The Soviet Union and Russia since WWII

History 327, Section 001
Spring 2019
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11:45 a.m., East Building 122

Prof. Steven A. Barnes
Robinson B349
sbarnes3@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30-11:45 a.m.

Course Description:

From 1945-1991, the Soviet Union was one of two major world superpowers, the U.S. “enemy” in the Cold War. Since 1991, Russia collapsed and reemerged as a powerful player in world politics. Fourteen other independent states appeared on world maps with the Soviet collapse. They have followed similar but not identical trajectories since that time. In order to understand the fifteen countries that were once part of the Soviet Union and to understand the post-Cold War world, we must understand late Soviet history. This course explores the history of the Soviet Union from the bloody rule of Joseph Stalin during World War II through the collapse of communism in 1991, and studies the Russia that emerged through its difficult "transition" to capitalism and the rise of Vladimir Putin. The course covers the creation of a distinctive and violent form of state and society called Stalinism, the attempts to reform the system through the renunciation of mass terror under Nikita Khrushchev until his removal in a “palace coup,” the stagnation/stability of the Leonid Brezhnev years, and Mikhail Gorbachev's final effort to reform communism that destroyed the Soviet Union. The post-Soviet years saw the radical recreation of every sphere of life, but also mass crime, corruption, an economic collapse as severe as the Great Depression, before recovery and return to international importance.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

Explain how and why World War II played and continues to play a much greater role in the former Soviet Union than in the United States.

Explain the basic foundations of the Stalinist socialist system in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres with emphasis upon state terror, the single party dictatorship, and the state-owned and state-planned non-market economy.

Explain how the attempts at reform of the Stalinist socialist system after his death altered and ultimately destroyed the system from within.
Explain the interrelationship of the Soviet and post-Soviet social, cultural, economic, and political systems with their global, especially American, counterparts.

Explain the attempts to construct a non-socialist society in the wake of the Soviet collapse and how those attempts at change differed in the fifteen new independent states that emerged from the Soviet collapse.

Explain the historical roots of contemporary life in the former Soviet Union.

Practice critical reading and proper citation of primary and secondary sources, including texts, images, music, films, and websites.

See improvement in critical reading and thinking skills as well as writing and oral expression skills through in-class discussions, in-class exams and composition of a final paper.

Course Assignments:

**PAPER 1: (3-4 pages): 150 points** On the novel *Everything Flows*. Due via Blackboard at 9:00 a.m. on February 14.

**PAPER 2: (3-4 pages): 150 points** Students will use American and British newspapers and the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* database to compare Soviet coverage of a major event in post-1945 world history with coverage in the press of their Cold War competition. Further details will be given out in class. Due via Blackboard at 9:00 a.m. on March 5.

**EXAMINATION 1: 150 points** In class on March 7.

**PAPER 3: (3-4 pages): 150 points** On the novel *Homo Zapiens*. Due via Blackboard at 9:00 a.m. on March 28.

**PAPER 4: (3-4 pages): 150 points** On the book *Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine*. Due via Blackboard at 9:00 a.m. on May 6.

**EXAMINATION 2: 200 points** In class on Tuesday, May 14, 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

**5 FILM RESPONSES: 10 points each** Due via Blackboard at noon on February 12, February 28, March 26, April 9, and May 2

Total 1,000

GRADE SCALE:

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<th>Points Range</th>
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<td>980-1,000</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>930-979</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>900-929</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>870-899</td>
<td>B+</td>
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Please note that grades are not rounded. A final score of 869 will not be rounded up to 870 but will be assigned a grade of B.

**Course Policies – READ CAREFULLY:**

*Attendance:* Our class meetings are the foundation of everything we do during the term. You cannot afford to miss them. I do not assign a textbook that can be read to cover material from class. Grades in the course strongly correlate with attendance. Although no grade penalties result directly from failure to attend class, I will take attendance. If you have two or fewer absences during the term, I will add ten points to your final grade for the semester. **For purposes of the attendance extra credit, no absence counts as “excused” and late arrivals are considered the same as an absence.**

*Enrollment:* It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that they are officially enrolled in the course. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar’s Website [http://registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu).)

