

## History 4446/5446

### Soviet Russia Fall 2007 Tuesdays, 3:30-6:00 pm

Dr. Elaine MacKinnon

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The course will introduce students to the history of the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1991. We will cover selected topics in political, social, and cultural history, with a particular focus on the Stalinist period from 1929 to 1953. We will examine the evolution of the Soviet system: the visionary expectations of its founders, the bureaucratization and brutalization of the Stalinist period, the movement for reform under Khrushchev followed by the reactionary conservatism of the Brezhnev era, the return to reform and "New Thinking" under Gorbachev, and finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the wake of serious economic decline, rising nationalism, and the discrediting of Soviet ideology. We will explore the relationship between state and society and evaluate Soviet communism as a mobilizational political culture. We will consider the multi-ethnic structure of the Soviet Union and how this shaped its history and eventually contributed to its denouement. Although we will be focusing on Soviet leaders and outstanding figures who have shaped Soviet history, we will also examine the lives of ordinary Soviet citizens, their experiences, hopes, and tragedies. Our goal is to understand the multiple factors that shaped the Soviet system, why it enjoyed popular support, why it collapsed, and why its appeal may not be entirely extinguished.

The format for the course is a seminar, organized around weekly discussions of assigned readings, supplemented by informational and background lectures. In order for the class to succeed, everyone must be ready to discuss and ask questions. **This means that you must do the readings each week and be prepared to take part in class.** The textbook will provide chronology, basic facts and historical background, while the supplemental readings will give you a deeper understanding of and exposure to Soviet politics and society.

#### **Required Texts:**

All of the following are available for purchase in the campus bookstore.

David G. Rowley, *Exploring Russia's Past: Narrative, Sources, Images*. Volume II: Since 1856. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006. Abbreviated in the syllabus as TEXT.

Jeffrey Brooks and Georgiy Chernyavskiy, *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Lydia Chukovskaia, translated by Aline Werth. *Sofia Petrovna*. Northwestern University Press, 1988.

Roy A. Medvedev and Zhores A. Medvedev, translated by Andrew R. Durkin. *Khrushchev: the Years in Power*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978.

Natalya Baranskaya, ***A Week Like Any Other***. The Seal Press, 1979.

#### **Grading:**

**Mid-term Exam: 25%**

**Final Exam: 30%**

**Research Essay: 25%**

**Response Papers/Quizzes on Supplemental Readings: 15%**  
**Class Participation/Quizzes and Attendance: 5%**

### **I. Grading--Examinations**

There will be two examinations, a midterm and a final. These may consist of any or all of the following: identification questions (write a detailed paragraph explaining the significance of specific terms or explaining the connection between two terms), map questions, short-answer questions, and essays. The final will not be comprehensive, but the essays may ask you to reflect on the entire course and/or the legacy of Soviet history.

### **II. Grading--Formal Written Assignments:**

1). Each student will write a 8 to 10 page research essay, typed with one-inch margins and either 10-point or 12-point font. You must choose one of the essay topics listed on the last page of the syllabus. Topics must be selected by September 25. In addition to your required readings, you are expected to use at least three outside books, one article from a scholarly journal, and three primary documents (written or visual). Examples of scholarly journals carried by the Ingram Library at West Georgia include *Russian Review*, *Slavic Review*, *Journal of Modern History*, and more are available through Galileo, J-Stor and Project Muse. Encyclopedias and internet sites do not count as one of the three outside sources, nor do the assigned course readings. But you may get your primary documents from approved internet sites, and one of your three primary documents may come from your Rowley textbook (but the other two must come from other sources).

Late papers will be penalized 10 points for each day late. Each paper should be at least four pages in length, typewritten and doublespaced, exclusive of endnotes and bibliography (works cited) page. The standard guide of the history department is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 5th edition, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*, available in the reference section of the bookstore and of the library; in addition, the library has copies on permanent reserve--ask at the circulation desk.

