

Spring 2019: History 575
W 7:00-9:50 MHRA 1213

HIS-575: The Soviet-Afghan War and its Aftermath

Instructor: Jeff Jones
Office: 2139 MHRA
Office Hours: T 1:00-2:15; W 2-3:30; Th. 11-12:30 and by appointment

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Course Description

This course is a combined graduate/undergraduate-level seminar on the Soviet-Afghan War and its aftermath. In four separate units we will use a mix of primary and secondary sources to examine developments leading up to the war, aspects of the war itself, its impact on both Soviet and Afghan societies and the reactions of people therein to the war, the US role in the conflict, and the aftermath and legacy of the war, including in film, in the years following its cessation.

Required Readings:

- Svetlana Alexievich, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992), ISBN: 9780393336863;
- Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-1989* (Oxford University Press, 2011), ISBN: 9780199322480; this title is available as a library e-book;
- Artemy Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Harvard University Press, 2011), ISBN: 9780674058668; this title is available as a library e-book;
- Nelofer Pazira, *A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan* (New York: Free Press, 2005), ISBN: 9780743281331.

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.
- Identify and thoughtfully discuss some of the key issues of debate regarding the Soviet-Afghan War.
- Participate in a respectful and thoughtful manner in discussions of a variety of topics.
- Apply principles and generalizations learned in this class to other problems and situations.

Course Activities

Undergraduate Students

Participation	60%
Research Essay (12-15 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	30%
Oral Presentation	10%

Graduate Students

Participation	60%
Research Essay (15-18 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	20%
Book Review (2-3 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced)	10%
Oral Presentation	10%

Grading Scale

A	93-99	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	59 and below

Participation

Class participation is *very* important. The participation grade will be based mostly on a number of assignments for class, including an Internet Assignment, Worksheets (WS), and Reaction Pieces (RPs) to the designated readings; the RPs are intended to be your *reaction to* or *opinion of* the assigned readings with evidence from the reading(s) to back it up, *not* a summary of the reading. Where a RP is assigned for more than one reading, you can choose to intertwine your reaction to them in a single piece (500-750 words/2-3 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced), or deal with them separately (adhering to the same specifications). The participation grade also includes in-class discussion during our weekly meetings (it should be noted that the *quality* of one's participation in the discussions will be more important than the *quantity* thereof).

Research Essay

All students will write a Research Essay based on primary source material on a topic to be approved by the Instructor (see the list of possible topics below, though you are not limited to the topics listed there) or a historiographical essay that conveys the major themes covered in 3-4 works examined (which can include books and/or articles read for the course) as well as key differences (if there are any) between them. **Students who want to work on the same topic may team up (in groups of 2-4) to write a single paper** (the specified length will of course be longer), although it should be made very clear which student wrote which part of the essay.

All Research Essays will be graded on the basis of these criteria:

- 1) Level of analysis/argumentation. State your thesis *clearly* at the outset of the essay and present a thoughtful argument and interpretation, *not* a mere summary of facts.
- 2) Use of evidence. The material you select to support your thesis must be relevant and must clearly back up your argument.
- 3) Clarity of communication. You must present the evidence and express your argument in a clear, coherent, comprehensible manner.

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.

Book Reviews (Graduate Students)

Graduate students will write and present a review of a title not required for the course (worth 10% of the overall course grade). Students are encouraged to consult published reviews (if there are any) with the clear understanding that their review will be their own work. The book review should be concise (500-750 words/2-3 pages; 12-point font; double-spaced) and should convey the author's argument and methodology clearly, as well as describe the primary source material on which the work is based. The review should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the work under review. In the week that students write their review, which, along with the title, shall be determined in consultation with the Instructor, they will also give a brief (5-8 min.) in-class oral report summarizing the main aspects of their review as part of their class participation.

