

FIG
History 200: Russia and America
Tuesdays 1:20-3:15, 2611 Humanities
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2023

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This introductory seminar examines Russian and American relations from the late 19th century through the present. It focuses on diplomatic relations, cultural relations, economic relations, and other forms of Russian and American engagement. Themes include American views of the Bolshevik Revolution; America's response to Stalinism; the Cold War; McCarthyism; Khrushchev's visit to America; the 1980 Olympics; and Soviet responses to American popular culture. Students will read memoirs, speeches, political position papers, and other (English-language and translated) primary sources. They will also look at rich primary sources available on the UW-Madison campus—including fascinating archival documents about American-Russian relations in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archive and Memorial Library's Rare Books Room. They will also watch and discuss several films.

Breadth: Social Science of Humanities

L&S Credit: Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S.

Credit Hours: The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), reading, writing, watching films, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Goals: This course will focus on developing the following skills:

- Asking questions, including questions that may generate new directions for historical research. Posing questions to prompt productive group discussion.
- Finding and citing sources. Learning the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and using them to identify and locate source materials.
- Evaluating sources. Determining the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials. Distinguishing between primary and secondary material for a particular topic. Identifying the perspective or authorial stance of a source. Summarizing an argument presented in a text.
- Developing and presenting an argument. Using sources appropriately to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and to raise new questions. Citing evidence to support an argument.
- Communicating ideas and research findings effectively through written and oral presentations.

Grades: Course grades will be determined as follows: weekly assignments 40% total (each assignment will be graded on a scale from 1-10); participation in weekly discussions in class 30%; final project 30%. There is no final exam for this course. Final projects are due on Sunday December 17th at 5pm.

Final Project: Your final projects will be based on course readings and additional primary sources (archival documents, films, political cartoons, diaries, etc.). Options include (but are not limited to): a 10-page research paper, a 10-minute documentary, a 20-minute podcast (with links to sources and a bibliography), a 15-page original work of historical fiction (with footnotes linking to historical sources). We will discuss topics, types of sources, and possible types of projects in class and during one-on-one meetings.

Readings: All readings will be available on Canvas. I will ask you to print out key readings and bring them to class.

Week 1, 9/12: Introduction: Russia and America, History and Politics

This week we'll talk about the historian's craft and about how historians, journalists, and politicians put together narratives about current and past events.

Week 2, 9/19: The Russian Empire and the United States

Theme: Mutual Perceptions

Skill: What are primary sources and what can they tell us about the past?

Background:

1. "Imperial Russia," BBC Bitesize History
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z6rjy9q/revision/1>
2. Jane E. Good, "America and the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1888-1905," *The Russian Review* 41, no. 3 (1982): 273-287.

Readings for Discussion:

1. Mark Twain, selection from *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), pp. 120-136.
2. George Kennan, "Russian State Prisoners: Further Details of the Prison Life of the Revolutionists," *Century Illustrated Magazine*, vol. 35 (March 1888): 5-16.
3. "George Kennan's Siberian Travels," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1887, p. 9.
4. "When Mark Twain Wept," *Kansas City Star*, April 7, 1888, p. 2.
5. "Gorky and Twain Plead for Revolution," *The New York Times*, April 12, 1906.
6. Maxim Gorky, "The City of the Yellow Devil," 1906, in *America Through Russian Eyes*, ed. and trans. Olga Peters Hasty and Susanne Fusso (1988), pp. 124-143.

Assignment #1 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper (12-point font) reflecting on the following: What can the primary sources you read this week tell us about Russian and American mutual perceptions? What are some questions that these sources cannot answer?

Week 3, 9/26: Russia's Revolutions and American Responses

Themes: Revolution and Ideology; Entanglement

Skill: How do we work with memoirs?

Background:

1. S. A. Smith, *The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (2002), 4-39.
2. Timeline of Russian Revolution
<https://www.bl.uk/russian-revolution/articles/timeline-of-the-russian-revolution>

Readings for Discussion:

1. John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919), chapters 1-4.
2. Louise Bryant, *Six Red Months in Russia: An Observer's Account of Russia Before and During the Proletariat Dictatorship* (1918), pp. 1-51, 99-109.
3. Donald E. Carey, *Fighting the Bolsheviks* (1997), pp. 1-4, 41-50.

Assignment #2 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper reflecting on what the primary source readings for this week tell us about Russia and its revolutions.

Week 4, 10/3: Fear and Opportunities

Themes: International Exchange; Business, Culture, Diplomacy

Skill: How do we fill in the blanks when reading (or viewing) primary sources without secondary sources?

