

History 329 DL1: Modern Russia and the Soviet Union (3 credits)

Spring 2024

**On Zoom Synchronously Tuesdays from 10:30-11:45am and
Asynchronously via Blackboard**

Professor Steven A. Barnes

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Office hours: Available to meet immediately after Synchronous Sessions on Zoom or by appointment via Zoom. Please contact me for an appointment.

University Dates and Deadlines: Please visit [GMU Spring 2024 Semester Calendar](#) for up to date deadlines for registration, withdrawal, and so forth.

University Resources: The University has a wide array of resources available to assist students. Please visit [GMU Resources and Support Services](#) for a useful list of such resources.

About This Course

This is a fully-online hybrid synchronous and asynchronous course. The course will meet synchronously on Tuesdays from 10:30-11:45am on Zoom (with sessions going live for optional video enrichment material starting at 10:15am). The rest of the course involves asynchronous work to be completed via the Blackboard course site. Full details on all requirements, course calendar, etc. can be found on the Blackboard site.

Zoom Link for Synchronous Sessions

A link to the Zoom Sessions is available via the Course Menu on the Blackboard Course. **In the event Blackboard is down**, save this link to use to join our Synchronous Sessions. **Please do not to share the link beyond our course.**

Students are **expected to have their camera on** during Zoom sessions. If there is a significant reason to have your camera off during a particular session, you must contact Professor Barnes in advance.

Zoom Link for Our Synchronous Sessions

Course Description

This course explores the history of the lands and peoples that made up the Russian Empire under the tsars at the beginning of the 20th century, through the Russian Revolution, the establishment of a communist regime under Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, the collapse of the Soviet system, the emergence of new systems after the Soviet collapse and the rule of Vladimir Putin.

This course satisfies the Mason Core requirement in global understanding or the College of Humanities and Social Sciences requirement in non-Western culture.

Blackboard Login Instructions

Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class.

Required Books

Thompson, John M. and Christopher J. Ward. *Russia: a Historical Introduction from Kievan Rus' to the Present*. Eighth edition. New York, NY: Westview Press, 2017. An electronic version of the textbook is freely available through George Mason Libraries, or you may purchase a hard copy on your own. [Link to Library Catalog Listing of Textbook](#)

Sorokin, Vladimir, *The Queue*, New York, NY: NYRB Classics, 2008. The George Mason Bookstore is ordering this book, so you may order it from them or via online bookseller.

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes for the Global Understanding Mason Core

Requirement:

The goal of the Mason Core global understanding category is to help students see the world from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their positions in a global society, and be prepared for future engagement as global citizens. While it may include historical perspective, global understanding courses focus primarily on contemporary understanding of one's place in a global society.

Courses in this category must meet a minimum of three of the following learning outcomes.

Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.

Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.

Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.

Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

General Learning Outcomes for History 329:

At the end of this course, students will exhibit the following skills which relate to the first three global understanding learning outcomes:

Demonstrate familiarity with the main themes in modern Russian and Soviet history and show how historical and cultural particularities interact with global trends to develop specific social, cultural, economic, and political regimes.

Explain the particular local and larger global social tensions and political movements that brought about the Russian Revolution.

Explain the basic foundations of the Soviet socialist system in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres and how those foundations arise from and yet differ from historical and modern American and global systems.

Explain the sources of stability and instability within the Soviet system and an understanding of its applicability to the contemporary global order.

Explain the attempts to construct a non-socialist society in the wake of the Soviet collapse, the successes and failures of the integration of Russia into the global system, and the tensions those successes and failures reveal about the global political, economic, cultural, and social environment.

Practice critical reading and proper citation of primary and secondary sources, including texts, images, music, films, and websites, understanding the particular social, cultural, historical, and political context within which those sources were created.

Technology Requirements

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at [MyMason](#). Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher.

Activities and assignments in this course will also regularly use web-conferencing software (Zoom and possibly Blackboard Collaborate). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with **a functional camera and microphone**. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection **with cameras on** is the expected norm.

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Course Schedule

The full course schedule is available via the **Course Calendar menu on the Blackboard site.**

Each Module represents one week of the semester. **Modules officially begin at 12:01am on Saturdays and end at 11:59pm on Fridays following the Synchronous Session for a given module.** New Modules are opened at minimum one week in advance of their start date.

Nearly all assignments are either day “prior to Synchronous Session” (**meaning noon on Tuesdays**) or “prior to end of Module” (**meaning 11:59pm on Fridays.**)

Assignments Description

Class Participation (5%):

The nature of this class requires your active participation—whether on Discussion Boards or in Synchronous Sessions. We are in this together. We will learn from one another. Active participation is required. Participation does not necessarily mean speaking frequently in our Synchronous Session. You can show you are participating actively by attending class regularly, turning on your cameras in the Synchronous Sessions, sharing ideas and thoughts via the text chat function, and engaging extensively on the Discussion Boards. In short, there are numerous ways to participate actively, but if you are not present, you cannot actively participate. My expectation is that everyone should be easily be able to earn full credit for Class Participation.

Discussion Board Posts (15%):

In most Modules, students will be required to provide **an initial post** and **at least two substantive responses (i.e. just saying “I like what you said in your post” is not enough)** to posts to the course discussion board. While typical practice will require an initial post prior to each Module’s Synchronous Session and replies by the end of the Module, pay close attention to the specific instructions and due dates for each discussion board. These posts will be graded in accord with the timeliness of their submission and the quality of the comments. All Discussion Board

assignments are equally weighted, and the combined score in all discussion boards is weighted at 20% of the final course grade.