Oral Presentations

For the last two class meetings and during the designated exam period for our class, **Friday, May 3, 7:00-10:00**, students will present the findings of their Research Essays to the class in 5-7 minute presentations (with 3-5 additional minutes for questions), worth 10% of the overall course grade. The oral presentation should succinctly summarize the thesis, place the work within a historiographical context (where relevant) as well as succinctly describe the source base utilized for the paper (with 2-3 examples of the evidence used to support the thesis), and conclude by sharing the paper's most salient conclusions. Students are encouraged to consult the [University Speaking Center](#) for assistance in this endeavor. Power Point or other forms of visual technological aids are encouraged but not required for the oral presentations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION. Objective: utilize primary and secondary sources to introduce the main issues and tasks in the class, background history leading up to the Soviet-Afghan War, and key issues and events in the early stages of the war.

Wednesday, January 16. Introduction to the Course.

****BEGIN READING: *A Bed of Red Flowers* by Nelofer Pazira (pp. 1-206 and 351-376; OPTIONAL: pp. 207-350); RP-1 (10 pts.) due February 6**

- Reading for January 23: [Background Information for the March 1979 Politburo Discussion and Documents—1\) Politburo Discussion of the Crisis in Herat March 17-19, 1979;](#) and 2) [Informant Report on the Soviet-Afghan War December 31, 1979;](#) “Introduction” and “The Reluctant Intervention” in *A Long Goodbye* by Kalinovsky (pp. 1-53); [“From the ‘Great Game’ to the Eve of War”](#) (pp. 1-41) by Jeff Jones—WS-1 (5 pts.) due in class

Wednesday, January 23. Introduction (cont'd): Background, Soviet Invasion, and Early Stages of the War

UNIT 2: Reactions to the War and the Conduct of it. Objective: utilize primary and secondary sources to analyze the reactions of Soviet citizens to the early stages of the war in Afghanistan as well as the reactions of Afghans to the Soviet invasion of their country.

- Reading for January 30: “Prologue” and “Part I: The Road to Kabul” in *Afgantsy* by Braithwaite (pp. 3-117); and [“Questioning the Conflict: Opposition to the Soviet-Afghan War in the USSR, 1980-1989”](#) by Jeff Jones (pp. 1-55)—**WS-2** (5 pts.) due in class

Wednesday, January 30. Soviet Reactions to the War

- Reading for February 6: *A Bed of Red Flowers* by Nelofer Pazira (pp. 1-206 and 351-376); “The Turn toward Diplomacy,” “Gorbachev Confronts Afghanistan,” and “The National Reconciliation Campaign” in *A Long Goodbye* by Kalinovsky (54-121); **RP-1** (10 pts.) to both readings due in class

Wednesday, February 6. The Afghan Perspective of the War

****BEGIN READING: *Zinky Boys* by Svetlana Alexievich; **RP-3** (10 pts.) due February 20**

Wednesday, February 13. The Afghan Perspective of the War (cont’d): **FIELD TRIP TO DUKE UNIVERSITY** for the **Opening Ceremony of an Exhibit on Afghan Posters during the Soviet-Afghan War** at the John Hope Franklin Center, 2204 Erwin Rd., Durham (dinner will be served at the event); the program starts at 5:30 so unless they arrange for other transportation to the program **STUDENTS NEED TO BE at the Shuttle Bus Stop on Forrest Dr.** (near MHRA Bldg. across from the Oakland Parking Deck) **no later than 4:15** and to plan on being dropped off there as well at around 8:15; students should write up a **RP-2** (5 pts.) of their impressions of the event and email it to the Instructor by Friday, February 15 at 5:00.

