

The HISTORY of RUSSIA to 1900

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Office Hours: M 11-12:00; W 3:30-4:30; and by appointment	

Course Description

Russia is one of the most influential countries in the world and it has had a fascinating and difficult history. This course introduces students to the issues and debates raised in that history from its origins in roughly the ninth century until the eve of the 20th century. We will examine Russia's history, as much as possible, through the eyes of those who lived it, thereby acquiring a fuller understanding of Russia today. The course is divided into two sections: Early Russia to 1700; and Imperial Russia 1700-1900. Relying largely on primary sources, we will approach the subject material from several perspectives, including political, social, economic, and cultural history, with a number of themes in mind: state and society; ideology/religion; family/gender; social class; and war and peace.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Comprehend that history is not the memorization of dates, names, and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past.
- Critically appraise varying historical arguments and formulate their own interpretations.
- Analyze the key terms, issues, and events in early Russian history and thereby gain an informed historical perspective.
- Identify the main claims, thesis, logical structure, and evidence base in a scholarly interpretation and recognize competing historical interpretations among scholars.
- Interpret history through primary source material by identifying the author(s), purpose(s), literal meaning(s), point(s) of view, biases and omissions in such texts.
- Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.
- Critically read and distinguish between different types of historical sources and “read between the lines” of differing points of view.

Course Readings:

- Aleksandr Nikitenko, *Up From Serfdom: My Childhood and Youth in Russia, 1804-1824*. Translated by Helen Saltz Jacobsen. Foreword by Peter Kolchin (Yale University Press, 2002); ISBN: 9780300097160. Available as a [UNCG Jackson Library e-book](#).
- Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers & Sons*. Translated and with an introduction and notes by Richard Freeborn (University of Oxford Press, 2008); ISBN: 9780199536047. Available as a [UNCG Jackson Library e-book](#).
- Online material designated below

Course Activities:

Participation	40%
Midterm Exam/Take Home Essay	30%
Final Exam/Take Home Essay	30%

Participation: The 40% class participation grade consists of Worksheets and Reaction Pieces (1-2 pages double-spaced). The RPs are intended to be your reaction to or opinion of the assigned reading supported by specific evidence from the text, not a summary of the reading. Where an RP is assigned for more than one

reading either respond to those readings separately or tie them together, but be sure to address all assigned readings in the RP and draw on specific evidence from each of them. There are questions on the readings for guidance on Canvas.

Exams: There is a midterm exam and a final exam (each worth 30%) for the class. The exams are comprised of Identifications and Short Answer Questions based on course material and readings. The exams will both be online with a Take Home Essay to be turned in on exam day; each essay, the topics for which are listed below, is worth 10% of the overall exam grade. The exams cover *only* the part of the course for which they are designated (Midterm: Early Russia-1700; Final: Imperial Russia 1700-1900), so they are *not cumulative*, except that the topics for the Final Exam Take Home Essay cover the entire course.

Grading: Grades are compiled on a point system (you can keep up with your grades on Canvas). For example, if you make 80 on the midterm (16/20) + 87 on the midterm Take Home Essay (8.7/10) + an 88 on participation (35.2/40) + 84 on the final exam (16.8/20) + 90 on the final Take Home Essay (9/10) your final grade = **85.7/B**

CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, August 16. Introduction: Images of Russia

Part I: Early Russia to 1700

- Reading for August 21: [Why Study History Through Primary Sources?](#) and “[An Arab Traveler to Kiev](#)”; **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to the Arab Traveler reading due

Monday, August 21. Early Settlements in Russia & Daily Life of the Early Slavs

- Reading for August 23: Excerpts from [The Russian Primary Chronicle](#); **Worksheet 1** due; and “[Slavic Myths and Gods](#)”

Wednesday, August 23. The “Norman Theory”: Discussion of the Readings

- Reading for August 28: “[A Woman of Words: Pagan Ol’ga in the Mirror of Germanic Europe](#)” by Francis Butler; and [A Chart of the Differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism & Features of the Russian Orthodox Church](#)

Monday, August 28. Kievan Rus & the Christianization of Russia: Discussion of the Reading

- Reading for August 30: “[Russians Flip out over Flapjacks as Lent Nears](#)”

Wednesday, August 30. The Decline of Kiev: Discussion of the Readings

- Reading for September 6: [Accounts of the Mongol Invasion of Russia](#); **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due

Wednesday, September 6. The Mongol Invasion & its Aftermath: Discussion of the Reading

- Reading for September 11: “[The Mongol Impact on Russia](#)” by George Vernadsky; Optional: “[Russia in The Mongol Empire in Comparative Perspective](#)” by Charles Halperin

Monday, September 11. The Impact of the Mongols & the Rise of Novgorod

- Reading for September 13: [The Novgorod Chronicle](#); **Worksheet 2** due

Wednesday, September 13. The Decline & Fall of Novgorod: Discussion of the Reading

Monday, September 18. The Rise of Muscovy & Ivan IV’s Childhood

- Reading for September 20: “[Ivan the Terrible as Renaissance Prince](#)” by Michael Cherniavsky; and “[The Correspondence Between Tsar Ivan IV and Prince Andrei Kurbsky](#)”; **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due

Wednesday, September 20. Ivan IV (the “Terrible”): Discussion of the Readings

- Reading for September 25: “[Ivan IV’s Rampage Against Novgorod](#)”; [Ivan IV’s Oprichnina](#); and “[A German Merchant’s Account of Famine in Russia](#)”

Monday, September 25. Ivan IV’s *Oprichnina* & the Roots of the “Time of Troubles”

- Reading for September 27: “[An English Account of the Bolotnikov Uprising](#)”; and “[Who was Tsar Dmitrii?](#)” by Chester Dunning; [Worksheet 3](#) due

Wednesday, September 27. The “Time of Troubles” (cont’d): Who Was False Dmitrii?

