

Course syllabus developed with funding from:

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History 348 – History of the Soviet Union
Saint Xavier University
Spring 2017
Wednesday 6:00-8:50 in L325

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Office: N219

Office Hours: Tuesday + Thursday 11:00-12:30 (no appointment needed)
or by appointment any other time

Most of us (even me!) are too young to remember the Cold War, or to recall that for nearly fifty years, the Soviet Union represented a shadowy boogeyman that threatened the American way-of-life and even the very existence of life on earth. None of us remember that in the early years of its existence, the Soviet Union inspired fear and consternation among foreign leaders, but incredible hope, optimism, and excitement among people around the world who hoped that the Bolshevik Revolution would be the end of oppression, inequality, and exploitation.

In 1991, the Soviet system collapsed, and some observers suggested that we were witnessing an “end of history” itself; this was hardly, however, the end of the Soviet story. Vladimir Putin presides over a Russia that continues to play a major and adversarial role in international geopolitics. Soviet policies in Central Asia contributed directly to the rise of a radical Islam that haunts American life. We cannot ignore the history or the legacy of the Soviet state if we want to understand the political, social, and economic world of today.

In this course, we focus on the following broad questions:

- What did Soviet communism represent, and **why was it so appealing** to so many people?
- How did communism in the Soviet Union **change over time**?
- In what ways did the USSR’s **foreign policies and domestic treatment of non-Russian populations** shape the twentieth century?

Course objectives

1. Examine the relationship between Soviet-era policies and the political, social, and economic state of present-day eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia to illustrate both the lasting impact of historical events as well as the importance of history to contemporary understandings of the world.
2. Identify and evaluate the arguments of scholars working in the field of Soviet history.

3. Write a literature review assessing the current state of scholarship on a particular subject within the field of Soviet history.

Required Texts

Alexeievich, Svetlana, *Voices from Chernobyl*.

Dobrynin, Anatoly, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents*.

Grossmann, Vassily, *A Writer at War*.

Remnick, David, *Lenin's Tomb*.

Said, Kurban, *Ali and Nino*.

Additional readings will be available online. Readings available on CANVAS will be marked with a *.

Grades will be on the following scale:

A – 90%-100% - superior mastery of course goals

B – 80%-89% - good mastery of course goals

C – 70%-79% - average/adequate mastery of course goals

D – 60% - 69% - minimal/below average mastery of course goals

F – below 60% - no mastery of course goals

Assignments

Class Participation 15%

Oral Presentation 15%

Take-home midterm 20%

Outline + Annotated Bibliography 20%

Paper #2 30%

= 100%

- *Class participation* consists of your involvement in our discussions as well as group assignments and quizzes: asking questions, answering questions, and working effectively with classmates.
- Each week, two students will be responsible for a short (5-10 minutes) *oral presentation* of the reading material. We will sign up for weeks on the first day of class. Each presentation should cover all the week's readings and should highlight the argument or main purpose of each; draw connections between readings; and draw connections between the week's readings and readings and lectures from the rest of the course. A rubric outlining my expectations for your oral presentations is available on CANVAS.
- Your *outline + annotated bibliography* will form the basis of your final literature review. It should include a detailed outline of your proposed literature review, including a thesis statement which evaluates the state of the current scholarly literature. A rubric outlining my expectations for your outline + annotated bibliography is available on CANVAS.
- For your *take-home mid-term*, you will choose two of four possible essay questions about some of the key themes of the course. Each essay response should be 2-3 pages (typed).

A rubric outlining my expectations for your mid-term responses is available on CANVAS.

- Your *literature review* will be a brief (5-7 page) assessment of the scholarly literature on a particular aspect of Soviet history. The literature review should evaluate the state of the current scholarship on your chosen topic. Pay attention to which topics or themes are most emphasized, which are left out, how different scholars approach the subject methodologically, and areas of agreement or disagreement. Consider, too, opportunities for future research suggested by the current scholarship. You will submit your proposed topic to me by the fourth week of class. A rubric outlining my expectations for your lit review is available on CANVAS.
- All written assignments must be turned in via CANVAS.

Attendance Policy

You are allowed two free absences, no questions asked. You are responsible for the material covered during your absence. After two absences, a doctor's note is required and your participation grade will be affected.