- Reading for February 20: *Zinky Boys* by Svetlana Alexievich; and [“Mothers, Prostitutes, and the Collapse of the USSR: Representations of Women in Svetlana Alexievich’s *Zinky Boys*”](#) by Jeff Jones—**RP-3** (10 pts.) to both readings due in class

Wednesday, February 20. The Soviet soldier’s experience

- Assignments for February 27: Internet Assignment (5 pts.)—[“Handbook of Materials for Counterpropaganda Work January 1987”](#) (Responses due Monday, February 25 by 5:00PM); “Part II: The Disasters of War” in *Afgantsy* by Braithwaite (pp. 119-246)—**WS-3** (5 pts.) due in class

Wednesday, February 27. Researching the Soviet-Afghan War: at 7:00 we will meet with Lynda Kellum at the UNCG Library (Citilab) to discuss Research Strategies for the Essays for the first half of the class—**please go directly to the Library at 7:00 to begin the session**; we will then reconvene in our regular classroom for the remainder of the class at ~8:30

UNIT 3: The American Role and Soviet Withdrawal. Objective: examine and analyze the American role in the Soviet-Afghan War and the eventual Soviet withdrawal from the conflict through secondary sources and film.

- Reading and Assignment for March 13: “Prologue” and “Part One: Blood Brothers” in *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion*

to *September 10, 2001* by Steve Coll (pp. 1-186)—**RP-4** (5 pts.) due in class (**NOTE**: this reading is available on Canvas under “Modules”); also, **write the first two paragraphs of your Research Paper**—submit one copy to the instructor via email by Monday, March 11 at noon and bring a hard copy to class

Wednesday, March 13. The Role of the US/CIA in Afghanistan

- Reading for March 20: “Engaging with the Americans,” “The Army Withdraws and the Politburo Debates,” “Soviet Policy Adrift,” and “Conclusion” in *A Long Goodbye* by Kalinovsky (pp. 122-227); and “A Cold War Crusader: Andrew Eiva, the KGB, and the Collapse of the USSR” (pp. 1-37) by Jeff Jones—**WS-4** (5 pts.) due in class

Wednesday, March 20. The Role of the US/CIA in Afghanistan (cont’d) and the End of the War

- Reading for March 27: “Part III: The Long Goodbye” and “Epilogue: The Reckoning” in *Afgantsy* by Braithwaite (pp. 247-336); and Alan J. Kuperman, “The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 114 (Summer 1999), 219-263—**WS-5** (5 pts.) due in class

Wednesday, March 27. Stinger Missiles and the End of the War

- Reading for April 3: The CIA’s Intervention in Afghanistan: Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser; “Tom Hanks Tells Hollywood Whopper in ‘Charlie Wilson’s War’”

Wednesday, April 3. “Charlie Wilson’s War” (2007): In-class Viewing and Discussion

UNIT 4: The Soviet-Afghan War on Screen. Objective: analyze the depiction of the Soviet-Afghan War in Russian films at the time of the war and since.

- Reading for April 10: “Reel War: The Soviet-Afghan War on Screen, 1983-1989” by Jeff Jones; and “9th Company” in *Variety* by Leslie Felperin

Wednesday, April 10. “9th Company” (2005): In-class Viewing and Discussion

- Reading for April 17: Gregory Carleton, “A tale of two wars: sex and death in *Ninth Company* and *Cargo 200*,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, Vol. 3 (2), 2009: 215-228

Wednesday, April 17. “Cargo 200” (2007): In-class Viewing* and Discussion

Wednesday, April 24. Student presentations

Wednesday, May 1. Student presentations

Friday, May 3. Student presentations. **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

* **WARNING**: this is an *extremely* disturbing film that includes rape scenes and a great deal of depravity; if you wish to be excused from this film let the instructor know so that we can devise an alternative assignment.

