

History 230A

Survey of Russian History

Spring 2016

MWF 8:00-9:25 in TBD

Dr. Ian Stacy
istacy@whatcom.ctc.edu

360.383.3563

Office: LDC 225

Office Hours: TBD and by appt.

Course overview

Description

This 5-credit course in Russian history surveys the period from 1700 to the present. After a brief overview of Russia before the eighteenth century, we will examine the reign and reforms of Peter the Great and the consolidation of the Russian empire. We will move on to Russia's growth as a major world power, the Russian Revolution, and the formation and collapse of the Soviet Union. Along the way, we will explore the role of religion in Russian society, gender relations, the enormous diversity of people within the Russian imperial framework, political systems, and foreign policy. Although our primary focus will be on historical topics, be prepared to discuss current events in today's Russia throughout the course.

This course applies toward the Social/Behavioral Science (SS) and Global Studies (g) distribution requirements.

Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. Create a chronological framework of the historical events Russia and the Soviet Union from the reign of Peter the Great to the present.
2. Research specific topics related to how Russians have dealt with major social and political issues since the 18th century.
3. Identify the main geographical features and the key people, dates, and locations in Russian history related locations and events outside Russia and the Soviet Union.
4. Analyze the important historical movements and pressures in Russia and elsewhere and analyze their impact on modern societies.
5. Interpret primary documents, maps, and other sources of information for their reliability and utility in understanding history.
6. Propose connections between personal and contemporary events and historical forces, using historical references and data.

Summary of important due dates

F 5/13	Midterm exam
F 6/10	Final draft of paper due
W 6/15	Final exam

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Required texts and course materials

Nicholas V. Riasnovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 8th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Adele Baker and Bruce Grant, eds. *The Russia Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University press, 2010.

Additional required readings are available on electronic reserve or at the reserve desk in the WCC library. See reading schedule for more details.

Reading schedule

By Friday of each week, I will create a reading and homework schedule for the following week. A copy of the schedule will be distributed in class and posted to Canvas. A tentative copy of this schedule attached to this syllabus.

Core learning abilities (CLAs)

WCC's core learning abilities – communication, critical thinking, global awareness, information literacy, and quantitative literacy – are skills taught and reinforced throughout our curriculum. These skills are integral to students' professional and personal lives. This course will give you the opportunity to practice and develop global awareness and information literacy.

Assignments and grading

Grade distribution

Homework assignments	20 percent
Participation	10 percent
Exams	40 percent (midterm and final, 20 percent each)
Major writing assignment	20 percent
Weekly current events	10 percent

Assessment criteria

Homework Assignments

Class lectures are meant to supplement, not replace, the readings from the textbook and the primary documents. You will get more out of the lectures and class activities if you have already gained context before coming to class. Expect short homework assignments related to the readings for each class period, approximately 5 to 10 points per day. Unless otherwise noted, homework is due no later than the start of class on the day it is assigned. I will drop the lowest two homework grades to allow for missing a couple assignments.

Participation

Students must come to class prepared to engage the course material and to be active learners. Half the class period will consist of in-class writing assignments, student discussions, or other non-

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lecture activities. These exercises will be worth approximately 5 to 10 total points per hour of class. Participation requires in-class group work, personal writing and reflection exercises, speaking out loud, and periodic seating rearrangements. Occasionally, the daily participation grade will simply reflect attendance. Students arriving late or leaving early without advance notice may lose at least half the participation points for that hour. I will drop the lowest two participation grades.

Exams

Exams cover the readings, lectures, and class activities. Exams are closed-book but you are allowed to create handwritten study guides. You will have 65 minutes to take each exam. We will review how to prepare for exams during Week 4. The final exam is not cumulative. Makeup exams are only allowed in the case of a student's documented illness. You must inform me of your absence via phone or email before the exam and bring in a physician's note when you return to class.

Study aids for exams may be used as follows: for the first part of the exam (short answers and vocabulary) you may use one 8.5 x 11 sheet of standard printer paper, handwritten on one side. For the essay portion of the exam, you may use one 3 x 5 index card, handwritten on one side.

Writing assignment

This quarter you will complete a 4-5 page research and writing assignment based on a classic Russian/Soviet novel. This is not merely a book report but instead an analytical paper that places the novel within the period of Russian history in which it was created, examines the life of the author, and traces the novel's impact on Russian culture and modern literature. Some suggestions:

Bulgakov, *The Master and the Margarita*
Tolstoy, *War and Peace*
Gladkov, *Cement*
Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter*
Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*
Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovitch*
Zamyatin, *We*

There's a lot more out there, so feel free to suggest a different title (I reserve the right of final approval.) A copy of *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* is on reserve at the library.

Weekly current events discussions

One of our primary goals this quarter will be to connect Russia's past with its present and future. To this end, we will be reading the news and discussing our findings as a class. Links to some common news sites are on the course Canvas page, but I encourage you to seek out others. If you don't know whether a news outlet is legitimate or not, I'd be happy to take a look at it. After the first couple weeks, my hope is that you will find a topic, theme, or geographical area that interests you. Please consider becoming the class expert on a specific issue. On Fridays, we will devote approximately 20-30 minutes of class time to discussing modern Russia. To help us along, you will be required to

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submit a one-to-two page summary of your news readings for the week. Be sure to include references and/or web links.