You will be graded for both content and style. Each paper should have a concrete thesis; an introduction that states your purpose, what questions you will address and what methodology you will use; a body that develops your argument/thesis in an orderly sequence; and a conclusion that is not just a restating of the topic, but that sums up your argument and explains what you have discovered. Factual material should be clearly presented and relative to the theme of the paper. You need to put forward your own ideas based on reading and research. Do not pour out everything you have gathered; select the facts which best explain, illustrate, or substantiate your points. You should include in your body discussion of the historiographical debates connected with your theme. You may want to critically engage a particular author's view on a topic and present your own view. Credit direct quotations of ideas or data of others in endnotes at the back of the paper (or in footnotes at the bottom of the page). Errors in logic or fact, errors in mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation) and general messiness will lower your grade. Avoid contractions, slang or sloppy constructions. Learning how to express your thoughts in a clear and logical manner is an invaluable skill.

**Start Early! Be sure to keep a copy for your files.**

**Papers turned in after the due date and time will lower the grade by ten points each late day.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Computer glitches do not excuse you from the established deadlines.

You will be asked to present progress reports at designated dates in the syllabus. Failure to do so could lower your grade. If time permits during the last two class meetings, then each student will present orally to the class a synopsis of his or her research. If you have any problems or questions regarding the writing of essays and reports, please see me or make use of the excellent University Writing Center. I will be happy to examine rough drafts (submitted at least two weeks prior to due date) and offer comments.

The final draft of the research essay is due by 3:30 pm on Tuesday, November 27.

2). For two of the four assigned supplemental readings (Brooks and Chernyavskiy, Chukovskaia, Medvedev, and Baranskaia), you will write response papers (minimum three typed pages with one-inch margins) discussing their main themes and analyzing their significance as historical sources. You should give a brief overview of the contents (an analytical summary, not a retelling of the story), explain the historical context, and then analyze the significance of the reading for understanding Soviet history. What particular aspects of Soviet history do these readings illuminate? In the case of the readings on Lenin and Khrushchev, how do the readings present these individual leaders? What impact on Soviet history do the readings suggest they had? Do the readings evaluate them positively or negatively? How can individual experiences contribute to an understanding of historical development in the Soviet Union? In the case of the two fictional readings, what do you learn from the personal experiences of the main characters about Soviet history and society? How do their lives compare to the textbook's presentation of events during the particular period being depicted?

For each of these works you will be give specific questions which are to be addressed in your response papers. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade or even a failed grade. THESE ARE NOT BOOK REPORTS OR EVEN REVIEWS. You must be able to discuss what you learn from these texts about Soviet history, and how these texts can best be used to study Soviet history. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using biography and fiction to study history? After evaluating the work as an historical source, you should record your own individual reactions to the readings. What have you gained from reading this work? What do you find to be most significant or most striking about the reading? Questions to consider include: What do you learn from the work that you could not learn from a textbook? To what extent are the experiences described unique to Soviet society, and to what extent are they universal? What does the human experience recorded in these works tell us about the Soviet system, the Soviet people, or even about the twentieth century as a whole? About modernity?

Unlike the research paper, you may use first person for these papers. The reports must be typed with one-inch margins and either 10- or 12-point fonts. They are due on the days listed in the syllabus for discussion of the supplemental readings (*Lenin and the Making of Soviet Society*, September 18 ; *Sofia Petrovna*, October 2; *Khrushchev: The Years in Power*, October 30; *A Week Like Any Other*, November 20.

In addition, there will be reading comprehension quizzes on each of the supplemental books in class on the day each is assigned.

### III. Grading--Class Participation

You should take part in class discussions, ask questions, and be present for in-class writing assignments and activities. The more you participate, the more you will learn, and the more likely it will go in your favor if you are in a borderline grading situation. Included in class

participation are unannounced quizzes and writing assignments.

Questions are provided in the syllabus (See “Questions for Discussion”) which may form the basis for either in-class writing assignments or out-of-class assignments. You may be asked to write responses to these questions, so be sure to think about them as you do the assigned readings. The questions are intended to prepare you for class discussions and activities.

**You may also be asked to write response papers to films watched in class or to class debates and discussions. In addition,** there will be writing assignments analyzing the primary and visual sources found at the end of each chapter in your Rowley textbook. This work may be done at times in groups and at times individually. Be sure that you read these sources for each chapter covered in the textbook. Repeated failure to read these when assigned may lead to pop quizzes and additional formal paper assignments.

