

**History 419**  
**History of Soviet Russia**  
**UW-Madison**  
**Fall 2023**  
**MWF 9:55-10:45 in 1131 Humanities**

**Professor F. Hirsch**

[fhirsch@wisc.edu](mailto:fhirsch@wisc.edu)

Office: 4125 Humanities

Office Phone: (608) 263-1783

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00-1:00 and Fridays 11:00-12:00

**TA Emily Lobenstein**

[elobenstein@wisc.edu](mailto:elobenstein@wisc.edu)

This course examines the history of the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1991 with a focus on Revolutionary Russia, Stalinism, the experiences and consequences of World War II, the Cold War years, perestroika, and the Soviet collapse. We will look in depth at the Soviet Union as an empire, focusing on Soviet nationality policy and the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations. We'll read novels and short stories and examine a wide range of primary sources including Soviet films and memoirs. Throughout the course we'll debate key questions of Soviet history: What was Marxism-Leninism? What was socialism? What was internationalism? How do people live under totalitarian regimes? We'll also discuss connections between the past and the present—with an eye to understanding Putin's Russia.

Requisites: Sophomore standing or permission of instructor.

Breadth: Social Science

Level: Advanced

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

Course Attributes: For graduate students counts toward 50% of graduate coursework requirement.

Format: Lecture and discussion. Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to show up prepared and ready to participate.

Credit Hours: This 4 credit course meets for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for class discussion and debate, and/or studying for quizzes and exams.

Learning Objectives: This course will help students develop skills in critical reasoning, research, source evaluation, and analytical writing. Students will work individually and in small groups to do original research in preparation for our in-class debate. Students will share their research findings and arguments in papers and oral presentations. This course will also encourage students to make connections between the past and the present—between the events of the 20th century and the world we live in today.

Readings: Books with an (\*) are available at the University Book Store and are on reserve at College Library. All books should be available used or as e-books. Other course readings are available on Canvas. I will ask you to print out some of the Canvas readings and bring them to class for close textual analyses.

Grading: Course grades are determined as follows: participation (including in-class writing prompts) 25%, debate project (including annotated bibliography and short position paper) 15%, memoir analysis project 20%, in-class midterm 15%, map quiz 5%, final project 20%.

## **Week 1: The Russian Empire**

**9/6, 9/8: Introduction; The Russian Empire**

### **Reading:**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), pp. 14-27.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

## **Week 2: Revolutionary Russia**

**9/11, 9/13, 9/15: 1905; The Road to 1917; The February Revolution**

### **Readings:**

1. "Programs of Russian Political Parties," in Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700-1917, ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (New York, 1967), pp. 325-350.

2. V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution, 1917, chapters 1 and 5 ("Class Society and the State" and "The Economic Base of the Withering Away of the State").

<https://www.marxists.org/ebooks/lenin/state-and-revolution.pdf>

### **Week 3: 1917**

#### **9/18, 9/20, 9/22: The Bolsheviks; Red October; Culture and Commemoration**

##### **Readings:**

1. Red Army Oath: "Solemn Oath on Induction into the Worker-Peasant Red Army (1918)."

<https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1917-2/red-guard-into-army/red-guard-into-army-texts/solemn-oath-on-induction-into-the-worker-peasant-red-army/>

2. Eduard M. Dune, Notes of a Red Guard, ed. and trans. Diane P. Koenker and S. A. Smith (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 3-87.

##### **Film:**

October: Ten Days That Shook the World, 1927

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpxfwIF18Wc>

### **Week 4: Civil War**

#### **9/25, 9/27, 9/29: Yom Kippur (No Class); Reds and Whites; ...And Greens**

##### **Readings:**

Mikhail Bulgakov, Days of the Turbins: A Play in Four Acts (1926).

##### **Map Quiz:**

A Map Quiz will be given at the beginning of class on **9/29**.

### **Week 5: Whither the Revolution?**

#### **10/2, 10/4, 10/6: The Nationality Question; The NEP; Bolshevik Dreams**

##### **Readings:**

1. \*Yevgeny Zamyatin, We (1924).

