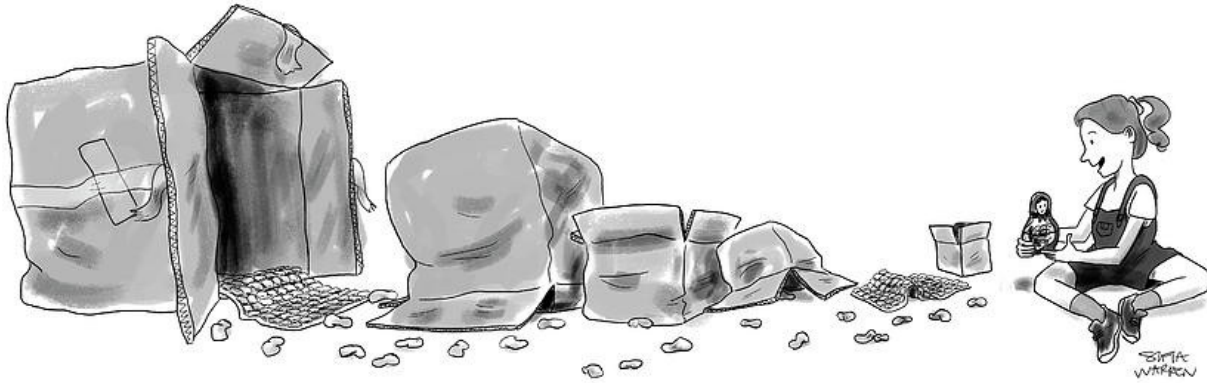


## His 378—Russia Since 1900

Spring Semester, 2020. MHRA 2211. Tuesday & Thursday, 6:30 – 7:45 pm.

Instructor: Travis Sutton Byrd / Office: MHRA 2102 / email: [tsbyrd@uncg.edu](mailto:tsbyrd@uncg.edu)

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 7:45-8:45pm, Wednesday, 11:00am-12:00pm; and by appointment



Cartoon: Sofia Warren, *New Yorker* (11/5/2008), 32.

### 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 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.

Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Picador, 2006) ISBN: 978-0-312-42652-1

Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Harris, and Kiril Tomoff, eds., *Writing The Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2011). ISBN: 978-0-230-10930-8

Elena Zubkova, trans Hugh Ragsdale, *Russia After The War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998) ISBN: 0-756-0228-8

Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) ISBN: 978-0-19-536863-5

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:** Your 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 formatted 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.**

Reading: Yuri Slezkine, "The Two Faces Of Tatiana Matveena," *Writing The Stalin Era*, 37-41.  
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)

Joshua Sanborn, "Military Occupation and Social Unrest: Daily Life in Russian Poland at the Start of World War I," *Writing The Stalin Era*, 43-55.

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.

**Tues. 1/28. Marxism, Bolshevism, and Party Structure.**

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 1<sup>st</sup> Five Year Plan.**

Reading: Fred Beal, *Proletarian Journey*, 227-235, 237-238, 242-243, 288-295. (C)  
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)  
Fred Beal, *Proletarian Journey*, "Famine," 298-299, 306-308. (C)  
Lynne Viola, "Counternarratives of Soviet Life: Kulak Special Settlers in the First Person,"  
*Writing The Stalin Era*, 87-97.  
Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student*, "Collective Farms," 349-352. (C).

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

**Thurs. 2/13. Purges, Stakhanovites, Ice Cream for the Masses: Stalinist Culture in the 1930s.**

Reading: Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student*, "Back in Moscow," 328-329. (C)  
Merridale, *Ivan's War*, Ch. 1 & 2, p. 23-81.  
Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, "The Social Psychology of the War," 11-19.

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.**

Reading: Merridale, *Ivan's War*, Ch. 6 & 7, p. 187-262.

ABSTRACT & FINAL BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

WEEK 7.

**Tues. 2/25. The Great Patriotic War: Operation Bagration to Berlin.**

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.**

Reading: Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, "The Victory and the Victors," 20-30; "How to Live After 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.**

Reading: Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, "The Political Temper of the Masses," 74-87; "The Crisis of Postwar Expectations," 101-108.

WEEK 10.

**Tues. 3/17. The GULAG—A World Within The State.**

Reading: Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, "The Wave of Repression, 1949-1953," 130-138.

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.**

Reading: Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, “The Cult of Personality,” 178-190.

Nina Khrushcheva, “An Eternal Revolution of the Russian Mind,” *Ruritan* (Winter, 2008), 113-129. (C)

**UNIT IV: REFORM, REACTION, RESURECTION**

WEEK 11.

**Tues. 3/24. The Death of Stalin.**

Reading: Zubkova, *Russia After The War*, “Without Stalin: The New Public Atmosphere,” 151-163; “Turning to the Individual: The Paths from Above and Below,” 171-177.

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.”**

Reading: Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, approx. 1-57.

WEEK 12.

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

Reading: Mark Edle, “Collective Action In Soviet Society: The Case of War Veterans,” *Writing The Stalin Era*, 117-128.

Continue reading Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, approx. 58-85.

**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)

Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, through 192.

WEEK 14

**Tues. 4/14. *Novyi Vozhdy* (the New Strongmen): From the Putsch to Putin**

Reading: Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 193-220.

Tony Wood, “Russia's 'Imitation Democracy': Vladimir Putin Rules an Authoritarian System First Established by Boris Yeltsin.” *The Nation* (February 12-19, 2018), 23-25. (C)

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.**

Reading: Francine du Plessix Gray, *Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope*, “Growing Up Powerful,” and “Marriage, Mother, and Divorce,” 40-62. (C)

Mie Nakachi, “Gender, Marriage, and Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union,” *Writing The Stalin Era*, 101-116.

**Thurs. 4/23. PRESENTATIONS GROUP II.**

HANDOUTS DUE: GROUP II ONLY

WEEK 16.

**Tues. 4/28. Russo-Soviet Environmental Imperialism.**

Reading: Douglas R. Weiner, “The Predatory Tribute-Taking State: A Framework for Understanding Russian Environmental History,” *Global Environmental History*, McNeill and Roe, eds., 283-312. (C)

(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-SOVIET 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 <i>kresky</i> 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
Iosef 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.