**Assignments:**

Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings in advance of each class session and to be able to discuss them. Some of the readings are lengthy, so plan ahead and budget your time accordingly. Try not to fall behind! **All written assignments are due on the specified date; unexcused late work will lower the grade by one grade level for each late day.**

**Cheating Policy and Plagiarism:**

Anyone caught cheating or helping someone to cheat will be asked to leave the class and will receive a course grade of "F." Plagiarism, or claiming someone else's work as your own, will result in failure. This rule is in effect for all assignments, examinations, quizzes, and extra credit work.

**Attendance:**

Make every effort to be in class and on time. You are responsible for all materials and announcements presented in class. If you must be absent, be sure to get the notes from a classmate. More than one unexcused absence will affect your final grade. More than two may lead to a W/F. Absences due to illness or school business will be excused if you bring me a written note. Being late to class or leaving class early will also lower your grade. Two tardies will count as one unexcused absence, and the same for leaving early. If you are tardy, it is your responsibility to inform me of your presence at the end of class. Regular attendance and punctuality will enhance your learning experience and can work in your favor in borderline grading situations (or against you, if not maintained). Missed quizzes cannot be made up, so repeated absences can bring down your class participation grade.

**Office Hours:**

My office is Room 3222 in the TLC Building and the hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm or by appointment. My office phone number is 678-839-6048. Please see me if you have questions or concerns with any part of the course.

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**Tentative Course Outline and Readings Schedule**

August 21: Introduction/The Legacy of Imperial Russia  
Readings: TEXT, Introduction, pp. 1-13; 22-28

Questions for Discussion: Why is it important to study the history of Soviet Russia? What is the relationship between Russia and the Soviet Union? What were the major factors shaping Soviet history?

August 28: The Great Reforms to 1917

Readings:

TEXT, Chapter 12, pp. 31-39, 42

Ch 13, pp. 57-59; 62-65; 73-75

Ch 14, pp. 79-92; 102-105

Questions for Discussion: What were the major events, forces, and factors shaping Russian history from 1861 to 1917? Was revolution in 1917 inevitable?

September 4: Revolutions of 1917

Readings: TEXT, Ch. 15, pp. 106-130

*Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 1-17 and 37-60

Questions for Discussion: Consider the nature of the October Revolution. How do we define revolution? Was this a revolution in the true sense of the word, or was it a coup from above? What role did Lenin play in the revolution? Can you draw any comparisons between the October Revolution and other revolutions you have studied, such as the American or French Revolutions?

September 11: The Civil War and the Formation of the Soviet Union

Readings: TEXT, Ch. 15, pp. 115-119, 129

*Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 17-33; 61-102

Questions for Discussion: Who is the real Lenin? What do the documents show us about Lenin's conception of Marxism? Of revolution? Of the proletarian state? What influence did the Russian Civil War have on Lenin? On Bolshevism? On the new Soviet state?

September 18: NEP Russia, "The Experimental Decade"?

Readings: TEXT, Ch 16, 131-154/ *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*, pp. 103-161

\*\*\*RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON *Lenin and the Making of the Soviet State*

Questions for Discussion: What impact did Lenin's death have on the evolution of the Soviet system? What do you think Soviet Russia would have been like had Lenin lived? What were Lenin's intentions for the New Economic Policy? Was it a temporary break from the intensity of War Communism, or an alternative path to building socialism in Russia? What do the documents suggest? How did the NEP influence political, economic, and cultural trends in the 1920s? How did workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia fare in the first decade of Soviet power? What did the revolution mean for women? How were their lives changed?

LAST DAY FOR CHOOSING TOPIC FOR RESEARCH ESSAY IS SEPT 25

September 25: The Stalin Revolution

Readings: TEXT, Ch 17, 155-179

Questions for Discussion: What was the Stalin "Revolution"? In what ways were his policies "revolutionary"? What is meant by the term "Stalinism"? Was this the natural outcome of the October Revolution and Marxism-Leninism, or was it an aberration?

October 2: Stalinist Society/The Terror—One Woman's Experience

Readings: *Sofia Petrovna*, all

\*\*\*RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON *SOFIA PETROVNA*

Questions for Discussion: How does the novel show you the process through which “terror” and arrests became a mass phenomenon? How does the novel help you to understand what life was like for many Soviet citizens during the 1930s? What is the effect of fear and suspicion both on Sofia and on those around her? How did ordinary people contribute to the climate of suspicion and fear, as well as to the arrests?

October 9: Midterm Exam

\*\*\*Brief progress report due October 16. Turn in your thesis and annotated working bibliography.

