COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since 1900, Russo-Soviet history has been as deceptively multi-layered as a matryoshka doll; it was more than just Lenin or Stalin, Gorbachev or Putin. This course will explore the complexities of Russian history—social and political—from late tsarism through the advent of the current regime. A cultural approach will be used to plumb topics as diverse as gender, ethnicity, environmental history, and the experience of the average RKKA soldier in the Great Patriotic War. We will also consider the major personalities and their profound influence on the rise, shape, and eventual demise of the Soviet Union. Stalinism and the Cold War will be topics of particular scrutiny, as will Western attitudes toward Russia since the revolutions of 1917. Finally, the role of memory, myth, and propaganda in creating a distinct Russo-Soviet identity in the period will be considered throughout the semester. While including lectures, this course will will be largely conducted in a seminar format.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

General Education Historical Perspectives SLOs:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

Course Objectives: In addition to GHP SLOs, by the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Identify major themes and trends in Russo-Soviet history, especially during Stalin's regime and in the Cold War, and to assimilate this knowledge into your understanding of the people's experience as a whole. (Departmental SLO #1: “Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. [Historical comprehension]”)
2. Use primary and secondary sources to formulate concrete historical arguments. (Departmental SLO #2: “Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical analysis]”)
REQUIRED BOOKS (& OTHER READINGS)
Two required books are to be read in their entirety: *Ivan's War* and *Armageddon Averted*. The other two are used selectively, but extra material in them can contribute to historiographical essays.


These books are available at the UNCG bookstore, but may be purchased more inexpensively through on-line retailers. *Writing The Stalin Era* and *Russia After The War* are both on course reserve in Jackson Library; recommended to scan the relevant chapters to flash drive and print; this is your responsibility.

Other readings are on Canvas (C) under Files. Each is identified by author's name, and short title if necessary. **You must read these in addition to the assigned books or readings from them as noted.**

COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Readings:** In a seminar format, **all students are required to come to class prepared—to have completed the readings for the day!** Unprepared students will be immediately deported to a GULAG.

**Participation:** In a seminar, the classroom is a “kitchen cabinet.” **Speak up!** There are no “listeners”—except your instructor. **Your grade depends on the quality of your discussion!**

**Late Work:** Unless previously cleared by your instructor, or under very extenuating circumstances, **late work will not be accepted!** *Stakhanovites are expected to produce on schedule!*  

**Electronics:** **No electronics are permitted!** Take notes and do readings the old fashioned way—on paper by hand. **Manual labor is the hallmark of the proletariat!** If you must use an electronic device, it has to be approved by your instructor and you must sit in the front row. For approval refer to the section on disabilities and be cleared by both OARS and the instructor.

**Be On Time:** You instructor starts class on time, and **your instructor does not repeat material.** Your instructor also ends class on time—if not a little early! Workers are required to be punctual; difficulty finding a parking space or standing queue for bread are **not** valid excuses! **If you are over five minutes late, you will be declared a wrecker, dismissed, and sent away**—to Lefortovo for the day.

**Eating:** This is an evening class, but **there is no excuse for eating in class.**, Doing so is disruptive to fellow students and disrespectful to you instructor. Drinks are permitted. But in class, we must suffer as during the famines. Eat before or after the starvation period is over. **“Liquidate Food!”**

**Attendance:** In a seminar, attendance is necessary in each session, but emergencies and misadventures
do occur—especially in Russo-Soviet history; therefore, you have been permitted two (2) unexcused absences. Beyond that, you will have missed over a week and the instructor reserves the Stalinist right to deduct ten (10) points from your final grade! This is in addition to participation—obviously, you can not take part if you are not present! Blocking units of NKVD and SMERSH are to the rear, also.

Inclement Weather: Bad winter weather is a fact of life in Russian history. Hopefully, the same will not be true in this course. But if snow days do occur, students are required to keep up on daily readings until we meet next. If a component of the historiographical essay is due, it the students' responsibility to email it to their instructor on time. Tests will be reassigned as per university policy. If necessary, the instructor may alter the course schedule to match the contingencies with the course content.

Assignments
The midterm and final will consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions and identifications. The historiographical essay must be formated in **12 point font, double spaced, with one (1) inch margins**. You must present one (1) printed paper copy of the final paper on the due date, as well as e-mailing a PDF copy. Drafts, the proposal, etc will be printed with one (1) paper copy handed in on the various due dates as listed in the course schedule. The steps and grading parameters for the essay are broken down below. Note: Information from student presentations is eligible for inclusion in the final exam; *intelligentsia* are expected to learn, remember, and reiterate—hence the handouts.