List of Possible Research Topics:

- Afghan media during the war (“Kabul Times” and “Kabul New Times” in English and available online at least for part of the period of the war—ends in 1983)
- Drug/alcohol use by Soviet troops
- Soviet military tactics/strategies during the war
- Accusations of Human Rights Abuses by Soviet troops during the war
- The Soviet-Afghan War in Film—Russian and/or American, i.e. “The Beast” (1988); “Rambo III” (1988); etc.
- The Rise of Communism in Afghanistan
- The Communist Government (DRA) of Afghanistan (1978-1992)
- The position/Role of Women in Afghanistan during the 1980s
- The *Mujahedeen*: as a whole or one of the various factions therein
- Women in the anti-communist/anti-Soviet Resistance
- US Actions/Policies/Role during the Soviet-Afghan War
- US/Western Media Coverage of the Soviet-Afghan War
- Comparison/Contrast between the Soviet-Afghan War and the US-Vietnam War (and/or other conflicts)

Readings/Sources for the Research Paper; NOTE: a mix of primary and secondary works, these books deal either in whole or in part with aspects of the Soviet-Afghan War).

- Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival*, edited by Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriam (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).
- Ansari, Tamim. *Games Without Rules: The Often Interrupted History of Afghanistan* (New York: Perseus, 2012).
- Aslam, Nadeem. *The Wasted Vigil* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).
- Barfield, Thomas. *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton University Press, 2010).
- Benard, Cheryl. *Veiled Courage: Inside the Afghan Women's Resistance* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002).
- Bergen, Peter. *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Touchstone, 2004).
- Bocharov, Genadii. *Russian Roulette: Afghanistan Through Russian Eyes*. Translated by Alyona Kojevnikov (New York: Harpers, 1990).
- Borovik, Artyom. *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Grove Press, 1998).
- Carp, Craig. *Afghan Resistance and Soviet Occupation: a 5-year summary* (Department of State: Bureau of Public Affairs, 1984).
- Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
- Coll, Steve. *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Penguin, 2018).
- Crile, George. *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Account of the Largest Covert Operation in History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).
- Danziger, Nick. *Danziger's Travels: Beyond Forbidden Frontiers* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1993).
- Emadi, Hafizullah. *Repression, Resistance, and Women in Afghanistan* (Westport, CT, 2002).
- Feifer, Gregory. *The Great Gamble: the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper, 2009).
- Follain, John and Rita Cristofari. *Zoya's Story: An Afghan Woman's Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Harper, 2002).
- Fremont-Barnes, Gregory. *The Soviet-Afghan War, 1979-89* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2012).
- Galeotti, Mark. *Afghanistan: the Soviet Union's Last War* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).
- Giustozzi, Antonio. *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan* (Columbia University Press, 2009)
- Giustozzi, Antonio. *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992* (Georgetown University Press, 2000).
- Goodson, Larry. *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).
- Guahari, Farooka. *Searching for Saleem: An Afghan Woman's Odyssey* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996).
- Hafvenstein, Joel. *Opium Season: A Year on the Afghan Frontier* (Guilford Connecticut: the Lyons Press, 2007).
- Hirsh, M. E. *Kabul: A Novel* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1986).
- Jones, Ann. *Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan* (New York: Picador, 2006).

- Kakar, Hasan. *Afghanistan: the Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (University of California Press, 1995).
- Macdonald, David. *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).
- McVicker, Ben A. *Afgantsy: The Social, Political, and Cultural Legacy of a Forgotten Generation* (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2018).
- Nojumi, Neamatollah. *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- Nordberg, Jenny. *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* (New York: Broadway Books, 2014).
- Raleigh, Donald J. *Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk About Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
- Reese, Roger. *The Army of Afghanistan: A Political History of a Fragile Institution* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- Rybakov, Vladimir. *The Afghans: A Novella of Soviet Soldiers in Afghanistan*. Translated by James Nelson (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2004); originally published in Russian as *Afgantsy* (1988).
- Steele, Jonathan. *Ghosts of Afghanistan: The Haunted Battleground* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2011).
- Tamarov, Vladislav. *Afghanistan: A Russian Soldier's Story* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2001), originally published as *Afghanistan: Soviet Vietnam* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1992).
- Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002).
- The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*. Compiled by the Frunze Military Academy. Translated and edited by Lester W. Grau (London: Frank Cass, 1998).
- The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*. Compiled by the Russian General Staff. Translated and edited by Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).