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HSTR 595.01: Special Topics - Readings in Soviet History

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Recommended Citation

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HSTR 595: Readings in Soviet History Fall 2014

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Course Description:

This graduate colloquium explores classic and recent English-language scholarship in the cultural, political, and social history of the Soviet Union, from revolution to dissolution. Specific topics include the origins and outcomes of the October Revolution; the formation of the Soviet state and the problem of violence; the contours of Bolshevik culture and culture-building; the nature and legacy of Stalinism; post-Stalinist reconfiguration; and questions of ideology, conviction, and coercion. The chief goals of the course are to expose students to the major historiographical problems in the field, to investigate new and classical scholarly trends in Soviet history, and to cultivate critical thinking and analytical skills.

This course is designed for History graduate students and presupposes no intimate familiarity with Russian and Soviet history. Students interested in Russian-language historical literature should consult with me. Those in search of a solid and intelligent textbook are advised to seek out Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) or Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010). The single-best collection of English-language scholarly essays on Soviet history is *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 3: *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

Course Requirements:

Completion of assigned readings, faithful attendance in class, and consistent active participation are essential for success in this course.

1. **Presentation:** Students will be required to lead discussion (either singly or in pairs) *twice* during the semester. We will determine a presentation schedule for the semester in the first week of the course.
 - a) Each presenter will email the class (myself included) a list of discussion questions no later than Thursday afternoon at 5.00pm. These should be substantive and thoughtful questions concerning the methodology, argument, source base, and historiographical significance of the book.
 - b) We will begin each class with opening remarks from the week's presenter(s). Presenters will lay out the argument, structure, and historiographical significance of that week's texts (both the assigned and recommended texts; in some cases, an alternate recommended text or set of articles can be presented; check with me first). Presentations should be approx. 10 minutes and will summarize the themes, arguments, sources, and contribution of the reading(s) as well as relate the work(s) under consideration to both common and recommended course readings. Note: I have not ordered copies of the recommended texts at the Bookstore. It is up to you to procure a copy of the recommended text(s) in your presentation week; get an early start and proceed in timely fashion (check the Mansfield Library, ILL, or Amazon).

2. **Writing assignments:**
 - a) Each student will write a total of nine (9) 750-1000 word book reviews on the assigned texts. You will email the class (myself included) a copy of your review by 11.59 pm on Thursday night. I strongly encourage you to read your comrades'

reviews in advance of our Friday meeting. You will bring a hard copy of the review (stapled and properly formatted) to class on Friday. Ideally, presenters will incorporate one or more of the recommended texts in their reviews.

- b) On weeks that you are not writing a review, you will email the group with thoughtful discussion questions on the week's readings. These questions are in lieu of writing a book review. Discussion questions are due by 5.00pm on Thursday afternoon.
- c) A longer historiographical essay (15-20 pages) is also required, on a topic of interest to the student (ideally germane to the student's MA or PhD focus), to be selected in consultation with the instructor. This is due at the end of the semester (during finals week).

Final Grade: Your final grade for the course will be calculated on the basis of your weekly participation (active, engaged, informed); two presentations; nine book reviews; discussion questions; and the final historiographical essay.

On Writing Book Reviews:

A book review should both summarize and critically analyze/appraise the author's main arguments, use of evidence, historiographical approach, and conclusions. Ideally, the book review should also comment on the significance of the author's contribution to the field. Reviews in *Journal of Modern History*, *American Historical Review*, and *Past and Present* are among the best for this purpose, but feel free to use other journals as well. The leading English-language journals for Russian/Soviet history are *Kritika*, *Russian History*, *Russian Review*, and *Slavic Review*. Use the formatting style of published reviews as a template for your review. When in doubt, don't hesitate to ask me.

