

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**HIS. 417: HISTORY OF RUSSIA TO 1801,
THE MAKING OF MODERN RUSSIA**
Spring 2021 DeLuca Forum (main floor WID)
MW 2:30-3:45

Instructor: Prof. D. McDonald [dmcdon1@wisc.edu]
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Office: 5134 Humanities

Office Hours: MRW 10-12 (subject to change) or by appointment. Access via the “Course Room” in BB Collaborate Ultra on the class’s Canvas site.

TEXTS:

For purchase: N. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (any edition after 1980)

Other assigned readings posted on Canvas, excerpted from S. A. Zenkovsky *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974) and B. Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia, A Source-Book, 1700-1917* (New York: Harcourt School, 1990). Internet sources are acknowledged in their links.

REQUIREMENTS:

This course introduces major issues in the social, political, cultural, and diplomatic history of Russia from its beginnings until the death of Paul I in 1801.

Course assignments assume that students attend all lectures and, further, *that students will have read the assigned readings for a given week before each week’s lectures*. As you will see below, readings fall into two groups: general textbook assignments supplemented by more specific primary and secondary sources, which give added detail on and insight into the events treated in lecture.,

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

This course involves three sorts of activity: lectures, assigned reading, and a series of written assignments, both papers and tests. These elements offer several related benefits to students willing to devote the appropriate effort and attention to them. Most immediately, students will see the development over nearly 1,000 years of a society and political order that became the dominant power in Europe by 1815, since when it has figured as a prominent power in the global political system. This history produced a culture, society and state order that has long challenged the historical assumptions and expectations of Western Europeans and North Americans with its mix of the familiar—dominant religion, social organization and material culture—and the exotic. By learning to understand Russian history on its own terms, students

will gain new perspective on their own and other societies, while gaining an understanding of the processes that drive historical change.

As a **3-credit** class, this course combines several sorts of work. One credit stems from twice-weekly 75-minute lectures for the entire semester. The other two credits cover the time devoted to the assigned course readings, in addition to the time students spend researching and writing up the required tests and papers assigned for the course. Totaled over the whole semester, this out-of-class work should average six hours or more weekly.

Objectives and Outcomes

Through their reading and discussion of the course materials, students will learn how to associate various sorts of evidence with arguments about broader problems. In doing so, they will also learn how historical context frames the views and assumptions of participants in or commentators on the events of their time. This ability can extend to the reading of texts and documents in one's own society or in the contemporary world. Third, proper attention to the written assignments for the course will help students learn how to define a problem, understand its significance in broader context, how to find relevant and valid evidence that casts light on this problem. Most important, these assignments should teach students how to develop and express in writing an argument that incorporates this evidence in an organized and substantiated discussion presented in clear prose. In the process, students will also learn the possibility of multiple interpretations—often equally valid—from the same body of evidence; they will be able to defend their own choice of the most persuasive of these interpretations. These skills will serve their holder well both in subsequent study and in her or his later social and professional lives.

Course Objectives

By the time you have finished your required work for this semester, you should have accomplished the following objectives:

- Learn to make clear arguments supported by evidence drawn from a variety of sources.
- Learn how to write clearly and effectively.
- Learn how to read critically in order to coax meanings out of challenging texts from a different cultural and historical tradition.
- Acquire the ability to relate instances or events to broader contexts and levels of cause.
- Learn how to identify and explain continuity and change as complementary elements in historical development.
- Find ways to understand on its own terms a society and culture with aspirations, values and norms that differ greatly from your own.
- Challenge or revisit your own assumptions about Russia or “east vs. west” and related conventions in thinking about that country.
- Understand the framing logics that rendered a highly hierarchical, divided society under autocratic rule “natural” or even “chosen” to its inhabitants.