October 16: The Great War of the Fatherland/Postwar Stalinism  
Readings: TEXT, Ch 18, 180-205

Questions for Discussion: What accounts for the catastrophic losses suffered by the Soviet Union in World War II? What impact did the war have on the Soviet state and society? Why does the war become such a seminal experience for the Soviet people, more so than any previous event? What were Stalin’s foreign policy goals in the immediate post-war period? How did life in the Soviet Union change after World War II?

October 23: Khrushchev, the Cold War, and De-Stalinization  
Readings: TEXT, Ch 19, 207-232

Questions for Discussion: Who is to blame for the Cold War, the United States or the Soviet Union? Was the Cold War inevitable? Did the Cold War change with the death of Stalin? What were Khrushchev’s foreign policy goals in the 1950s? What was the meaning of “peaceful coexistence”? What were his reform goals?

October 30: Khrushchev: Contradictions and Ambiguities of a Soviet Reformer

Readings: *Khrushchev: The Years in Power*, all

\*\*\*RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON *KHRUSHCHEV: THE YEARS IN POWER*

Questions for Discussion: Why did Khrushchev institute de-Stalinization and what were its effects? What critical contradictions and ambiguities did Khrushchev display? How do the Medvedev brothers evaluate Khrushchev’s role as a reformer? Was he successful? Why or why not?

November 6: The Brezhnev Era: Stagnation, Detente, and the Social Compact

Readings: TEXT, Ch 20, 233-256

Questions for Discussion: What are the “paradoxes of Brezhnev’s long reign”? Is it fair to refer to this period as one of “stagnation”? Why is it that many Russians even today look back nostalgically upon the Brezhnev period? In what ways had Soviet society modernized? What is the nature of the “social compact” forged by the regime with society, and how effective was it? What problems were emerging by the end of the Brezhnev era?

\*\*\*Progress Report Due on November 13. Turn in an introductory thesis paragraph and an updated bibliography.

\*\*\*For those wishing to turn in a rough draft, November 13 is the last day to turn this in to me.

November 13: Post-Stalinist Society and Trends

Readings: *A Week Like Any Other*, pp. 1-62

\*\*\*RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON *A WEEK LIKE ANY OTHER*

Questions for Discussion: As you read this work, think about the role and status of women in Soviet society. How does this story illuminate the concept of the “double burden” in Soviet society? Compare Olga’s story to that of Sofia Petrovna. What changes can you see in Soviet society from the time period of *Sofia Petrovna* to that of *A Week Like Any Other*?

November 20: Afghanistan, Perestroika, and Collapse

Readings: TEXT, Ch. 21, 257-283

Questions for Discussion: What is the significance of Mikhail Gorbachev for Soviet history? For World History? Was he a revolutionary or a reformer? What were his goals? Did these goals change over time? How will the textbooks in 2104 present Gorbachev?

How old were you when the Soviet Union came to an end in 1991? Were you aware of what was going on at the time—did you discuss it in school, at work, or at home? How did you understand this process; did people try to explain it? Did you know about the August Coup in 1991?

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE BY 3:30 PM ON NOVEMBER 27

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November 27: The New Russia?

Readings: TEXT, Ch 22, 284-311

Questions for Discussion: Was the collapse of the Soviet Union inevitable? If you had to explain the collapse of the Soviet state now to a group of students, what factors would you identify as most critical? What has been the most significant consequence of this collapse? Do you consider it a positive or negative historical process?

TUESDAY DECEMBER 11: FINAL EXAMINATION, 3:30–6:00 P.M.

Soviet Russia  
Topics for Research Essay

Select one of the following topics for your research essay. If you would like to do an essay on a topic that is not included below, then please speak with me. No more than three students can do a topic. Topics will be assigned on a first-come basis. You must choose a topic by September 25