Readings for Discussion:

1. A. Mitchell Palmer, "The Case Against the 'Reds,'" *Forum*, vol. 63 (1920): 173-185.
2. "Report of Trip to Russia, October 1921," from S. G. McAllister to H. F. Perkins, International Harvester, from the Cyrus McCormick Papers in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archive.
3. Vladimir Mayakovsky, *My Discovery of America* (1925), pp. 73-99.
4. Maurice Hindus, "Henry Ford Conquers Russia," *The Outlook*, June 29, 1927, pp. 280-283.
5. Richard Cartwright Austin, *Building Utopia: Erecting Russia's First Modern City*, 1930 (2004), pp. 1-43.

Film (watch before class):

The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks, 1924

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqz53CnWZJA>

Assignment #3 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper reflecting on what this week's assigned materials (the readings and the film) can tell us about Russian-American relations before the U.S. granted the Soviet Union diplomatic recognition.

Week 5, 10/10: The City of Steel and Little Golden America

Themes: Politics, Economics, and Everyday Life

Skill: What makes someone a "reliable narrator"?

Readings for Discussion:

1. John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel* (1942), pp. 3-6, 9-51, 117-133, 173-206, 247-249.
2. John Scott's correspondence with the U.S. Department of State, from the John Scott Papers in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archive.
3. Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, *Little Golden America* (1936), pp. 53-59, 71-76, 96-103.

Assignment #4 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper comparing John Scott and Ilf/Petrov as narrators.

Week 6, 10/17: Visit to the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archives

Week 7, 10/24: Equality, Opportunity, and Soviet-American Relations

Themes: Ideology, Propaganda, Fight for Equal Rights

Skills: How can we use memoirs and films to gain a more vivid picture of the past?

Readings for Discussion:

1. Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (1969), pp. 153-234.
2. Robert Robinson, *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (1988), pp. 23-33, 35-53, 55-63, 65-73, 75-112.
3. Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (1993), pp. 95-121.
4. Jennifer Wilson, "When the Harlem Renaissance Went to Moscow," *New York Times*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/opinion/when-the-harlem-renaissance-went-to-communist-moscow.html>

Film (watch before class):

Circus (Tsirk), 1936, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVAN0A6OWE4>

Assignment #5 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper addressing the following: Did the readings for this week and the film *Circus* change your understanding of Soviet-American relations in the 1930s? Explain.

Week 8, 10/31: Hopes, Dreams, and Stalinist Terror

Themes: Stalinism, Apologists, Biography and History

Skill: How do we work with historical newspapers, letters, and diaries?

Readings for Discussion:

1. Walter Duranty, "Power of Stalin Now at Its Height," *New York Times*, January 23, 1933.
2. Walter Duranty, "Stalin Tells Red Youths to Ferret Out Foes," *New York Times*, February 3, 1933.
3. Walter Duranty, "Death of 17 Asked at Moscow Trial," *New York Times*, January 29, 1937.
4. Correspondence among Alexander Gumberg, Walter Duranty, and Raymond Robins, from the Alexander Gumberg Collection in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archive.
5. Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (1941), pp. 1-7, 21-31, 36-38.
6. Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (2008), pp. 48-60, 108-147, 368-369, 374-378.

Assignment #6 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper addressing the following: Do you think that Duranty and Davies were acting as apologists for Stalin? What do you think motivated them?

Week 9, 11/7: Visit to the Chazen Museum and Memorial Library Special Collections

Week 10, 11/14: From Wartime Alliance to Cold War Rivals

Themes: The Wartime Alliance; 1946

Skill: How do we work with online sources?

Background

Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2000* (2002), pp. 1-52.

Readings for Discussion:

1. George F. Kennan's "Long Telegram," February 22, 1946.
2. "The Novikov Telegram," September 27, 1946.

Browse the following websites:

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/topics/cold-war-origins>

<https://www.hoover.org/library-archives/collections/cold-war>

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/cold-war-on-file/>

Assignment #7 due in class:

1. Select a primary source that sheds light on the start of the Cold War. Bring a copy of the source to class. Prepare a short presentation (4 minutes) telling your classmates about the source that you selected.
2. Write a one-page double-spaced paper comparing Kennan's perceptions of Russia and Novikov's perceptions of America.

Week 11, 11/21: Red Scare Redux

Themes: Communism in the United States, McCarthyism

Skill: How do we work with political cartoons and different types of propaganda?

