

## **History 327 DL2: The Soviet Union and the Post-Soviet World (3 credits)**

**Fall 2020**

**On Zoom Synchronously Tuesdays from 6:00-7:00pm and Asynchronously via Blackboard**

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Office hours: By appointment via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra or Zoom. Please contact me for an appointment.

**Please visit [https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall\\_2020/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall_2020/) for up to date deadlines for registration, withdrawal, and so forth.**

This is a fully-online hybrid synchronous and asynchronous course. The course will meet synchronously on Tuesdays from 6:00-7:00pm on Zoom. 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. Students are asked not to share the link beyond our course. <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/94729013355?pwd=eGpOb2F5V0NEc2laQytHWWROZWc2Zz09>**

### **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 takes a series of case studies to explore deeply a variety of aspects of post-Stalinist Soviet history and the history of the former Soviet space since 1991.

This course satisfies 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**

Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows*, Robert Chandler trans. New York Review Books Classic Edition. New York, NY: NYRB Classics, 2009.

Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, Andrew Bromfield trans. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002.

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, Bela Shayevich trans. New York, NY: Random House, 2017.

One additional book TO BE ANNOUNCED.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

#### **Learning Outcomes for History 327:**

At the end of this course, students will exhibit the following skills:

1. Explain the basic foundations of the Stalinist 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.
2. Explain how the study of attempts to reform the Stalinist system after his death reveals the dilemmas and limitations of truth-telling in the modern state.
3. Explain the dilemmas faced in a state and society attempting suddenly to turn away from mass violence and injustice.
4. Explain the operation of the state-owned, state-planned non-market economy focusing both on its successes and its failures as a way to understand how people lived under late Communist rule.

5. Analyze the collapse of the Soviet economy and Soviet life in the 1980s and 1990s understanding both its promises and failures.
6. Explain the historical roots and the ongoing salience of history in the contemporary life of parts of the former Soviet Union.
7. 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 <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. 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. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this website.)
- 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 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. As the course is currently under construction due to the COVID19 transition to online teaching, the Course Calendar will be continually updated throughout the term as new Modules are opened up. No additional assignments will be added to Modules once they are opened to students.

Each Module represents one week of the semester. No Module is assigned for Thanksgiving week. Modules are scheduled to be completed from Saturday through Friday of each week. New Modules are opened one week in advance of their start date.

## Assignments Description

- 1. Discussion Board Posts (20%):** In nearly every Module, students will be required to provide an initial post and at least two responses 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. Starting with the discussion board in Module 2, a rubric is available to show how grades are assigned. All Discussion Board assignments except Module 1 are equally weighted, and the combined score in all discussion boards is weighted at 20% of the final course grade. The first is worth half, since no replies are required, but earning extra credit on the first is possible.

**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 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. <https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions>

- 2. 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 will receive a perfect score. With the exception of Module 1, these must be all be completed 30 minutes prior to the Module's Synchronous Session. All Reflections assignments are equally weighted, and the combined score in all discussion boards is weighted at 10% of the final course grade.
- 3. Readings Essays (40%)** You will be asked to complete five essays based on readings in the course. 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 40% of the final course grade.

- 4. Film Responses (20%)** You will watch many 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, Russia, or in another post-Soviet state 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.

- 5. Summative Examination Essay (10%)** You will write one essay at the conclusion of the course to sum up and check your learning through the course. You will have a week to complete this assignment. It will be released to you on Tuesday, December 1 at 11:59pm and will be due by Tuesday, December 8, at 11:59pm. The Summative Examination Essay is weighted at 10% of the final course grade.

- 6. Extra Credit (maximum 5%)** Students will receive an extra 1% added to their final weighted grade if they miss 0-1 Synchronous Sessions during the course. For purposes of this extra credit policy, all absences are counted identically. In addition, a variety of events will be provided over the course of the semester with the possibility of earning extra credit for attendance and submission of a 250-word Extra Credit Event Discussion Board essay summarizing the lessons learned from the events. Check the “Extra Credit Opportunities” page on Blackboard for these opportunities. A maximum of 5% extra credit can be earned during the course of the semester.

## Grading Scale

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. 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.
- 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. Collaborate or Zoom) 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:**

- 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.

### **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 in the midst of a pandemic, 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. No assignments will be accepted after 11:59pm, Tuesday, December 15.

### **Instructor-Student Communication:**

- Please see the Meet and Contact Professor Barnes page on Blackboard for communication policies.

### **University Resources**

- a. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (<http://caps.gmu.edu>) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. Counseling Center: Student Union I, Room 364, 703-993-2380.
- b. [The George Mason University Writing Center](#) staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. University Writing Center: Robinson Hall Room A114, 703-993-1200. The writing center includes assistance for students for whom English is a second language.
- c. Many other services are available at George Mason University to support student success and wellness. Please access a full list of resources at <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>.