Please note that the instructor has no authority to add or drop students after the deadlines. After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

*Policy on Late Work:* Papers are due on Blackboard at 9am on their due date. Grades on late assignments will be reduced by 5 percent for each 24 hours of lateness or portion thereof. **No papers will be accepted for a grade more than 10 calendar days after their assigned due date** absent truly exceptional circumstances.

*Email Addresses:* Mason and the professor use only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their instructor, department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

*Students with Disabilities:* If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the [Office of Disability Services](http://ds.gmu.edu) at 703.993.2474 or ds.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through
that office.

Cheating and Plagiarism: All work in this class must be your own unless otherwise directed by the professor. In addition, all work submitted in this class must be unique to this class (i.e. no “double submission” of the same or substantially the same work to this class and another class whether this semester or prior to this semester). For purposes of this course, cheating and plagiarism are defined as follows:

- Cheating encompasses the following:
  1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students.
  2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information.
  3. Attempted cheating.

- Plagiarism encompasses the following:
  1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
  2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at [http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. For first time violations of the Honor Code, I always recommend failure of the course. If you have any questions on what constitutes cheating or plagiarism after reviewing these materials, please talk to me. If you are unsure when completing an assignment, ask me. Do not take a chance of your case winding up before the Honor Board.

Do note that all submitted papers are subjected to a review using the SafeAssign system.

Laptops, cell phones: Recent research has revealed that students learn and perform better when taking notes long-hand without use of a laptop. Accordingly and because they are invariably a distraction not only to their user but also to those around them, laptops are strongly discouraged and may only be used in the back two rows. (For those with a need to use a laptop to accommodate a disability, please see me immediately after class and read the section on students with disabilities.) In addition, texting or other activities using phones or other electronic devices are forbidden. (If there is an emergency need to have your phone available during class, please let me know before the particular class session.)
Each time you engage in texting or similar activities during class, five points may be deducted from your final class grade.

_Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)_: George Mason University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of services to students, faculty, and staff. Services are provided by a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors. The Center provides individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs -- experiences to enhance a student's personal experience and academic performance. If you are in a crisis, please contact them via [http://caps.gmu.edu/](http://caps.gmu.edu/) or 703-993-2380 or at their office SUB I, Room 3129.

**Required Materials:**

The following books are required and available for purchase at the GMU Bookstore or from your favorite online booksellers:

- Vasily Grossman, _Everything Flows_
- Victor Pelevin, _Homo Zapiens_
- Sophie Pinkham, _Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine_

In addition, it is recommended but not required that you acquire a textbook of modern Russian history. The basic narrative of Russian history required in this course will be covered through lectures, but it is of necessity abridged and simplified. A textbook can help you enhance and deepen your knowledge of things covered in lectures. It is also a good reference source when writing papers. I recommend the following textbook which you can acquire via your favorite online book seller. I have provided page numbers in the syllabus to indicate which portions of this textbook correspond to the material covered in class. However, you are welcome to acquire a different textbook if you wish.

Robert Service, _A History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twentieth Century_, 3rd edition

In addition, many readings come from the website [http://soviethistory.msu.edu](http://soviethistory.msu.edu). A few other readings are available via the web or Mason Libraries’ e-journal collections.

Please complete all readings for each part of the course by the end of that section. Students are responsible for doing all readings. Not everything in the readings will be covered in lecture, and not everything in the lectures will be covered in the readings. **Exams and paper assignments will draw on all course material, and you should expect specific questions covering the required readings and films.**

**Schedule of Classes:**

The course will operate as a combination of lecture, discussion and film. Students are strongly encouraged to ask questions whenever they arise and to come to class prepared to be active participants in the educational process.
PART 1  (January 22-31) Background/Overview - The Soviet Union from the Revolution to Collapse

**Readings:**  [http://soviethistory.msu.edu](http://soviethistory.msu.edu)  
Under 1954 tab: Read ‘Prisoners Return’

Begin reading Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows*

PART 2 (February 4- February 12) The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization

**Film 2:**  By February 12, Watch *Ballad of a Soldier* dir. Grigori Chukhrai, 1959  
[https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10dju1](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10dju1) (Part 1)  
[https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10ce0g](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x10ce0g) (Part 2)

Also available at Johnson Center Library

**Readings:**  Complete all readings before February 12 class  
Finish Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows*

[http://soviethistory.msu.edu](http://soviethistory.msu.edu)  
Under 1954 tab: Under “Succession to Stalin,” read text ‘Mourners Crushed’

