

THE SOVIET CENTURY (draft syllabus)

Location TBA

MW 10:15-11:15

Prof. Benjamin Nathans
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This course satisfies the Sector II requirement for History and Tradition as well as the Cross-Cultural Analysis requirement.



Comrade Lenin Cleanses the World of Scum (1920)



The Motherland Calls (1941)



The People and the Party are One (1978)

The Russian Revolution marked the opening of the “short twentieth century” (1917-1991), and its demise signaled that turbulent century’s end. During its lifetime, much of the world viewed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as the defining political experiment, the greatest modern challenge to liberalism, capitalism, imperialism, and fascism. This course is about the Soviet century.

We will trace the emergence of the Soviet Union from the ruins of a dynastic empire and its transformation into the showcase of the future. Lectures, readings and recitations will explore the building of the world’s first socialist society and its attempts to recast human relations and human nature itself. Topics include the origins of the Revolutions of 1917, the role of ideology in state policy and everyday life, the Soviet Union

as the center of world communism, the challenge of forging a new society from an ethnically diverse population, the Soviet Union's epic defeat of Nazi Germany, its rise to the status of superpower, its various attempts to reform itself, and its sudden implosion in 1991. We will follow the rulers (from Nicholas II to Lenin, from Stalin to Gorbachev) as well as the ruled (peasants, workers, intellectuals; Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Latvians, Armenians, Georgians, Azeris, and many others). The course will consider the significance of the Soviet Union for Russians today – including Vladimir Putin.

Curiosity about Soviet history and a willingness to explore its drama and complexity are the only prerequisites for this course. No prior knowledge of the subject is assumed.

REQUIREMENTS:

Each week students will attend two lectures and one recitation. If you cannot attend a lecture or recitation, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Please complete the assigned readings as early in the week as possible – you will get more out of the lectures that way. This means allowing yourself sufficient time not just to read but to think about what you've read. Bear in mind that active participation in recitations means asking good questions as well as proposing good answers. I am happy to take questions during lectures too. Recitations will explore the assigned readings – especially the historical documents – as well as the lectures. Students will submit two short papers (Weeks 5 and 10), take three quizzes (Weeks 6, 12, and 16; I will not count the lowest of the three scores), and complete a take-home final exam.

GRADING:

Participation in recitations:	25%	Students are expected to abide by the University of Pennsylvania Code of Academic Integrity, which can be found at:
1000-word essay:	15%	
Strongest Quiz:	5%	
1500-word essay:	25%	
2 nd -Strongest Quiz:	5%	
Take-home final exam:	25%	

<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

READING

Reading assignments will be ca. 120 pp. per week, plus occasional films. Please note that in some weeks the reading load will be heavier, in others - lighter.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at Penn Book Store – 36th and Walnut)

Geoffrey Hosking, *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*
Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel*
Abram Tertz [Andrei Sinyavsky], *The Trial Begins*

Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*
Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*

Course documents, including memoirs, letters, and secret decrees in translation, are available on Canvas. Students should bring the relevant documents to recitation.

HELPFUL REFERENCE WORKS

Ian Barnes. *Restless Empire: A Historical Atlas of Russia* (2015)
Joseph Wieczynski, *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (1976-)
Archie Brown, Michael Kaser, and Gerald S. Smith, eds. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* (1993)
Irina Corten. *Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture: A Selected Guide to Russian Words, Idioms, and Expressions of the Post-Stalin Era, 1953-1991* (1992)
Edward Acton et al., eds. *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921* (1997)
Wolfgang Kasack, ed. *Dictionary of Russian Literature Since 1917* (1988)
Claus Dieter Kernig, ed. *Marxism, Communism and Western Society*. 8 vols. (1972-73)
Martin McCauley. *Who's Who in Russia Since 1900* (1997)
Martin Gilbert. *The Routledge Atlas of Russian History*, 4th ed. (2007)
Robin Milner-Gulland and Nikolai Dejevsky. *Cultural Atlas of Russia and the Soviet Union* (1998)

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE

Jan. 11: **Why Study Soviet History?**

- Hosking, *The First Socialist Society*, 15-34 (19 pp.)
- CANVAS**
- Alexander Herzen, "The Russian People and Socialism" (2 pp.)