**GRADING**

Midterm.........................................................................................................................................10 points  
Final...............................................................................................................................................20 points  

**Historiographical Essay:**

- Topic Selection..............................................2.5 points  
- Preliminary Bibliography..............................2.5 points  
- Abstract & Final Bibliography..........................5 points  
- Rough Draft....................................................10 points  
- Final Draft.......................................................20 points  
- Presentation & Handouts.................................10 points  

Total.......................................................................................................50 points  

**Participation..................................................................................................................................20 points**  

**THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY—AN EXPLANATION**

As a field, historiography can be defined as the practice of historians studying other historians. Since we work in an academic discipline, we must recognize that new evidence comes to light—as in the case of the opening of Soviet archives—and that interpretations of the past change over time. There is, in other words, no static consensus about the shape of what occurred “back then.” With that in mind, a historiographical essay is an effort to survey a topic, issue, or event and assess how our understanding about that particular segment of the field has evolved—sometimes with acrimonious debate between respected scholars! Another tact is to look into the corpus of work by one historian and to determine how it has transformed our general understanding of the past.

This part of the course requires students to select a topic or particular historian, and to ask and answer questions such as: what are the oppositional points of view; why was a certain work so groundbreaking; was a work's source-base appropriate for the topic; what modalities or interpretations might be wrong or disingenuous?

When studying Soviet history, asking such questions is particularly important. As a major component in this course, the historiographical essay invites students to become critical experts on various segments of Russo-Soviet history and the people who have contributed to the field. Typically, one
might read or skim books by different authors and consider reviews thereof published in historical journals. Peer reviewed articles are another forum. Some scholars have been extensively critiqued—both for good and ill. The point is to get to the heart of the debate between historians about a subject or the validity of a particular interpretation.

The end products of this inquiry will be a polished 10-15 page scholarly essay defining and analyzing a topical debate in Russo-Soviet history, or summarizing and explicating one scholar's contribution to the literature. Additionally, because historians present their findings at conferences, each student will also give a brief talk about their subject and describe their findings; that way, we can all learn from one another. Each student will provide printed handouts for future reference.

This has been intentionally designed as a stepwise project. Stay on task and follow cues in the course schedule to prevent being overwhelmed! See the end of the syllabus for select topics.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT I: HISTORY, MEMORY, & HISTORIOGRAPHY

WEEK 1.

Tues. 1/14. Introductions and Historiography as a Concept.

Thurs. 1/16. True Stories: Russian History and Memory.
   Svetlana Alexievich, Secondhand Time, 3-11, 17-20. (C)

UNIT II: REVOLUTIONS & COUNTERREVOLUTIONS

WEEK 2.

Tues. 1/21. Late Tsarist Russia: Fin de Siècle through the Great War.
   Reading: Niall Ferguson, The War of the World, 43-56. (C)
   Arthur Symone, “Impressions of Moscow,” The Nation (11/22/1917), 565-566. (C)
   RECOMMENDED: Victor Sebestyen, “The Police State,” Lenin, 49-57. (C)

Thurs. 1/23. “All power to the Soviets!”: The Revolutions of 1917.
   Reading: Victor Sebestyen, “Coup d’Etat,” Lenin, 7-23 + maps. (C)
   Simeon Strunsky, “What the Bolsheviki Really Want,” The Nation (11/15/17), 530-532 (C)

WEEK 3.

   Reading: Constantin U. Chernenko, Human Rights in Soviet Society, 7-22. (C)

Thurs. 1/30. The Civil War, War Communism, and NEP.
   Reading: Begin reading Merridale, Ivan’s War.
   (Note: We will likely screen film clips from Kommisar.)
   TOPIC SELECTION DUE

UNIT III: STALINISM

WEEK 4.

Tues. 2/4. LIBRARY FIELD TRIP (We will meet in Jackson at the reference desk.)
   Reading: Continue reading Merridale, Ivan’s War.
   (Note: The class will be instructed in research strategies by Maggie Murphy or associate.)
Thurs. 2/6. How Stalin Aggregated Power and the 1st Five Year Plan.
Continue reading Merridale, *Ivan's War*.

WEEK 5.

Tues. 2/11. Collectivization, Dekulakization, and Famine.
Reading: Shiela Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 37-45, 49-54. (C)
Lynee Viola, “Counternarratives of Soviet Life: Kulak Special Settlers in the First Person,”
*Writing The Stalin Era*, 87-97.

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Reading: Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student*, “Back in Moscow,” 328-329. (C)

WEEK 6.

Tues. 2/18. The Great Patriotic War: Operation Barbarossa to Stalingrad.
Reading: Merridale, *Ivan's War*, Ch. 3-5, p. 82-186.

Thurs. 2/20. The Horrors of Total War on the Home Front.
ABSTRACT & FINAL BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

WEEK 7.

Reading: Merridale, *Ivan's War*, Ch. 8 -11, p. 287-388.

Thurs. 2/27. MIDTERM EXAM
Reading: You must have finished *Ivan's War* before the exam!

