THE RISE OF RUSSIA

GOALS OF THE COURSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to Russian history and culture before the revolutions of 1917. Russia provides a case study of the synthesis of native and foreign elements characteristic of many major world cultures past and present, and we will examine the similarities and differences between Russian traditions and those of Western Europe and North America.

The core of the course will be a narrative of the highlights of Russian history and culture from the earliest times up to 1917. Along the way, we'll investigate the major features of Russian culture--geography, ethnicity, religion, art, music, philosophy, literature, popular customs, and political institutions.

The course is also designed to enhance students' skills in the study of history at the college level. Students will learn the kinds of issues that interest historians, as well as how historians pose questions, evaluate evidence, explain causality, and interpret conflicting views. The course will show how historians balance the desire to find patterns in past human interaction with an appreciation of the uniqueness of the historical subject.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students enrolled in the course will acquire and/or develop the following skills:

1. Historical Comprehension: Students will be able
   ✓ to analyze the literal and contextual significance of a historical passage
   ✓ to identify the central questions in historical narratives
   ✓ to articulate historical perspectives.

2. Historical Analysis and Interpretation: Students will be able
   ✓ to compare and contrast opposed and/or multiple sets of ideas, interpretations, values, personalities, behaviors and institutions
   ✓ to assess competing historical narratives
   ✓ to hypothesize the impacts and significance of past events.
METHODS TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE COURSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Two methods common to learning in all subjects will be used to achieve the goals of the course and student learning outcomes. The first method is passive learning. The instructor has selected several topics for lectures, which will present appropriate background material and differing interpretations. The textbook will provide the basic source of factual material not covered in the lectures. Students are expected to attend the lectures and read the textbook. The second method is active learning. Students will have an opportunity to develop their skills in interpreting the past by answering exam questions, as well as by reading, discussing, and writing about selected primary texts. We will analyze selected texts in class discussion, and class participation is important.

IMPORTANT DATES:

September 9: Last day to add classes and last day to drop with no tuition penalty

September 17: Last day to drop with a 50% tuition penalty

October 1-29: Selective withdrawal period for undergraduates (see conditions at http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/SWR.pdf)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Three hour-long tests (20% each)
One 1000-1500-word paper (20%) Instructions for the paper will be given in class.
Class participation (10%)
Quizzes (10%) At random moments in the semester there will be a short answer quiz based on the reading for that day. 6 quizzes, lowest grade can be thrown out.

REQUIRED BOOKS

John M. Thompson, Russia and the Soviet Union (Westview) (Online at Fenwick)


Alexander Pushkin, The Captain’s Daughter (Vintage)
Leo Tolstoy, Childhood, Boyhood, Youth (Penguin)
Barbara Engel and Clifford Rosenthal, eds. Five Sisters: Women against the Tsar (Routledge OR Northern Illinois University Press) (Online at Fenwick)

https://wrlc.gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma9946900294404105&context=L&vid=01WRLC_
Olga Semyonovna Tian-Shanskaia. *Village Life in Late Tsarist Russia.* Ed. David Ransel (Indiana University Press) (Online at Fenwick)


In addition to the required books, the following readings are available on the course website. A study guide that will help you find important concepts and passages accompanies each reading. Consulting the study guide before and after each reading will help you focus your thoughts. **These readings are required and are indicated by an asterisk (*) on the syllabus.**

**Medieval Russia**

Geographical Maps
Historical Maps
"The Coming of the Varangians" [chronicles]
"The Acceptance of Christianity" [chronicles]
"Herberstein’s Observations of Russia," [foreigner’s account]

Peter the Great and Catherine the Great

Vasilii Klyuchevsky, *The Artisan-Tsar*
Feofan Prokopovich, *Funeral Oration for Peter the Great, 1725*
Voltaire’s assessment of Peter the Great
Karamzin’s assessment of Peter the Great
British Ambassador’s Description of Catherine II
Catherine’s “Instructions” to the Legislative Commission
Alexander Radishchev, *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* [excerpt]

First Half of the 19th century: Alexander I and Nicholas I

Statute of the Union of Welfare, 1818
Project for a Constitution, 1822
Pavel Pestel’s Testimony, 1826
Alexander Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman”
Herzen’s Commentaries on the Russian Scene, 1849
Konstantin Aksakov, *An Immense Spiritual Evil, 1855* [published 1881]