Under 1954 tab: Read 'Stilyaga' and Texts 'In Search of Melancholy Baby'  
Under 1954 tab: Read 'Fight against Superstition'  
Under 1961 tab: Read 'Khrushchev on the Arts' and text 'Khrushchev on Modern Art'  
Under 1956 tab: Read ‘Khruschev’s Secret Speech’

Read excerpts from Nikita Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” from the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 25, 1956  
[https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/apr/26/greatspeeches2](https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/apr/26/greatspeeches2)

**Written Work:**

**Film response #1 on Ballad of a Soldier** due via Blackboard by 9am on February 12  
**Paper #1 on Everything Flows** due via Blackboard by 9am on February 14.

PART 3 (February 14-February 28) Living Socialism—Stability and Stagnation

**Readings:**  Complete the following reading before February 19 class
Readings from the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*. (Will be made available via Blackboard)

**Complete the following readings before February 28 class:**

http://soviethistory.msu.edu –

Under 1956 tab: Read ‘Dachas’ and Texts ‘Consumers, Design, and Cultivating Public Taste’
Under 1961 tab: Read ‘Khrushchev Slums’
Under 1968 tab: Under ‘Fight against Superstition,’ read Texts ‘Soviet Ritualism’
Under 1968 tab: Read 'The Double Burden' and Texts 'A Week Like any Other' and ‘The Elusive Pursuit’
Under 1968 tab: Read ‘Generation Gap,’
Under 1968 tab: Read ‘The Responsive Economy’
Under 1973 tab: Read ‘KVN Cancelled’
Under 1973 tab: Read 'The Pessimistic Citizen'
Under 1973 tab: Read ‘Seventeen Moments of Spring’
Under 1980 tab: Read 'The Underground Economy' and Related Texts ‘Knights of the Jeans Culture’

**Film 3:** By February 28, watch *Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!*, 1976, dir. El’dar Riazanov

Before watching film, read the following:

http://soviethistory.msu.edu

Under 1968 tab: Read ‘The Limits of Expression’

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lVpmZnRIMKs (Part 1)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TmGPeowN-0 (Part 2)

Also available at Johnson Center Library.

**Written Work:**

Film response #2 on *Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!* due via Blackboard by 9am on February 28

Paper #2 on the Soviet press (details to come) due via Blackboard by 9am on March 5.

Examination #1 in class on Wednesday, March 7. Bring Bluebooks.

**PART 4** (March 5, March 19-March 26) Collapse – 1985-1998

Readings: Read the following by March 26

Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*
http://soviethistory.msu.edu
Under 1986 tab: Read ‘Turbulent Youth’ and texts ‘A Turbulent Factor’ and ‘The Rockers’
Under 1986 tab: Read ‘Female Sexuality’
Under 1986 tab: Read ‘Gorbachev and Nationalism’

ADDITIONAL READINGS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Film: By March 26 watch Little Vera 1988 dir. Vasilii Pichul
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojJzYrIM9I

Written Work:

Film response #3 on Little Vera due via Blackboard by 9am on March 26
Paper #3 on Homo Zapiens due via Blackboard by 9am on March 28.

PART 5 (March 28-April 9) Russia Resurgent—1998-present

Readings: Start reading Sophie Pinkham, Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine
Finish the following reading by April 9


ADDITIONAL READINGS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Film: By April 9 Stilyagi (The Hipsters), 2008, dir. Valerii Todorovskii
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmHO-Whyz4E
Written Work:

Film response #4 on Stilyagi (The Hipsters) due via Blackboard by 9am on April 9

PART 6 (April 11, April 16, April 23) Ukraine
NOTE: NO CLASS ON APRIL 18

Readings: Finish the Following Reading by April 23
Sophie Pinkham, Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine

PART 7 (April 25-May 2) Kazakhstan

Readings: Finish the Following Readings by May 2

ADDITIONAL READINGS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Film: By May 2 The Gift to Stalin, Kazakhstan 2008 dir. Rustem Abdrashev

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUSgfKFhbVU

Written Work:

Film response #5 on The Gift to Stalin due via Blackboard by 9am on May 2
Paper #4 on Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine due via Blackboard by 9am on May 6

FINAL EXAMINATION: Tuesday, May 14, 10:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. Bring Bluebooks