2. A. Kollontai, "Communism and the Family," 1920.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm>

### **Week 6: The Struggle for Power and the Rise of Stalin**

#### **10/9, 10/11, 10/13: Struggle for Power; The Bolshevik Debate!**

##### **Readings:**

1. V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of the Nationalities," 1921.

<https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/transcaucasia/transcaucasia-texts/lenin-on-nationality-policy/>

2. V. I. Lenin, "On the New Economic Policy," 1921.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/oct/17.htm>

3. J. V. Stalin, "The Question of the Union of the Independent National Republics," 1922.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1922/11/18.htm>

4. J. V. Stalin, "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists," 1924.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/12.htm>

### **In-Class Debate and Position Papers**

The debate will be held in class on **10/11 and 10/13**.

Position papers are due in class on **10/13**.

### **Week 7: The "Great Break"**

**10/16, 10/18, 10/20: Collectivization and Industrialization; Cultural Revolution; Hopes and Dreams**

#### **Readings:**

1. M. Ilin, New Russia's Primer: The Story of the Five-Year Plan, trans. George S Counts and Nucia P. Lodge (New York, 1931), pp. 1-32.

2. Lev Kopelev, "The Last Grain Collections (1933)," in The Education of a True Believer, trans. Gary Hern (New York, 1978), pp. 224-236, 248-267.

3. John Scott, Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel (1942) (Bloomington, 1989), pp. 3-6, 9-51, 117-133, 173-206, 247-249.

### **Week 8: The Great Terror**

**10/23, 10/25, 10/27: Show Trials; Terror; Midterm**

#### **Readings:**

"Galina Vladimirovna Shtange" and "Stepan Filippovich Podlubny" in Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s, ed. Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen (New York: 1995), pp. 167-215, 291-331.

#### **Film:**

Circus, 1936

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVAN0A6OWE4&t=1853s>

#### **Midterm Exam**

The midterm exam will be given in class on **10/27**.

### **Week 9: The Great Patriotic War**

**10/30, 11/1, 11/3: Invasion; At War; History Panel at Pyle Center (No Class)**

**Reading:**

\*Svetlana Alexievich, The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II (New York, 2017), pp. 1-17, 71-112, 159-183, 185-210, 281-301.

**Week 10: Postwar Stalinism**

**11/6, 11/8, 11/10: Wartime Myths and Realities; Postwar Stalinism; Nikita Khrushchev and De-Stalinization**

**Reading:**

\*Francis Spufford, Red Plenty (Minneapolis, 2012), pp. 1-264.

**Week 11: The Soviet Union and the Cold War**

**11/13, 11/15, 11/17: Life Under Khrushchev; Khrushchev Takes America; Cold War Dangers**

**Readings:**

1. Nikita Khrushchev, "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," 1956 <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/91940/download>
2. Spufford, Red Plenty, pp. 265-361.

**Week 12: Stagnation or Ferment?**

**11/20, 11/22, 11/24: Brezhnev and the Technocratic Society; Crisis and Creativity; Thanksgiving (No Class)**

**Reading:**

\*Loren R. Graham, The Ghost of the Executed Engineer (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

**Memoir Paper Deadline:**

Memoir papers are due in class on **11/20**.

**Week 13: Waiting for Gorbachev**

**11/27, 11/29, 12/1: Springtime for Brezhnev; System in Crisis; Memorial Library Special Collections (to see *samizdat*)**

**Readings:**

1. "The World of Samizdat," in Uncensored Russia: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union, ed. Peter Reddaway (New York, 1972), pp. 350-374.

2. Andrei Sakharov, "How I Came to Dissent," The New York Review of Books, March 21, 1974.

**Film:**

Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears, 1979

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTWA\\_7-ld\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTWA_7-ld_U)

**Week 14: From Perestroika to Collapse**

**12/4, 12/6, 12/8: Gorbachev; *Glasnost'* and *Perestroika*; Popular Culture**

**Reading:**

\*David Remnick, Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire (New York, 1994), pp. 3-119.

**Week 15: Beyond the Soviet Union**

**12/11, 12/13: Yeltsin and Putin: From USSR to Russia Today**

**Readings:**

1. Remnick, Lenin's Tomb, pp. 493-530.

2. Masha Gessen, The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin (New York, 2014), pp. 11-99.

**Final projects are due by 12/21 at 5pm.**