From the Great Reforms to the Revolution, 1860-1917
Catechism of the Revolutionary, 1868
Katkov’s Views on the Polish Situation, 1863
Pobedonostsev’s Criticism of Modern Society [published 1898]
Father Gapon’s Petition to Nicholas II, 1905
The October Manifesto, 1905
Programs of Russian Political Parties, 1903-1905
The Durnovo Memorandum, 1914
Letters of Nicholas and Alexandra

A few words about the readings. For the past three centuries one of the most important components of Russian culture has been literature; a good share of the reading in this course is taken from works of fiction. In addition, for reasons that we will examine in the course, Russian writers have been highly sensitive to the moral, philosophical, and political questions of the day. Accordingly, the readings for this course will not only introduce you to some of the most famous Russian writers; the literature will help you understand important concepts in Russian culture.

The required books are available for purchase at the bookstore. If available, a copy of each book has been placed on reserve at Fenwick library. In addition, as indicated above, several books are accessible online at Fenwick. (Note: Books lying on the shelves at the Bookstore can be purchased by anyone. Moreover, the Bookstore returns books to the publishers in the middle of the semester. To avoid inconvenience, students must make every effort to purchase all the books at the beginning of the semester.)

CLASS POLICIES AND ETIQUETTE

As a courtesy to fellow students and to the instructor, cell phones must be turned off during class.

It is important that I be able to reach you outside of class. Therefore, you should check your GMU email address regularly. If you use another email address, I should know it in case I need to reach you quickly. Not reading your email is not an excuse for not receiving important class information.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

· 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 MLA or APA format. 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.
· As in many classes, a number of projects in this class are designed to be completed within your study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

· Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

· Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500.
Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

· 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
WHY DOES HISTORY MATTER?

As you prepare to study the history and culture of Russia for one semester, ponder the following quotation:

National unity requires both a sense of cohesion or ‘fraternity’ and a compact, secure, recognized territory or ‘homeland’; all nationalisms, therefore, strive for such fraternity and homelands. But, since neither is born overnight or ex nihilo, both presuppose a long history of collective experience. So “history” becomes the focal point of nationalism and nation-formation. The “rediscovery” or “invention” of history is . . . a matter of national honor and collective endeavor. Through the tracing of our history, “we” discover (or “rediscover”) who we are, whence we came, when we emerged, who our ancestors were . . .


Read this passage again and for “we” and “our” in the last sentence, think Americans and the United States. Why is history important to us as Americans? If History is “what happened,” then what is the “invention” of history? Who are the “we” and the “our” in the last sentence? Whose history are we talking about?

Now read this passage one more time and for “we” and “our” think Russians and Russia. Pretend that you are a Russian, today, sitting in a university class in Moscow. Why is Russian history important to you?
SYLLABUS

NB: The pages of Thompson are from the 6th edition. Where different, the pages from the 7th edition will be following in parentheses.

August 27

Introduction to the course: Why study Russian history?

August 29

The Neighborhood: Is geography destiny?

Thompson, ch. 1, pp. 1-9

* Geographical Maps:
Comparative Map USSR, USA, UK; Vegetation Zones, Temperature and Precipitation, Winter Temperatures

* Historical Maps:
Slavs by 800 BC; Asian Migrations 800-600 BC; Scythians, Greeks and Slavs; Romans and Sarmatians; Triumph of the Goths; Empire of the Huns; First Slav Expansion 450-550 AD; Avar Conquests; Slav Recovery 600-700; Khazar Kingdom; Scandinavian Migrations; Slavs and Norsemen by 800 AD

September 03

Earliest history: How did 4 worlds come together to create the Kievan Federation?

Thompson, ch. 1, pp. 9-26

* Historical Maps:
Kievan Russia, 880-1054; Rivers and Trade; Christianity and the Slavs; Flourishing of Russian Monasticism; Fragmentation of Kievan Russia 1054-1238

DISCUSSION:
* “The Coming of the Varangians”

September 05

The Russian Orthodox Religion; Faith or politics? (Or theater?)

DISCUSSION:
* “The Acceptance of Christianity”
More information on Eastern Orthodoxy may be found at: “Eastern Orthodoxy”
http://www.fact-index.com/e/ea/eastern_orthodoxy.html

September 10

Mongols: Was there a “Mongol yoke” in Russian history?

