essays as described below), as well as discussing readings and films on a regular basis. The participation grade also consists of Worksheets (worth 5 points each) to the readings designated below.

Attendance Policy

Because this class meets only once a week attendance is obviously *very* important and students are expected to attend all classes. Students with more than 2 unexcused absences or 4 total absences will fail the course; if you have to miss class, let me know beforehand (and/or provide adequate documentation afterward) to have it counted as an excused absence.

Oral Report on the Final Essay:

The oral reports on the final essay, which comprise 10% of the overall participation and course grade, will be 5-7 minutes in length with an additional 3-5 minutes for discussion. Students are encouraged to visit the Speaking Center for help. [The University Speaking Center](#) provides online services as well as one-on-one tutoring and instructional workshop services designed to help students further develop their oral communication confidence and competence. Assistance is offered in the preparation and delivery of speeches and presentations, and development of knowledge and skill in interpersonal, group, or team communication. The Oral Report on the Final Essay will be graded according to the following criteria:

- 1) Description of topic. Tell us *briefly* what your final essay/oral report will focus on and why you chose this topic.
- 2) Analysis. The heart of your talk should be a clear summation of what you see as the main points/conclusions regarding your topic with examples from the readings.
- 3) Clarity of communication. Convey your points clearly and succinctly.

<p>A = excellent performance on all three criteria. B = above average on all three, or excellent on some tempered by flaws in others. C = average across the board, or above average in part but with significant flaws. D = below average overall performance.</p>
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Book Reviews

Undergraduate students will write a review of *one* or *two* of the three monographs assigned for the class (Snyder or Dobson and Yurchak). The specific titles to be reviewed will be determined in class and the due dates are listed below. Those who choose to review the book by Snyder will write just that one review but it will be twice the length (explained below). The others will review both Dobson and Yurchak. You are encouraged to identify reviews of the books in major scholarly journals (i.e. *The American Historical Review*, *Slavic Review*, or the *Russian Review*, although other scholarly journals are also acceptable) as a starting point. **If you review the title by Snyder, your review should be double-spaced, 12-pt. font, and ~1500 words (5-6 pages) in length. If you review the titles by Dobson and Yurchak, each review should be double-spaced, 12-pt. font, and ~750 words (3 pages) in length.** Briefly summarize the main points of the author's thesis and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the book's argument. Consider the following questions: What is the author's thesis? What sources/evidence does the author rely on? Where does the book fit with historiographical trends in the field? How convincing is the author's interpretation and the book's overall argument? Graduate students will write *one* additional review on a book of their choosing (due no later than Wednesday, November 19).

Final Essay

The Final Essay is a historiographical essay addressing an issue raised in the literature. Students can choose any relevant topic that interests them. The essay should show a command of the literature on the chosen topic by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of varying points of view. **Essays should be double-spaced, 12-pt. font, 8-10 pages (undergrads)/12-15 pages (graduate students)** in length. Possible topics include (but are *not* limited to) the following:

- A Comparison of Different Biographies of Stalin/Trotsky/Bukharin/Gorbachev, etc.
- The Collectivization of Agriculture
- The Debate over the Ukrainian Famine (1932-33)
- The Assassination of Sergei Kirov
- The Origins and Causes of the purges of the late 1930s
- Religion in the Soviet Union
- Art/Literature/Film in the Stalin/Soviet period
- Propaganda/Iconography/the Stalin Cult
- The Role or Position of Women in the Soviet Union
- Anti-Semitism in the USSR
- The Soviet Educational System
- The Leningrad Blockade
- Stalin's Role in World War II
- Postwar Reconstruction
- The Postwar Period/Late Stalinism
- The "Thaw"/Khrushchev Period
- The Soviet space/rocket program
- The Brezhnev Period
- The Gorbachev Reforms
- The Collapse of the USSR

Students are required to turn in a Bibliography of readings for the Final Essay on October 1. The 1st draft of the final essay is due October 29; the final draft is **due Friday, December 5**.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, August 20. Introduction: Themes in Russian History & the Russian Revolution; in-class viewing of “Red Flag—1917”

Part I: The Stalin Era

BEGIN READING Snyder, *Bloodlands*, Preface-Chapter 5

- Reading for August 27: 1-4) Four reviews of Robert Conquest’s *Harvest of Sorrow* (1986) by a) [George Liber](#); b) [John Armstrong](#); c) [L. A. Kosiński](#); d) [Gordon Smith](#); 5) [“The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933”](#) by Mark B. Tauger; 6) [Letters](#): Robert Conquest; Mark B. Tauger; 7) [“Should This Pulitzer be Pulled?”](#) by Douglas McCollam; 8) [“Introduction” and “Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s”](#) by Lynne Viola; 9) [“A Worker’s Strike in Stalin’s Russia”](#) by Jeffrey Rossman; 10) [“A Peasant Rebellion in Stalin’s Russia”](#) by Tracy McDonald; [Worksheet 1](#) due in class