SPECIAL NOTE ON DISCUSSION BOARD AND SYNCHRONOUS SESSION CHAT NETIQUETTE George Mason University is a place for civil debate, exchange of ideas, learning, and mutual respect. Discussion Boards, Synchronous Session discussions, and the Chat function on our Zoom Synchronous Sessions are great opportunities to engage in the intellectual life of the university with your fellow students and professor. However, this must be done in an atmosphere of openness, respect, and civility. Please read these useful suggestions on being productive contributors to the class's intellectual community. Pay particular attention when you are responding to the ideas of others. Make sure you have understood what they have said, keeping in mind that it can be easy when you are not in a face-to-face environment to take something the wrong way. Be respectful and non-confrontational keeping in mind that your goals are rooted not in winning an argument but in keeping the conversation going. [10 Netiquette Tips for Online Discussions](#)

Reflections Assignments (10%):

To encourage you to watch and think about mini-lectures, supplementary videos, and to complete readings, you will be asked to complete one to three assignment reflections in each Module. These are a low-stakes assignment in which you will be asked to write **just a couple of sentences** summarizing or analyzing some aspect of what you have learned. Any good faith effort to complete these assignment reflections showing that you have done the required work will receive a perfect score. With the exception of Module 1, these must all be **completed prior to the Module's Synchronous Session**. All Reflections assignments are equally weighted, and the combined score in all reflections assignments is weighted at 10% of the final course grade.

Readings Essays (20%):

You will be asked to complete two essays based on readings in the course. The first will be on the book *Yashka* by Maria Botchkareva. The book is in the public domain and made freely available to you in Module 2. The full details of the assignment and its due date can be found in that module.

The second will be on the book *The Queue* by Vladimir Sorokin. **You will need to acquire this book** via the GMU Bookstore or online seller. The assignment appears in Module 10 where you will find the full details of the assignment and its due date once the Module has been released.

A separate grading rubric will be provided for each essay.

Each Reading Essay is equally weighted, and the combined score of the Reading Essays is weighted at 20% of the final course grade.

Film Responses (20%):

You will watch approximately ten films in this course, a combination of documentary films about the time and place we are studying and dramatic films made in the Soviet Union or Russia at a particular moment in history. You will respond to these films with a short writing assignment. Complete descriptions of the assignment and grading along with a grading rubric can be found within the learning modules.

Each Film Response is equally weighted, and the combined score of the Film Responses is weighted at 20% of the final course grade.

Examination Essays (30%):

You will write three essays to sum up and check your learning through the course. These will not be timed essays, and you will be given at minimum a week to complete each of them. Assignment and due dates appear in the Course Calendar on the Blackboard site.

Each Examination Essay is equally weighted, and the combined score of the Examination Essays is weighted at 30% of the final course grade.

Extra Credit (maximum 5%):

Students may earn up to 5% on their final grade through writing an essay based on a variety of events related to the history of Russia and the former Soviet Union over the course of the semester. More details may be found under the "Extra Credit Opportunities" tab on the Blackboard Course Menu.

Grading Scale

Course grades are based on a final percentage score earned through the weighting of assignments as noted above. The “weighted total” category on Blackboard’s grade center will reflect this final score. Scores are not rounded.

99%-100%	A+
93%-98.99%	A
90%-92.99%	A-
87%-89.99%	B+
83%-86.99%	B
80%-82.99%	B-
77%-79.99%	C+
73%-76.99%	C
70%-72.99%	C-
60%-69.99%	D
0%-59.99%	F

Course Policies

Course Materials and Student Privacy:

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course sites are private to this class and are not to be shared publicly or with anyone not enrolled in this class.

By federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Video recordings — whether made by instructors or students — of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class.

Live video conference meetings (e.g. Zoom or Collaborate) that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class.

Some/All of our synchronous meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard [or other secure site] and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

Academic Integrity and AI Policy:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

Some kinds of participation in online study sites violate the Mason Honor code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the instructor's materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. Always consult your syllabus and your professor before using these sites.

Any text generated by an **artificial intelligence (AI) text-generation tool (such as ChatGPT) is not accepted in this class as "the student's own work,"** and so will be considered similarly to text published on paper or online or text composed or significantly edited/alterd by another person. **The use of such text in this course is a violation of academic integrity.**

Similarly submission of film responses without watching the films by way of paraphrasing published film reviews, Wikipedia or IMDB entries, or some other narrative recounting of the film constitutes plagiarism and cheating.

Please note that for cases of plagiarism or cheating, I will refer these cases to the GMU Honor Committee with a recommendation that the student fail the course.

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the [George Mason University Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please note that accommodations MUST BE MADE BEFORE assignments or exams are due. I cannot adjust your grade after the fact.

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500.
Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Diversity Statement:

In this course, we seek to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Late Assignments:

All assignments must be turned in on the due date given in the Course Calendar and on Blackboard. Fully recognizing the potential for health and/or personal circumstances to intervene, I will work with students if it becomes

necessary to turn in an assignment late if you contact me prior to the stated deadline so that we may reach an agreement on a revised schedule.

However, absent truly exceptional circumstances, **Discussion Board posts will not be accepted after the beginning of the Synchronous Session for the subsequent module**, as your contributions to the Discussion Board are critical not only for your own but for your fellow students' learning. Additionally, absent truly exceptional circumstances, **no assignments will be accepted more than 14 calendar days after their due date.**

Instructor-Student Communication:

Please see the Meet and Contact Your Instructors page on Blackboard for communication policies.