- Reading for October 2: Excerpt from [The Law Code of 1649](#); [Reaction Piece](#) (1-2 pages) due

Monday, October 2. The Reestablishment of Autocracy & the Origins of Serfdom

- Reading for October 4: Excerpts from [Avvakum’s Autobiography](#); [Worksheet 4](#) due

Wednesday, October 4. Religious Crisis & the Church Schism: Discussion of the Reading

Wednesday, October 11. **TAKE HOME MIDTERM EXAM and TAKE HOME ESSAY** (see topic below)

MIDTERM EXAM Take Home Essay Question (worth 10% of the overall course grade) (12-point font, 3-5 pages double-spaced):

Drawing on at least three sources from the course (which can include video material), defend one of these two statements:

1. The role of the Russian Church prior to the 17th century is often exaggerated by historians, perhaps because most of the sources they have to work with are from a religious point of view. In fact, Christianity did not greatly influence the lives of the vast majority of the Russian people, many of whom clung to pagan beliefs and superstitions along with (or instead of) a quasi-Christian faith, and some of whom actually resented the Church for adding to their economic difficulties by requiring tithes and payment for weddings or funeral rites, etc.

OR

2. Almost as soon as Eastern Orthodox Christianity took root in Russia it became a dominant force in shaping the political history of the state, as well as influencing the lives and culture of the country’s inhabitants. Its role cannot be overestimated; the Russian Church is the one constant through the otherwise dramatically different eras of Kievan Rus, Novgorod, the Mongol yoke, and the rise of Muscovy right down to the establishment of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 18th century.

Part II: Imperial Russia 1700-1900

Monday, October 16. Peter the Great: Childhood & Early Reign

- Reading for October 18: “[The Artisan Tsar](#)” by V. O. Kliuchevsky; and “[Personal Observations and Recollections of Peter the Great](#)”

Wednesday, October 18. Peter the Great (cont’d): Discussion of the Readings

- Reading for October 23: [Views of Catherine the Great & Catherine the Great’s Views](#)

Monday, October 23. Russia in the mid-18th Century

- Reading for October 25: “[Bribery and Justice in the Provinces in the Reign of Catherine II](#)” by Janet Hartley; [Worksheet 5](#) due

Wednesday, October 25. Catherine II (the Great): Enlightened Despotism?

- Reading for October 30: “[Petition from a Russian noblewoman to Empress Catherine II](#)”; and Excerpts from Alexander Radishchev’s “[A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow](#)”; [Reaction Piece](#) (1-2 pages) due

Monday, October 30. Catherine II & Alexander Radishchev: Discussion of the Readings

BEGIN READING: *Up From Serfdom*; **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to the book due Monday, November 13

- Reading for November 1: [Edicts from and Petitions to Emelian Pugachev](#)
Wednesday, November 1. The Pugachev Rebellion: Discussion of the Reading

- Reading for November 6: “[The Monarch and the State in 18th Century Russia](#)” (Review Essay) by Paul Bushkovitch; and “[Letter to the Editor](#)” by Aleksandr Kamenskii; Optional: “[The Decembrists](#)” & “[Apology of a Madman](#)”

Monday, November 6. Alexander I & Napoleon

Wednesday, November 8. The Decembrist Uprising of 1825

Monday, November 13. The “Iron Tsar” Nicholas I & Discussion of *Up From Serfdom*

BEGIN READING: *Fathers & Sons* by Ivan Turgenev; **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to the book due Monday, November 27

- Reading for November 15: [Inspector General](#) by Nikolai Gogol & “[Letter to Gogol](#)”; **Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due; Optional: “[Overcoat](#)” by Gogol

Wednesday, November 15. Russian Literature as Social Critique: Discussion of the Readings

Monday, November 20. Alexander II’s Great Reforms

Monday, November 27. Alexander II’s Great Reforms (cont’d): Discussion of *Fathers & Sons*

Wednesday, November 29. Russia on the Eve of the 20th Century

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 4 at 3:30: TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM and TAKE HOME ESSAY (see possible topics below) (**due by 3:30**)

FINAL EXAM Take Home Essay Question (worth 10% of the overall course grade) (12-point font, 3-5 pages double-spaced):

Choose one of the following questions:

1. Drawing on no fewer than three different sources from the course (at least one of which must come from before the Midterm Exam), describe life for Russia’s peasant-serfs between roughly 1000 and 1900. What are some of the key factors shaping life for the peasant-serfs and how do they interact with the nobility? How do Russia’s peasant-serfs respond to their conditions in life, and how does their position change over time?

OR

2. Drawing on no fewer than three different sources from the course (at least one of which must come from before the Midterm Exam), describe life for Russian women between roughly 1000 and 1900. What are some of the key factors shaping gender relations (i.e. how do men and women interact)? How do Russian women react or respond to their conditions, and how, if at all, does their position change over time?