

## Stalinism

History 646-001

Fall 2022

Tuesdays, 7:20-10:00 pm

Location:

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/96928412956?pwd=RTdFRlJwbU5lUW9CYkNRQWFjR0wxZz09>

Prof. Steven A. Barnes

Horizon Hall 3163

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Office Hours: By appointment either masked in person or on Zoom. Days/nights/weekends – I will find a time for you! Just reach out by email.

### Course Description:

Joseph Stalin ruled the Soviet Union from his victory in a succession battle after Vladimir Lenin's 1924 death until his own death in 1953. During that time, the Soviet Union went from "backward" peasant economy to a heavily urbanized and industrialized "socialist" country that emerged victorious in World War II. "Building socialism" in Stalin's Soviet Union was "accomplished" at the cost of millions of lives. This course will explore differing interpretations of the history of Stalinism. Topics for discussion will include Soviet ideology, terror, Stalinist culture and society, the politicization of everyday life, industrialization and urbanization, family and gender politics, nationalities policies with a particular focus on Ukraine, foreign policy, and famine—all of which combined to create the strange new culture that has been called Stalinism.

### Course Requirements:

#### 1) Reading:

There is a lot of reading in a graduate course in history. This one is no exception. You are required to read every assigned book or article in the course. You should, however, learn how to read effectively. Doing all the reading is not necessarily reading every single word. In fact, a sort of mindless "get through it all" approach to reading is less helpful than a intelligent and strategic combination of careful reading and skimming. Personally, I hate "gutting books," but sometimes the reading load simply requires it. As you are reading, pay particular attention to historiography, argument, methodology, sources, evidence, and interpretation. Additionally, think frequently about how the current set of readings relates to past readings and class discussions. If I've assigned more than one reading in a week, how do they speak to one another? (Or do they?) These are the things we will return to repeatedly. You kind find many essays that discuss strategies for reading and "gutting" a book. I would encourage you to at least read our own Professor Zachary Schrag, "[How to Read a History Book.](#)"

In addition to the assigned readings below, you will be required to read all reading responses written by other students in the class. These responses are due 24 hours before our class session,

precisely so that you will have some time and you should do everything you can to read them prior to our class discussion. They will be found on the Blackboard course site Discussion Boards.

## 2) Listening, Thinking, and Speaking:

Conversation is crucial to the success of this course. Consequently, participation in each week's discussion will contribute substantially to the final grade. Attendance in class is obviously therefore crucial. Attendance means more than having the Zoom session on. It means being present and actively engaged. Unless specific prior arrangement is made in advance, cameras are generally expected to be on. If you need for some reason to not have your camera on for a particular session, you must let me know in advance, and you need to make sure you are a particularly active participant in the discussion or I will think you're not really there.

Simply put, conversation is where the bulk of the in-class learning occurs. To do that successfully, each of you must devote your effort and attention to first listening to one another, then thinking carefully about what another person has said, before finally speaking to share your own thoughts. We are constantly in an effort not to win an argument but to move a conversation forward—to help one another understand a complicated and difficult topic. You will learn as many important things from other students as from the professor **if** you listen to one another carefully and think about what others are saying.

Everybody has something to contribute to the discussion, whether through comments, questions, or writings on the Discussion Boards, we all need and deserve the benefit of many voices. We deserve the benefit of **your** voice. I know not everyone will feel comfortable speaking the same amount. Often the relatively quiet, when they choose to speak up, will share the most well-considered and valuable of comments.

I do not grade your contributions in this area solely based on how often you speak, but also on how your speaking adds to our understanding. If you know you are a quieter student, make up for that with particularly active participation on the Discussion Boards. I am not counting minutes speaking. I am seeking quality contributions to collective learning.

I encourage you to read Caleb McDaniel's short essay, "[How To Discuss a Book for History](#)," as a way to think about how you can productively contribute to our conversations.

## 2) Discussion Leaders:

One or two students will be required to lead the week's discussion. They should begin briefly introducing the book, raising some of the broad issues raised by the week's readings, and **providing some value added** to the discussion. The value added could include reading and summarizing scholarly reactions to the work(s) under discussion. This would include not only reading reviews of the items under discussion, a must, but tracing out citations to the work in other monographs and articles as a way to trace the works' influence. The value added could include finding and discussing competing interpretations of the same subject. It could include finding and sharing primary source(s) related to the topic under discussion. You could also bring

(or display) short primary sources for the class to read that would add to our discussion. Students should meet with Professor Barnes during the week prior to serving as discussion leaders to discuss what that value-added component will be.