Background:

"Anti-Communism in the 1950s," <https://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/fifties/essays/anti-communism-1950s>

Readings for Discussion:

1. George F. Kennan, "McCarthyism," in *Memoirs: 1950-1963* (1972), pp. 190-228.
2. Committee on Un-American Activities, "100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the USA," 1949.

3. "Senator Joseph McCarthy's Speech on Communists in the State Department," 1950.

4. "The Conspiracy Against Sen. Joe McCarthy," *The Wisconsin State Journal*, September 9, 1952.

5. Browse the "Pointing their Pens" exhibit on the Library of Congress website:

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/pointing-their-pens-editorial-cartoons/red-scare.html>

Short Films from the Prelinger Archives (watch before class):

https://archive.org/details/0169_In_Our_Hands_Part_3_How_To_Lose_What_We_Have_10_00_43_11

https://archive.org/details/0771_Duck_and_Cover_12_33_20_12

Assignment #8 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper addressing the following: How effective were the primary sources you examined this week at communicating the "dangers of communism"? Give specific examples.

Week 12, 11/28: Khrushchev Comes to America

Themes: De-Stalinization, Cold War Diplomacy

Skill: How can we use documentaries as sources?

Background:

"The Khrushchev Era"

<https://countrystudies.us/russia/13.htm>

Readings for Discussion:

1. Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev in America* (1960), pp. 104-113, 152-163.

2. John Scali, "A Scene of Enormous Confusion, Activity." *Carroll Daily Times Herald*, September 23, 1959, p. 1.

3. "Report on the Khrushchev Visit," *Department of State Office of the Historian*, October 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, vol. X, part 1,

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v10p1/d136>

4. Rósa Magnúsdóttir, "Be Careful in America, Premier Khrushchev!": Soviet Perceptions of Peaceful Coexistence with the United States in 1959." *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 47, no. 1/2 (2006): 109–130.

5. Nina Khrushcheva, "The Case of Khrushchev's Shoe," *New Statesman*, October 2, 2000.

6. William Taubman, "Did He Bang It? Nikita Khrushchev and the Shoe," *The New York Times*, July 26, 2003.

Film (watch before class):

Cold War Road Show, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTtEoqT1Sv4>

Assignment #9 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper discussing the following: What kind of impression do you get of Nikita Khrushchev as a leader and as a person from the written primary sources? Did the film shift your impression of him or not? Explain.

Week 13, 12/5: Superpower Showdowns

Themes: Diplomacy, Sports, Cold War Politics

Skill: How do we "triangulate" sources?

Readings for Discussion:

1. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (2001), 51-70, 191-208, 374-414, 434-454.
2. "Olympics: To Go or Not to Go? The U.S. Weighs Hitting Moscow Where It Would Really Hurt," *Time*, January 28, 1980.
3. Stephen Smith and Bruce Nelan, "Bearish Beginning in Moscow: The Clouded Games Get Under Way in a Grand Setting," *Time*, July 21, 1980.

Film (watch before class):

ESPN *Of Miracles and Men* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM7HCm8yGNk>

Assignment # 10 due in class:

Write a one-page double-spaced paper discussing the following: What do this week's sources have to say about the connection between sports and politics? Give specific examples.

Week 14, 12/12: Rock and Roll and Radio Free Europe

Themes: Gorbachev, Perestroika, Dissolution of the Soviet Union

Skill: How do we paraphrase sources?

Background:

"The USSR in the Gorbachev Era," *Classroom Country Profiles*

https://jsis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/USSR_Gorbachev_Perestroika_Glasnost.pdf

(I recommend the linked video at the end explaining *glasnost* and *perestroika*.)

Readings for Discussion:

1. Vladimir Voinovich, "All at Sea: A Fairy Tale," *Radio Liberty Research*, January 22, 1988.
2. On the history of Radio Liberty: <https://pressroom.rferl.org/history>
3. Serge Schmemmann, "Soviet Union Ends Years of Jamming of Radio Liberty," *New York Times*, December 1, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/01/world/soviet-union-ends-years-of-jamming-of-radio-liberty.html>

4. Victor Ripp, "Discovering America," in *Pizza in Pushkin Square: What They Think of Us in the USSR* (1990), pp. 105-121.

5. Natasha Lance Rogoff, "Adapting Sesame Street for Russian TV-What Could Go Wrong?" <https://www.vulture.com/article/sesame-street-adaptation-russian-tv-ulitsa-sezam.html>

Assignment #11 due in class:

Select interesting quotes from two of the sources we are examining this week. Write each down verbatim and explain why you found it compelling. Then paraphrase each quote—taking it out of the quotation marks and restating it (capturing its essence) in your own words.