Lecture and Reading Schedule (tentative)

WED 4/6

Topics: Course introduction

Readings: None

FRI 4/8

Topics: *Major themes in contemporary and historic Russia*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 1; *The Russian Reader*, “The Bronze Horseman”

MON 4/11

Topics: *Peter the Great and the Petrine Reforms*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 20

Suggested readings: skim the five chapters in Part IV of Riasanovsky and Steinberg, focusing especially on chapters 18 and 19

WED 4/13

Topics: *From Peter the Great to Catherine the Great*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 21

FRI 4/15

Topics: *Catherine the Great*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 22; *The Russian Reader*, “Love and Conquest”

MON 4/18

Topics: *Society and Culture in 18th-century Russia*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapters 23 and 24; *The Russia Reader*, Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia;” *The Russia Reader*, “Emancipating the Serfs;” *The Russia Reader*, “The Challenged Gentry”

WED 4/20

Topics: *The reign of Alexander I; Russia and Napoleonic Europe*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 25; *The Russian Reader*, “The War of 1812”

FRI 4/22

Topics: *The reign of Nicholas I; Exploration and empire*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 26; *The Russia Reader*, “Chechnya—A Brief Explanation”

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MON 4/25

Topics: *Society and Culture in early 19th-century Russia; the reign of Alexander II*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapters 27, 28, and 29; *The Russia Reader*, "Work Done 'Out of Respect"; *The Russia Reader*, "Progress and Prosperity"

WED 4/27

Topics: *Nicholas I; the 1905 Revolution and its aftermath*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 30 and 31; *The Russia Reader*, "The Communist Manifesto"

FRI 4/29

Film: *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

MON 5/2

Topics: *Intellectual and ideological ferment*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapters 32 and 33; *The Russia Reader*, "The Background of Revolution"

WED 5/4

Topics: *Russia and World War I*

Readings: *The Russia Reader*, "Revolution and the Front;" *The Russia Reader*, "Letters from the Front"

FRI 5/6

Topics: *Lenin; the Revolutions of 1917, part I*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 34; *The Russia Reader*, "The Withering Away of the State"; *The Russia Reader*, "Voices of Revolution"

MON 5/9

Topics: *The Revolutions of 1917, part II*

Required readings: review assignment from 5/6

WED 5/11

MIDTERM EXAM

FRI 5/13

Topics: *An introduction to Soviet Russia*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 35; *The Russia Reader*, "Make Way for Winged Eros"; *The Russia Reader*, "The Bathhouse"

MON 5/16

Topics: *War communism and NEP*

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Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 36; *The Russia Reader*, "The Travels of My Brother Aleksei..."; *The Russia Reader*, "Learning to Labor"

WED 5/18

Topics: *Stalin*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 37; *The Russia Reader*, "Memories and Biographies of the Leningrad Terror"; *The Russia Reader*, "Revelations from the Russian Archives"

FRI 5/20

Topics: *The Soviet Union in World War II*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 38; *The Russia Reader*, "Magnificent Stubbornness"; *The Russia Reader*, "The Diary of a Red Army Soldier"

MON 5/23

Film: *The Cranes are Flying* (1957)

WED 5/25

Topics: *The Cold War begins; Art and literature in Stalin's Soviet Union*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 39; *The Russia Reader*, "The Secret Speech"

FRI 5/27

Topics: *Khrushchev and the Hour of Maximum Danger*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 40; *The Russia Reader*, "The Defense of a Prison Camp Official"

MON 5/30

Memorial Day – no classes

WED 6/1

Topics: *Society and Culture in the Soviet Union*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 41; *The Russia Reader*, "Communal Living in the Soviet Union," *The Russia Reader*, "Trial of a Young Poet"; *The Russia Reader*, "The Soviet Middle Class"

FRI 6/3

Topics: *Satellite States: Life behind the Iron Curtain*

Readings: selections from Drakulic, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (available on e-reserve)

MON 6/6

Topics: *Cold War case studies: Angola and Afghanistan*

Readings: selections from Braithwaite, *Afgantsy* (available on e-reserve)

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WED 6/8

Topics: *Chernobyl*

Readings: "Perils of Progress" (on library reserve)

FRI 6/10

Topics: *Gorbachev and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*

Readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapter 42; *The Russia Reader*, "The Most Responsible Phase of Perestroika"; *The Russia Reader*, "Causes and Collapse of the USSR"

MON 6/13

Topics: *Life after Communism; Putin and the 21st century*

Required readings: Riasanovsky and Steinberg, chapters 43 and 44; *The Russia Reader*, "Pyramids and Prophets"; *The Russia Reader*, "My Precious Capital"

WED 6/15

FINAL EXAM