Try this on-line Soviet geography quiz:

<https://online.seterra.com/en/vgp/3048>

(don't worry – you'll do better by the end of the course)

WEEK TWO

Jan. 16: **No class: MLK Day**

Jan. 18: **The Russian Empire under the Tsars**

CANVAS

- Adele Barker and Bruce Grant, “A Changing Countryside,” in idem., *The Russia Reader* (7 pp.)
- Petr Kropotkin, “Emancipating the Serfs,” from idem., *The Memoirs of Prince Kropotkin*, excerpted in Barker and Grant, *The Russia Reader* (3pp.)
- Semyon Ivanovich Kanatchikov, *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia* (21 pp.)

WEEK THREE

Jan. 23: **Revolutionary Movements and Marxism in Russia**

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (78 pp.)
Introduction by Martin Malia (pp. vii-xxviii)
Marx’s preface to the Russian Edition of 1882 (pp. 33-34)
The Manifesto (pp. 49-76)

CANVAS

- Karl Marx, “Letter to the Editorial Board of *Fatherland Notes*” (4 pp.)
- Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 3-15 (12 pp.)

Jan. 25: **Why Did the Old Regime Collapse?**

- Hosking, 35-56 (21 pp.) [read von Hagen first]

CANVAS

- Mark von Hagen, “The First World War, 1914-1918,” in Ronald G. Suny, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3, pp. 94-113 (19 pp.)

WEEK FOUR

Jan. 30: **The Russian Revolutions (I)**

CANVAS

- Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 136-179 (43 pp.)
- Sergei Mstislavskii, “The February Rising” from idem, *Five Days Which Transformed Russia* (see glossary at conclusion of this section; use this for other sections of Mstislavskii below) (37 pp.)
- Vladimir Lenin, “April Theses” (3 pp.)
- Vladimir Lenin, “The Withering Away of the State,” in idem., *State and Revolution*, excerpted in Barker and Grant, *The Russia Reader* (5 pp.)
- Documents on war aims and new diplomacy (19 pp.)
 1. Soviet Appeal to the Peoples of the World (March 27, 1917)
 2. Provisional Government on War Aims (April 10, 1917)
 3. Manifesto of the Ukrainian Rada (June 24, 1917)
 4. The Soviet Decree on Peace (November 8, 1917)
 5. Third Universal of the Ukrainian Rada (November 20, 1917)
 6. Soviet Appeal to the Toilers of the East (December 7, 1917)
 7. The Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson (January 8, 1918)

Feb. 1: **The Russian Revolutions (II)**

CANVAS

- Sergei Mstislavskii, “The October Revolution,” from *idem, Five Days*, 111-31 (20 pp.)
- Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 276-301, 344-349 (30 pp.)
- “To the Citizens of Russia!,” “Decree on the Formation of a Workers’ and Peasants’ Government,” and assorted Bolshevik revolutionary legislation (6 pp.)
- Sergei Mstislavskii, “The Day of the Constituent Assembly,” from *idem, Five Days*, 135-55 (20 pp.)
- “Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly” (2 pp.)

WEEK FIVE

Feb. 6: **Spreading the Revolution: Civil War and Comintern**

***** 1000-WORD ESSAY DUE ON FEB. 6 *****

- Hosking, 57-92 (35 pp.)

CANVAS

- The Brest-Litovsk Treaty: Lenin’s Defense (3 pp.)
- Map: Civil War and Foreign Intervention, 1918-21 (1 p.)
- Lenin, “All out for the fight against Denikin!” (2 pp.)
- Letter from Lenin on Dealing with Peasant Revolts (SECRET) (1 p.)
- Cheka Response to Attempt on Lenin’s Life and the Murder of Uritskii (2 pp.)
 - Invitation to the 1st Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) (3 pp.)
- Manifesto of the Communist International to the Proletariat of the Entire World (2 pp.)
- Theses on the Conditions for Admission to the Communist International (3 pp.)