* Maps: Republic of Novgorod 997-1478; Eastern Trade Routes of Novgorod; German Eastward Expansion and the Baltic; Mongol Empire by 1300; Mongol Conquest of Russia 1219-1241; Mongol Invasion of Russia and Eastern Europe

Thompson, ch. 2

September 12

Rulers and ruled in Muscovy: Is this the origin of Russian autocracy?

Thompson, ch. 3

* Maps: Lithuanian Conquests 1240-1462; Eastward Spread of Catholicism; Rise of Muscovy 1300-1462; Rise of Moscow 1261-1533.

DISCUSSION:
* Herberstein’s Observations of Russia

September 17

Ivan IV: Was Ivan Terrible? Or a shrewd state builder?

Thompson, ch. 4, pp. 67-77 (7th ed., pp. 62-71)

September 19

Guest appearance of Ivan the Terrible

September 24

Civil War and Religious Schism: The Legacy of Coercive State Building?

Thompson, ch. 4, pp. 77-84 (pp. 71-79); ch. 5

September 26

FIRST HOUR TEST
October 01

Peter I: Why was Peter “The Great”?

Thompson, ch. 6

READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS:

* Feofan Prokopovich, “Funeral Oration”
* Voltaire’s Assessment of Peter
* V. Klyuchevsky, “The Artisan Tsar”

* Maps: War and Revolution under Peter the Great; Russia and Sweden, 1700-1809

October 03

Peter “the Great”: Really?

READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

* Nikolai Karamzin’s assessment of Peter

October 08

Catherine the Great: Was absolutism enlightened?

READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

* British Ambassador’s description of Catherine
* Catherine’s “Instructions” to the Legislative Commission
* Alexander Radishchev, Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow [excerpt]

Thompson, ch. 7

October 10

Expanding and Defending the Empire

Alexander Pushkin, The Captain’s Daughter

* Maps: Russian Expansion under Catherine the Great, 1762-96
  Destruction of Poland, 1768-1795
  Russian Annexations of Poland, 1772-95
  Russia and Europe, 1801-25
  Russia in the Caucasus, 1800-1900
October 15

Alexander I: Could Russia have become a constitutional monarchy?

READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

* “Statute of the Union of Welfare”
* “Project for a Constitution”
* “Excerpts from Pavel Pestel’s Testimony

Thompson, ch. 8

October 17

St. Petersburg: More than just a city

* Alexander Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman”
Photos of today’s St.Petersburg at: http://www.enlight.ru/camera/

October 22

The Lives of Nobles: What do we learn from a child?

Leo Tolstoy, *Childhood*

October 24

The Russian intelligentsia: What issues animated them?

READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

* “Herzen’s Commentaries on the Russian Scene”
* Konstantin Aksakov, “An Immense Spiritual Evil”

OCTOBER 29

SECOND HOUR TEST

October 31

The Great Reforms: Salvation or a death-sentence for imperial Russia?

Thompson, ch. 9, pp. 169-175 (pp. 159-165)
November 05

What did it mean to be a revolutionary in tsarist Russia?

* “Catechism of the Revolutionary”
Vera Figner in *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar*

Thompson, ch. 9, pp. 175-191 (pp. 165-180)

November 07

Conservative Backlash: Does any of this sound familiar?

**READINGS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS**

* “Katkov’s Views on the Polish Situation”
* “Pobedonostsev’s Criticism of Modern Society”

November 12

The Russian Village: Stagnation or Change?

Semyonova-Tian-Shanskaya, *Village Life in Late Imperial Russia*

November 14

The Revolution of 1905: Did civil society go too far? Or not far enough?

* “Father Gapon’s Petition to Nicholas II”
* “The October Manifesto”

Thompson, ch. 10

November 19

Russian Political parties: Could Russia have become a limited monarchy?

**READING FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS**

* “Programs of Russian Political Parties”

November 21

World War I: Honor or a blunder for the Russian monarchy?

* “The Durnovo Memorandum”
November 26
NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AT A CONFERENCE

November 28
NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

December 03
The Collapse of Imperial Russia: Inevitable or accidental?
* Letters of Nicholas and Alexandra
Thompson, ch. 11, pp. 215-222 (pp. 203-210)

December 05
PAPER DUE
Review

December 17
THIRD HOUR TEST, 1:30-4:15