Books Available for Purchase:

(available for purchase at the Bookstore in the UC or via Amazon; plan ahead and procure your texts early) (* = e-book copy available through Mansfield Library)

- Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (1976; reprint, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009)
- * Donald J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002)
- * Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989)
- * Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: U California Press, 1997)
- * Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009)
- Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007)
- Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011)
- * David L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011)
- Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh Press, 2010)
- * Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011)
- Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011)

- Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005)
- David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011)

Soviet history books, simply put and with some notable few exceptions, do not sell. The result is that cover prices on many texts are so high as to render them cost-prohibitive for classroom use. Fortunately, a full half of the books we're reading this semester are available as free e-books through the Mansfield Library website; I've marked these texts in the list above with an asterisk and also in the course schedule below. This should save you a good deal of money, and I strongly encourage you to avail yourself of this economy. However, I would ask that if you *do* read the e-version, please bring a laptop or other device to class so that you will have the text in front of you and that we can have a meaningful text-based discussion.

Course Schedule:

Week I (Aug 29): Intro to the course

Week II (Sept 5): The Revolution(s) of 1917

- Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (1976; reprint, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009)
- Recommended texts:
- Edward Acton, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990)
- Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (NY: Vintage, 1991)
- Orlando Figes & Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999)
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008)

Week III (Sept 12): Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the Soviet State

- Donald J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002); **(e-version @ Mansfield)**
- Recommended texts:
- Mary McAuley, *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd, 1917-1922* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991)
- Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992)
- Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2007)
- Aaron B. Retish, *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008)

Week IV (Sept 19): Forging a Bolshevik Culture and Society

- Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) **(e-version @ Mansfield)**
- Recommended texts:
- Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993)
- Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998)
- Frances Lee Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses* (DeKalb: N. Illinois UP, 2007)

- Malte Rolf, *Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917-1991* (Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh Press, 2013)

Week V (Sept 26): Stalinism

- Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: U California Press, 1997)
- Recommended texts:
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996)
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999)
- David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003)
- Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012)

Week VI (Oct 3): Soviet Subjectivities/Selfhood

- Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009)
- Recommended texts:
- Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997)
- Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh Press, 1999)
- Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh Press, 2008)
- Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009)

Week VII (Oct 10): State Violence, Popular Participation

- Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007)
- Recommended texts:
- Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (1967; reprint, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007)
- J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987)
- Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996)
- Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012)

Week VIII (Oct 17): Punishment/Redemption/Refashioning

- Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011)
- Recommended texts:
- Paul R. Gregory, *Terror by Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009)
- David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009)
- Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009)

- Alan Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town: Forced Labor and its Legacy in Vorkuta* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013)

Week IX (Oct 24): The Bolshevik Project in Comparative Perspective

- David L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011) (e-version @ Mansfield)
- Recommended texts:
- James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999)
- Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002)
- Arno Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002)
- J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism: Bolsheviks, Boyars, and the Persistence of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013)

Week X (Oct 31): Periphery/Metropole; Urban Space & Culture

- Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh Press, 2010)
- Recommended texts:
- Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996)
- James R. Harris, *The Great Urals: Regionalism and the Evolution of the Soviet System* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999)
- Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009)
- Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2013)

Week XI (Nov 7): After Stalin

- Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011) (e-version @ Mansfield)
- Recommended texts:
- Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012)
- Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009)
- Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013)
- Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013)

Week XII (Nov 14): Cold War Culture

- Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011)
- Recommended texts:
- Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010)

- Diane P. Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2013)
- Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013)
- Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (London: Routledge, 2013)

Week XIII (Nov 21): Anthropological Approaches to Late (and Post-) Soviet Society

- Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005)
- Recommended texts:
- Caroline Humphrey, *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies after Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002)
- Serguei Alex Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009)
- Douglas Rogers, *The Old Faith and the Russian Land: A Historical Ethnography of Ethics in the Urals* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009)
- Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2013)

Week XIV (Nov 28): THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

Week XV (Dec 5): Comparative Perspectives; Under Western Eyes

- David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011)
- Recommended texts:
- David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007)
- Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011)
- Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012)
- Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013)