Your initial presentation should be approximately 10 minutes, or let's say 18 minutes if there are two of you. **This should not be a summary of the week's reading.**

After this, the presenters should prepare discussion questions around the broad issues and themes raised by the readings. You are, in a sense, the teacher of the day. **Leading discussions is hard.** Remember that it is best to pose open-ended interpretive questions rather than narrowly factual ones. You are trying to provoke discussion on the subjects we will be discussing in class. I find this one of many useful texts on how to lead an effective discussion. Samuel Schaffer and Alison Greene, "[Leading an Effective Discussion.](#)"

### 3) Written Assignments:

#### **READING RESPONSES:**

Students will write **5 reading responses at a minimum of 1,000 words each.** Four of these will be on books/articles that we will read for the class and are **due at least 24 hours prior to the start of the class session** discussing the book/articles (i.e. by 7:20pm on Monday nights). One will be on an extra book of your choice related to the history of Stalinism and published within the last 10 years.

You have a degree of choice over which assigned readings you will respond to during the semester. However, at least one reading response must be written in each period of weeks 2-5, 6-10, and 11-14. Obviously, in one of those stretches, you will write a second reading response.

You may choose when to write your extra reading response, but it must be submitted no later than week 11. It is an opportunity for you to explore one of the many topics in the study of Stalinism that are not covered in this class, or you may decide you want to explore one of our topics further by reading a second book. You are strongly encouraged to consult with me on your choice. I can help you find a book on a topic of your choice. At the very least, you should run the book by me before you read it.

These reading responses **should do more than summarize** the book. Here, I would encourage you to read Zachary Schrag again on "[How to Write a Reading Response.](#)" They should raise the points you see as most relevant for class discussion focused on things like sources, methodology, argument, and relationship to other course readings. In the responses to readings assigned in the course, assume your reader is already familiar with the book/articles, and you are engaging them in a discussion. If you came to my office to talk about a book we are reading, you would not start out by telling me what the book is about. For the extra book, since other students will not have read it, please start the response with a **brief** summary of what the book is about.

All responses will be **submitted via the Discussion Boards on the Blackboard course site**. Click “create thread” in the appropriate forum, title your response, and submit the text via the text editor. Please do not attach documents, as they are harder for others to read.

### **RESPONSES/WEEKLY WRAP-UP:**

Each week other than week 1, students will be required to write one response/weekly wrap-up. These can be responses to other students’ writings. These can be a wrap up of the most important points of the weekly discussion. These are intended to encourage you to think about our discussion after it has happened. What did you get out of it? How did it help you to understand Stalinism? What did it leave unanswered? These should also be **added to the Discussion Board forum** for a particular week and can either be responses to existing threads or the creation of new ones. **These should be a minimum of 150 words, shall not be written prior to the weekly class session, and are due each week by Friday at 11:59pm.**

### **FINAL PROJECT**

Additionally, students will write a final project of 3,000-3,500 words. The final paper will be discussed in more detail in a future session, as I am leaning toward allowing some creativity in determining its format. It will not require additional reading beyond what is assigned for the class (including, of course, the book you will read for your extra review) and will be your opportunity to show what you’ve learned in the course. The final paper will be **due via Blackboard on Saturday, December 10 by 11:59pm.**

### **Grade Breakdown:**

Presentation/discussion leading	10%
Listening/thinking/speaking	22%
5 Reading responses 5% each	25%
13 Responses/weekly wrap-up 1% each	13%
Final Paper	30%

### **Course Policies – READ CAREFULLY:**

*Policy on Late Work:* Extensions on assignments will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. No extension will be granted for reading responses on books/articles for a particular week, and they will not be accepted late.

*Email Addresses:* The professor will communicate with students via email. Therefore, all students must activate and check their official GMU email addresses frequently.

*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](#) at 703.993.2474 or [ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.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. If you haven't already, read the George Mason University Honor Code. 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.

Violators will be referred to the Honor Board. Penalties at the graduate level can be up to and include dismissal from the graduate program.

### **Course Reading:**

The readings for the course are listed below. Students are responsible for acquiring books, though many are available via the GMU Libraries website. All journal articles are available via George Mason libraries online collections. Other items are either available online or will be made available by the instructor via the Blackboard Course site.