1. Examine the significance of Lenin for the development of Bolshevism, for the October Revolution of 1917, and for the evolution of the Soviet regime.
2. Analyze the nature and causes of the October Revolution in 1917. Why does a second revolution take place in 1917? What role did the peasants, workers, national minorities, and soldiers play in this revolution? What role did Lenin play? In what ways does the October Revolution influence the evolution of the Soviet system?
3. Examine the meaning of the term "Stalinism." What factors contributed to the rise and triumph of Stalinism? To what extent was Stalin responsible for Stalinism? Was Stalinism rooted in Leninism, Marxism, Russian history, or was it a product of multiple factors? Was the "Stalin Revolution from Above" a betrayal of the revolution or its inevitable outcome?
4. Analyze the causes and consequences of the Cold War. Why did the Cold War result from World War II? What are the origins of the Cold War? Is either side more to blame? What impact did the Cold War have upon post-war history? What led to the end of the Cold War?
5. Compare/contrast Khrushchev and Gorbachev as Soviet reformers in terms of their goals, policies, personal styles, and motives.
6. Evaluate the status and role of women in the Soviet Union. What were the gains women made under the Soviet system and what were the problems? Did the gains outweigh the problems? What were the roots of the "double burden"? Was this intrinsic to the Marxist ideology or were there deeper roots?
7. Examine the factors that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. What role did nationalism play in this process? Why did Gorbachev's reform program fail to revitalize the Soviet system as intended? Was this collapse inevitable, and if so, why?
8. Analyze Soviet nationality policies during a specific period such as the NEP, the Stalinist period, the Post-Stalinist period, or perestroika. How did the Soviet system deal with its multi-ethnic population? How did nationalities policy evolve over time? In what ways did ethnic nationalism contribute to the collapse of the Soviet Union?

TURN OVER FOR MORE OPTIONS

9. Write a biographical paper that both recounts the life of an important figure in Soviet history and analyzes the significance of that person for Soviet history. Why is the life of this person important for the study of Soviet history? How was Soviet history shaped by this individual? If

not a political figure, what role did this individual play within Soviet society and culture? How does the life of this individual inform us about the evolution of Soviet history, its particular characteristics, or its final outcome? Your paper must do more than just tell the life story of the person. You must provide substantial analysis of how this person contributed to the making of Soviet history and why he or she is considered to be significant. You may choose from the following list of figures. If there is someone not listed whom you would like to research, please consult with the instructor.

Grigory Rasputin	Grigory Zinoviev	Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky	Maxim Gorky
Alexander Kerensky	Feliks Dzerzhinsky	Marshal Grigory Zhukov	Mikhail Bulgakov
Leon Trotsky	Sergei Kirov	Leonid Brezhnev	Sergei Eisenstein
Alexandria Kollontai	Nikolai Yezhov	Alexei Kosygin	Dmitri
Shostakovich			
Nadezhda Krupskaya	Lavrenti Beria	Yuri Andropov	Alexander
Solzhenitsyn			
Nikolai Bukharin	Trofim Lysenko	Alexander Yakovlev	Yevgenii
Yevtushenko			
Lev Kamenev	Maxim Litvinov	Boris Yeltsin	Boris Pasternak

10. Take a creative approach and engage in role playing. Assume the role of **one** of the following figures (See below a to j). Trace the life of this figure, with his or her birth taking place between 1880 and 1900. You are to do this in the form of an autobiography. You must trace your person's life under Soviet rule, trying to illuminate key events between 1917 and 1991 through the personal experiences of your subject. Events that could be used in your account include the 1917 October Revolution, the Civil War, the NEP, Stalin's Revolution from Above, collectivization, the Stalinist Terror and Gulag, World War II, the Khrushchev Thaw, Brezhnev's stagnation, and Gorbachev's perestroika. Exercise your creative powers, but you must base your fictionalized depiction on solid historical research and facts, which you must cite in the paper just as for an analytical essay. Describe activities you would engage in, events you would have witnessed, personal reactions to developments in Russian society and government, etc. Provide through your autobiography a picture of what life in the Soviet Union was like during these momentous periods in history, refer to specific facts and events, and evaluate Soviet historical development through the eyes of this person. **If you choose this option, please meet with me to work out your approach to the project.**

- a. a worker in the Putilov machine factory in Petrograd (Leningrad)
- b. a peasant from the Poltava province
- c. a kulak exiled to the north during collectivization
- d. a professor who is arrested in 1934 and sent into the Gulag
- e. a university student who joins the Bolsheviks in 1917
- f. a soldier in the Civil War
- g. a revolutionary idealist who joins the Cheka
- h. a wife of a top-ranking Red Army general or major Party leader arrested during the Terror
- i. an Orthodox priest
- j. an Uzbek woman who throws away her veil