WEEK 8.

NO CLASSES SPRING BREAK—YAY!  (Wisely begin reading Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted!*)

WEEK 9.

Tues. 3/10. The Postwar and Reconstruction.
the War?,” 31-39; “The Hungry Years,” 40-50.
(Note: We will likely screen film clips from *Vor*)
ANY CHANGES TO FINAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES OR ESSAY PARAMETERS DUE

Thurs. 3/12. The Postwar and Late Stalinism.
of Postwar Expectations,” 101-108.

WEEK 10.

Tues. 3/17. The GULAG—A World Within The State.
Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, “The Gulag Subculture” and “The Cult of
Criminality,” 113-128. (C)
Golfo Alexopoulos, “A Torture Memo: Reading Violence in the Gulag,” *Writing The Stalin
Era, 157-172.

**Thurs. 3/19. The Mentalité of Stalinism and its Lasting Impact.**

**UNIT IV: REFORM, REACTION, RESURRECTION**

**WEEK 11.**

**Tues. 3/24. The Death of Stalin.**
Begin reading Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*.
ROUGH DRAFTS DUE.
(Note: We will likely screen film clips from “The Death of Stalin.”)

**Thurs. 3/26. Khrushchev and the “Thaw.”**

**WEEK 12.**

**Tues. 3/31. The Brezhnev Era: “Stagnation” and Detanté.**

**Thurs. 4/2. Proxy Wars, Real Wars.**
Reading: Continue reading Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, approx. 86-112.

**WEEK 13.**

**Tues. 4/7. The “Gerontocrats”**
Reading: Continue reading Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, approx. 113-168.

**Thurs. 4/9. Perestroika, Glasnost, and “Gorby”**
Reading: Francis X. Clines, “Comrade on the Street: Russians See an Omen of Their Own Progress,” *NYT* (Nov. 11, 1989) in *The Collapse Of Communism*, 194-196. (C)
Mikhail Gorbachev, “Excerpts from Speech by Gorbachev,” *NYT* (Dec. 11, 1989) in *The Collapse of Communism*, 319-320. (C)
Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time*, 20-27. (C)

**WEEK 14**

**Tues. 4/14. Novyi Vozhdy (the New Strongmen): From the Putsch to Putin**
RECOMMENDED: Richard Sawka, *Putin: Russia's Choice*, ~25 pp redacted. (C)

**UNIT V: SPECIAL TOPICS & HISTORIOGRAPHY**

**Thurs. 4/16. PRESENTATIONS GROUP I.**
ALL FINAL DRAFTS DUE
HANDOUTS DUE: GROUP 1 ONLY
WEEK 15.

**Tues. 4/21. Gender in the Soviet Era.**

**Thurs. 4/23. PRESENTATIONS GROUP II.**
HANDOUTS DUE: GROUP II ONLY

WEEK 16.

**Tues. 4/28. Russo-Soviet Environmental Imperialism.**
(Note: We will also discuss the topic of petro-rubles, as presented by Kotkin in *Armageddon Averted*.)

**Thurs. 4/30. NO CLASS—READING DAY!**

WEEK 17. **FINAL EXAM—TBA**

**SELECT TOPICS FOR RUSSO-SOVIEI HISTORIOGRAPHY**

These topics have been selected for good reasons: the depth of the historiography and dialog within the fields. They are also fascinating topics! Unless otherwise approved, no more than one student may choose a particular topic. A bibliography with recommended and required titles is in a separate document. (Yes, as with all research projects, extracurricular reading is necessary! Many topics incorporate required course readings, however.) You can and should consult other books and/or peer-reviewed journal articles. Book reviews are key in mapping historiographical dialog. Random internet sources, podcasts, etc. are not acceptable, however.

- Revolution / Civil War
- Comintern / CPUSA
- Stalinist Culture
- The kresky and Ukraine more generally
- Ukrainian Famine
- NKVD / Great Purges

- Revisionist / Bottom-Up Historian: Sheila Fitzpatrick
- Postwar Reconstruction

- Fall of the CCCP / Mikhail Gorbachev / Boris Yeltsin
- The Great Patriotic War

- Polish Borderlands: Nazi occupation and “holocaust by bullets” / Katyn Forest
- GULAG

- Conservative / Totalitarian Historian: Richard Pipes
- The New Russia / Vladimir Putin

- Josef Jughashvili (aka Josef Stalin)
- Neo-Consensus Historian: Ronald Grigor Suny

- Stalin and Hitler: Comparative Analyses
- Oral Historian: Svetlana Alexievich

A CAVEAT: These are potential topics. Depending on the number of students enrolled in His 378, the selection may be expanded or restricted by the instructor. Other possible topics may be considered, but the instructor is ultimate arbiter and can summarily say nyet to any suggestions.