#### **Week 1 (August 23) Introduction**

Keith Gessen, "State of Terror," *The New Yorker*, Vol. 93, Iss. 35, (Nov 6, 2017). (PDF provided via email and on Blackboard Course site.)

#### **Week 2 (August 30) Can Biography Explain Stalinism?**

Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*

Introduction of Sarah Davies and James Harris, [\*Stalin's World: Dictating the Soviet Order\*](#) available as an ebook from GMU Libraries website.

#### **Week 3 (September 6) How Do You Write A Social History of Stalinism?**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*

Chapter 5 of Sarah Davies and James Harris, [Stalin's World: Dictating the Soviet Order](#) available as an ebook from GMU Libraries website.

**Week 4 (September 13) Speaking Bolshevik? Stalinism as a Civilization? Foucault's Stalinism? Micro-history to Macro-interpretations?**

Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*

**Week 5 (September 20) Stalinism and the Soviet Union as Empire? "Nationality" in the Soviet Union?**

Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*

Yuri Slezkine. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414-52.

**Week 6 (September 27) Stalinism in Ukraine – Promoting or Suppressing Non-Russian Ethnic Identities? Or Both?**

Matthew Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934*

**Week 7 (October 4) The Holodomor – Famine as State Weapon? As Genocide?**

Stanislav Kulchytsky, *The Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine: An Anatomy of the Holodomor*

Read the forum "Soviet Famines" in the journal [Contemporary European History](#), Vol. 27, Iss. 3 (August 2018), pp. 432-481.

**NOTE: October 11 – No Class – Your Monday Classes Will Meet on this Date**

**Week 8 (October 18) The Famine in Kazakhstan – Change or Reinforce How We Think of Ukrainian Famine? Does Stalinism Look Different in Central Asia?**

Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*

**Week 9 (October 25) Stalinism and Terror: How Do We Explain the Height of the Terror?**

Wendy Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin*

Oleg Khlevnyuk, "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-1938." In [Stalinism: The Essential Readings](#), David L. Hoffmann (Ed.). [Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *The American Historical Review*, October 1999. [The original journal article is available online via George Mason libraries. The piece also appears in *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, David L. Hoffmann (Ed.). Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," In *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, David L. Hoffmann (Ed.). [Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

Paul Hagenloh, "'Socially Harmful Elements' and the Great Terror," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, Sheila Fitzpatrick (Ed.) [Chapter will be made available electronically.]

Chapter 2 of Sarah Davies and James Harris, [\*Stalin's World: Dictating the Soviet Order\*](#) available as an ebook from GMU Libraries website.

**Week 10 (November 1) Stalinism and Terror: The Perpetrators – Why Did People Participate?**

Lynne Viola, *Stalinist Perpetrators on Trial: Scenes from the Great Terror in Soviet Ukraine*

Cynthia V. Hooper. "Bosses in Captivity?: On the Limitations of Gulag Memoir." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 1 (2013): 117-142.

**Week 11 (November 8) The Gulag – Was the Gulag a Penal System? Did Ideology Matter in the Gulag?**

Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*

**Week 12 (November 15) Stalinism at War – How Did the Stalinist Regime Survive Worse Losses Than Those Faced by Tsar Nicholas II? Why and How Did the Soviet Soldier Fight?**

Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*

**Week 13 (November 22) Stalinism, War, Women, and Gender – Was Stalinism Liberatory for Women? What was the Ideal Stalinist Woman? What Was the Stalinist Family?**

Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front*

Barbara Alpern Engel, "A Gendered Revolution?" *Revolutionary Russia*, 30:2 (2017), 196-207.

Elena Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire: Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East*, Read only Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion. [Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Women in Soviet Society : Equality, Development, and Social Change. In *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, David L. Hoffmann (Ed.). [Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

E. Thomas Ewing (2010) Maternity and Modernity: Soviet women teachers and the contradictions of Stalinism, *Women's History Review*, 19:3, 451-477.

Cynthia Hooper, "Terror of Intimacy: Family Politics in the 1930s Soviet Union," In Kiaer, C., & Naiman, E. (2006). *Everyday life in early Soviet Russia taking the Revolution inside*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. [Available as an e-book through George Mason libraries.]

**Week 14 (November 29) Stalinism and Nazism – Thinking Big at the End of a Long Semester?**

Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*