Course Readings:

You will find on the following pages a list entitled “Schedule and Readings,” designed to give you an outline of the course’s narrative trajectory *and* reading assignments for you to complete for that week’s lectures. At times, a “gap” may appear between the material covered in lecture and topics for discussion: you should still read the assigned content for that week. For the first half or so of the course, you will also find that the assigned readings for section come from documents generated at the time of the historical events we are examining. As a consequence, their genre—chronicles, saints’ lives, etc.—will seem very unfamiliar. To aid you in your reading, you will find on Canvas a set of study questions, covering events until about the mid-seventeenth century. Furthermore, as you consult this part of the syllabus, you will notice that each week’s readings are posted on Canvas. These materials supplement the assigned readings from the Riasanovsky textbook.

Assignments and grading:

History 417 requires four separate written assignments for all undergraduate students (see below for special requirements for honors and graduate students)—NB, DUE TO OUR FAVORITE, YOU WILL SUBMIT THESE ASSIGNMENTS TO MCDONALD AS A *MS WORD* ATTACHMENT IN AN EMAIL:

1. A brief (ca. 1,250 words) paper responding to ONE question from a list that you will receive in mid-February. It is due over email by 5:00PM on *Wednesday, March 10*. The mark for this paper comprises 15% of the final grade.
2. On March 24, you will receive a take-home mid-term examination, which you should take no more than *two hours* to complete for submission by 5:00PM on *Wednesday, March 31*. The mid-term will count for 25% of the final grade.
3. A second term paper falls due on *Monday, April 26*. As with the first paper, you will have a choice of topic from a list that will be distributed after the mid-term. This assignment will make up 35% of the final grade for the course.
4. The final examination for the course will comprise a take-home, two-essay assignment that will count for 25% of the final. You will receive the questions by email after the last class of the semester. The deadline for receipt of this examination is *5:00PM on Monday, May 3*.

Students’ grades in written work will vary depending on the nature of the assignment. Overall, the assignments increase in “importance” through the course of the semester. Thus, the first paper counts for only 15% of the final grade, since this assignment introduces students and instructor to one another and as such, serves as an occasion to illustrate concretely the instructor’s expectations for performance. Accordingly, the second paper counts for 35%, i. e. more than twice as much as the first paper. A similar increase occurs with the written tests. This

distribution of partial grades is meant to reward improvement across the semester, as students presumably become versed in the course materials and the instructor's expectations.

At the same time, the term papers and tests also constitute very different assignments, leading to different sorts of assessment. In both exercises, the instructor will reward the advancement of a clear or identifiable argument in response to the question the student has chosen. Moreover, in both sorts of assignment, the argument should rest on evidence drawn from the Riasanovsky textbook, but especially from the assigned weekly readings on Canvas.

However, the two sorts of assignment also differ meaningfully in terms of their composition and presentation. The term papers are more "formal," in that they should present their argument in clear, well-organized writing, while acknowledging *all* uses of evidence, whether matters of fact—dates, events, personages—or those of interpretation or argument, i. e. an informed opinion or evaluation about the meaning or importance of this or that occurrence. This acknowledgement will take the form of proper citations, whether foot- or endnotes, or parenthetical notations that prevail in social science conventions. Given the formal nature of the exercise and the lead-time provided for preparation, the instructor will have higher expectations for the use and citation of evidence than in the tests. The midterm and final exams ask students to respond more briefly and synthetically than the term papers and, given the shorter time for preparation, require less in the form of evidence or expression (to a certain extent) and do not require formal notes, although passing indication of sources always helps.

While attendance is not compulsory, students will find that regular presence at lectures will help reinforce and render more concrete the issues and events dealt with in the primary materials and Riasanovsky. Long experience has shown that reliable attendance can make the difference of a full grade over the course of a semester. Accordingly, students are strongly encouraged to attend lectures.

Graduate credit

Graduate students are not required to write the first assigned paper. Instead, they will write two reviews of book-length historical studies, selecting at least one dealing with Russian history before the reign of Peter I.