Wednesday, August 27. Collectivization, Famine, & Resistance in the Stalinist Period: Discussion of the Reading; in-class viewing of “Red Flag—1917” (cont’d)

- Reading for September 3: 1-2) [“Students in the First Five-Year Plan”](#) and [“Memoirs of an Engineer”](#) by Valentina Bogdan; 3) [“A Family Chronicle”](#) by Inna Shikheeva-Gaister; 4) [“Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times”](#) by Sheila Fitzpatrick; 5) [“Did Stalin Kill Kirov and Does it Matter?”](#) by Matt Lenoe; 6) [“The Assassination of Kirov”](#) (from *Let History Judge*) by Roy Medvedev; 7-8) Two reviews of Robert Conquest’s *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (1990) by a) [Peter B. Kaufman](#); b) [J. Arch Getty](#); 9-10) Two Reviews of Amy Knight’s *Who Killed Kirov? The Kremlin’s Greatest Mystery* by a) [Robert Thurston](#); b) [Sarah Davies](#); 11) [“The Politics of Repression Revisited”](#) by J. Arch Getty; 12) [“Another Kind of Fear: The Kirov Murder and the End of Bread Rationing in Leningrad”](#) by Lesley Rimmel; 13) [“Interview with Grover Furr”](#)

Wednesday, September 3. In-class viewing of the first half of “Burnt by the Sun” & Discussion: Did Stalin have Kirov Assassinated?

Wednesday, September 10. In-class viewing of the second half of “Burnt by the Sun” & Discussion of *Bloodlands* by Snyder (Preface-Chapter 5)

OPTIONAL Readings: *Darkness at Noon* and/or Kate Brown, *Biography of No Place*

CONTINUE READING Snyder, *Bloodlands*, Chapter 6-Conclusion; **Book Review due September 24**

- Reading for September 17: Excerpt from [Through the Burning Steppe](#) by Elena Kozhina; Stalin as [Time’s “Man of the Year” for 1939 and 1942](#)

Wednesday, September 17. The Soviet Union in WWII

- Reading for September 24: 1) [“Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments”](#) by Elena Zubkova; 2-3) [“Introduction: ‘Everything here will have to change’”](#) and [“‘Every Family Has Its Freak’: Perceptions of Collaboration in Occupied Soviet Russia, 1943-1948”](#) by Jeffrey W. Jones; 4) [Jones-Kuromiya Correspondence in Slavic Review](#); 5) [“Prisoners of](#)

[the Soviet Self?—Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism](#)” by Juliane Fürst; [Worksheet 2](#) due in class

Wednesday, September 24. The Soviet Union in WWII (cont’d) & Postwar Reconstruction
(**Review of Snyder, *Bloodlands* due in class**)

Part II: The Post-Stalin Period

BEGIN READING Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer*; review due Wednesday, October 15

- Reading for October 1: Excerpt from Khrushchev’s 1956 [Secret Speech](#); Khrushchev as [Time’s “Man of the Year” for 1957](#)

Wednesday, October 1. Khrushchev’s “Secret” Speech: in-class viewing & discussion of “The Thief”; **Bibliography for the Final Essay due in class**

- Reading for October 8: “[Bloody Saturday: Novocherkassk, 1962](#)”; “Bloody Saturday in the Soviet Union” by Samuel H. Baron, Parts: [A](#), [B](#) and [C](#); Chapter 9: “[Fiasco in Riazan Oblast](#)” in *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* by Roy and Zhores Medvedev

Wednesday, October 8. Strike in Novocherkassk and Fiasco in Riazan

- Reading for October 15: Excerpt from [Not By Bread Alone](#) by Vladimir Dudintsev; and excerpt from [One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich](#) by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Wednesday, October 15. The Thaw Years (**Review of Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer* due in class**)

BEGIN READING Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*; review due Wednesday, November 5

Wednesday, October 22. The Gorbachev Reforms: in-class viewing of “Forgotten Melody for a Flute”

- Reading for October 29: Documents on the Soviet-Afghan War: 1) [March 17-18, 1979](#); 2) [December 31, 1979](#); 3) [January 17, 1980](#); 4) [January 28, 1980](#); 5) [November 13, 1986](#)

Wednesday, October 29. The Soviet-Afghan War and In-class Viewing of “Cargo 200”; **1st Draft of Final Essays Due in Class**

- Reading for November 5: [Gorbachev as Time’s “Man of the Year” 1987 & 1989](#); “[Gorbachev: From High Hopes to the Bitter End](#)” by Theodore von Laue

Wednesday, November 5. The Collapse of the USSR (**Review of Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever* due in class**)

Wednesday, November 12. Student Oral Reports

Wednesday, November 19. Student Oral Reports. **Graduate Student 3rd Book Review due**

Friday, December 5 3:30-6:30: Student Oral Reports; **Final Essays Due**