Technology Integration

Technology will be an important component of your SXU course experience. You can expect that the content, delivery, and assessment of this course will be augmented by the use of the academic technologies including CANVAS (SXU's learning management system). You will find readings, images, film, and sound clips uploaded to CANVAS or online elsewhere as indicated.

Please silence your phone during class. You're welcome to use your laptop or tablet to take notes (but I don't necessarily recommend it; studies suggest that students who take notes by hand retain more of what they hear in class: <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>). You may use your phone to take pictures of tables, charts, lists, or anything else we put together in class as a group.

Students with Disabilities

SXU is committed to providing equal access and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities as defined under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Learning Center and Disability Services (LCDS) in L-108 or call (773) 298-3308 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for **requesting accommodations**. LCDS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Confidential Accommodation Plan" letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact LCDS as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

All work in this class must be your own. Academic dishonesty, such as cheating, unauthorized collaboration, and plagiarism, will not be tolerated and could result in failure of the course. The use of outside material must be properly cited, as should any direct quotations from our class texts. The university's policy is available in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog, at <http://catalog.sxu.edu/chicago/Shared/ACA/integrity.html>

Miscellaneous

Come to office hours to talk about history, to get help, to ask questions, or to say hi, or reach me by email at fojtik@sxu.edu. Please allow 24-48 hours for a response; this means you should not email me an hour before the mid-term and expect a response.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified of any changes.

WEEK 1 – January 12 – Introduction: why study a place that no longer exists?

WEEK 2 – January 19 - The Bolshevik Revolution and the Promise of Communism

Reading: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>); Kollontai, “Communism and the Family”

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

WEEK 3 – January 26 – The Nationalities Question

Reading + Film: *Turksib* (1929); Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment”*; Keller, “Women's liberation and Islam in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1926-1941”*

WEEK 4 – February 2 – The Hujum: Race, Religion, and Gender in the Early Soviet Union

Reading: Said, *Ali and Nino*

**** LIT REVIEW TOPICS DUE ON CANVAS BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4 AT 12 PM. ****

WEEK 5 – February 9 – Stalinization

Film + Podcast: *Burnt by the Sun* (1994); Wolff, “Stalin’s Eurasian Foreign Policy” (podcast)*

WEEK 6 – February 16 – The Great Fatherland War

Reading: Grossmann, *A Writer at War*

**** Take-home midterm questions will be posted on CANVAS by 12 PM on Friday, February 18. ****

WEEK 7 – February 23 – Cold War and the Aftermath of Stalin

Reading: Khrushchev, “The Secret Speech”*; Dobrynin, “Washington – Kennedy” (p. 53-118)

****TAKE-HOME MIDTERM (2-3 PAGES/QUESTION) DUE BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25 ON CANVAS. ****

WEEK 8 – March 1 – The Cold War Heats Up?

Reading: Dobrynin, “Washington –Johnson” (p. 119-195)

WEEK 9 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

WEEK 10 – March 15 - International Revolution and the “Third World”: the Soviet Union and Communist Revolution in Latin America and Africa

Reading: Gorsuch, “Cuba, My Love”*; Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World”*

WEEK 11 – March 22 – Soviet Baby Boomers: The Postwar Generation Comes of Age

Film + Podcast: *The Ugly Swans* (2006); Troitskii, “Back in the USSR” (podcast)*;

**** OUTLINE + ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE ON CANVAS BY FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 12 PM. ****

WEEK 12 – March 29 – Stagnation and Consumer Culture

Reading: Dobrynin, “Washington – Nixon” (p. 196-320); Lipman, “Fade to Red?”*

WEEK 13 – April 5 – The Beginning of the End

Reading: Alexeievich, *Voices from Chernobyl*

WEEK 14 – April 12 – The End of an Empire?

Reading: Remnick, *Lenin’s Tomb*

WEEK 15 – April 19 – Revolutions: The New Central Asia

Reading + Film: *Mimino* (1978); Montgomery, “*Namaz, Wishing Trees, and Vodka*”*

WEEK 16 - April 26 – Putin’s Russia in the World

Reading + Podcast: Terrell Starr, “Black in Ukraine (podcast)*; Sandomirskaia, “Return to the Motherland”*

**** LITERATURE REVIEW (5-7 PAGES) DUE BY XXX ON CANVAS. ****