Please make a note of these dates and enter them into your calendars. The instructor will amplify on the nature of each assignment in lecture and section. They will also specify their expectations for evaluating your work.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. While medieval and early modern Russia might seem light-years removed from the modern United States, issues of social and ethnic difference form a central motif in the area's history and its present. As you will

learn, the territories embraced by the Russian Empire by 1800 housed numerous ethnic communities – Russians, Ukrainians, Cossacks, Tatars, Finnic peoples, Turkic Muslims and, after 1772, Poles and a large Jewish population – in a state that professed Orthodox Christianity as the official religion. Moreover, this society consisted of a hierarchically ranged set of discrete, caste-like social groups, each with its own norms and customs small societies unto themselves. And, like many other societies of the time, Russian elites accepted and profited from slavery until well into the seventeenth century, while also practicing a particularly stringent form of serfdom, whose effects on Russian society lingered for more than a century after the institution’s abolition in 1861. Russian history presents a helpful mirror into how every society, our own included, attributes specific meanings to and valuations of difference, whether racial or linguistic or confessional, which often become an unseen foundation of that society’s norms and assumptions about inequality, authority, patriarchy and power.

At UW-Madison, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. To these ends, the university fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

History Lab

Those requiring assistance or extra guidance in framing and writing research papers should consult with the department’s History Lab. A representative of this valuable resource will visit our class early in the semester. As the Lab’s web-site states:

The History Lab is a resource center where experts (PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter what stage you are at in the writing process – choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts – the History Lab staff can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Drop by Humanities 4255 or schedule a one-on-one consultation at <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

<u>Week begin-date</u>	<u>Readings</u>
1. 1/25	INTRODUCTION. READINGS: Riasanovsky, Chapters I, II.
2. 2/1	THE EMERGENCE OF RUS’, ca. 750-950 CE. READINGS: Rias. IV, VI; Canvas documents under “Week 2.”
3. 2/8	RUS’ POLITICS AND SOCIETY—CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES (10 th -13 th centuries). READINGS: Rias. V, VII. Canvas, Week 3.

4. 2/15 THE MONGOLS AND RUS'—REGIONAL SUCCESSOR-STATES (ca. 1240-1350). READINGS: Rias. VIII, IX, X. Canvas, Week 4.
5. 2/22 RUS' AND THE PRINCIPALITY OF MOSCOW (1320-ca. 1450). READINGS: Rias. XI-XIV. Canvas, Week 5.
6. 3/1 MUSCOVY TRIUMPHANT; IVAN IV, part I (1463-1564). READINGS: Rias. XV. Canvas, Week 6.
7. 3/8 IVAN THE TERRIBLE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE "TIME OF TROUBLES" (1564-1605). READINGS: Rias. XV. Canvas, Week 7.
First term paper due by 5:00 PM, Wednesday, March 10
8. 3/15 THE END OF THE TROUBLES AND THE INSTALLATION OF THE ROMANOVVS (1611-1645). READINGS: Rias. XVI, XVII (through the reign of Michael). Canvas, Week 8.
9. 3/22 MATURE MUSCOVY: LEGAL AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS (1645-1682). READINGS: Rias. XVII, XVIII. Canvas, Week 9.
10. 3/29 RESPONSES TO CHANGE: THE SCHISM, SOPHIA'S "REGENCY." (1650's-1689). READINGS: Rias. XIX, XX
Take-home mid-term due by 5:00PM, Wednesday, March 31
11. 4/5 PETER THE GREAT, WAR AND REFORM, 1689-1711. READINGS: Rias. XX. Canvas, Week 11.
12. 4/12 PETER AND HIS SOCIETY, 1711-1725. READINGS: Canvas, Week 12.
13. 4/19 ABSORBING PETER'S LEGACY: RUSSIA, 1725-1762. READINGS: Rias. XXII. Canvas, Week 13.
14. 4/26 CATHERINE II AND "ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM" (1762-1796). READINGS: Rias. XXIV and Canvas materials, Week 14.
Second term paper due by 5:00PM on Monday, April 26

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION DUE BY 5PM, MONDAY, MAY 3