FILM: *The End of St. Petersburg* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927; 89 minutes)

Feb. 8: **Soviet Union—A Reconstituted Empire?**

- Hosking, 93-118 (25 pp.)

CANVAS

- Ronald Grigor Suny, “State-Building and Nation-Making: The Soviet Experience,” in *idem, The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 84-126 (42 pp.)
- The Union Constitution of 1924 (2 pp.)
- Lists of Ethnic/National Categories in the Soviet Censuses of 1926 and 1939 (4 pp.)

WEEK SIX

Feb. 13: **The Communist Party as Ruling Institution**

- Hosking, 119-148 (29 pp.)

CANVAS

- Instructions for Carrying out Verification of Party members, 1921 (4 pp.)
- Chart: The Party Hierarchy (1 p.)
- Lenin, "The Tax in Kind" (2 pp.)
- Correspondence of Bukharin and Dzerzhinsky (SECRET) (2 pp.)
- Kamenev to Ordzhonikidze, Dec. 10, 1927 (1 p.)
- Peasant letters to Stalin (2 pp.)
- "Bublichki" (1 p.)

Feb. 15: **Socialist Culture**

***** Quiz #1 in class *****

- John Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 3-51, 55-67, 82-92, 117-139 (91 pp.)
Interested in John Scott's father, who was fired from the Wharton School in 1915 for being too radical? Go to <http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0302/hughes.html>

CANVAS

- Richard Stites, "Iconoclastic Currents in the Russian Revolution" (19 pp.)
- Mikhail Gerasimov, "We" (1 p.)
- LEF (Left Front in Art), "Manifesto" (2 pp.)
- Central Committee, "On the Policy of the Party in the Field of Literature" (2 pp.)
- Alexandra Kollontai, "Make Way for Winged Eros," excerpted in Barker and Grant, *The Russia Reader* (10 pp.)
- Lev Trotsky, "Vodka, the Church, and Cinema" (4 pp.)
- Check Google Images for works by **Kazimir Malevich** and **Marc Chagall**

WEEK SEVEN

Feb. 20 **Building Socialism, I: Collectivization and Industrialization**

- Hosking, 149-204 (55 pp.)
- Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 173-206 (33 pp.)

CANVAS

- Stalin, "The Right Deviation in the CPSU(B)" (4 pp.)
- Discussion of the Law on Abolition of Legal Abortion, June 9, 1936 (2 pp.)
- Maxim Gorky, "Soviet Literature" (3 pp.)
- Susan Buck-Morss, "A Cosmopolitan Project," in Barker and Grant, eds., *A Russia Reader* (7 pp.)

Feb. 22: **Building Socialism, II: Terror and Retrenchment**

- Hosking, 205-260 (55 pp.)
- Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 209-249 (40 pp.)

CANVAS

- Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*, 1-14, 115-164 (63 pp.)
- Letter from Bukharin to the Politburo, February 20, 1937 (1 p.)
- Letter from Bukharin to the Supreme Soviet, March 13, 1938 (2 pp.)

WEEK EIGHT

Feb. 27: **The Soviet Union and “Total War”**

- Hosking, 261-295 (34 pp.)
- Scott, *Behind the Urals*, pp. 253-266, 280-306 (39 pp.)

CANVAS

- Order by Marshall Voroshilov Concerning a Counterrevolutionary Fascist Organization in the Red Army, June 7, 1937 (SECRET) (3 pp.)
- German Documents on Operation “Barbarossa” (1940-41) (8 pp.)
- Mobilization Against the German Invasion (2 pp.)

Mar. 1: **Red Triumph**

CANVAS

- Konstantin Simonov, “Wait For Me” (July 1941) and “Smolensk Roads” (November 1941) (3 pp.)
 - Lev Kopelev, *To Be Preserved Forever*, pp. 1-3, 35-58 (26 pp.)
 - Stalin on the Great Russians (1 pp.)
 - Stalin’s speech on Nov. 7, 1941: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poOZFKoEx9c>
 - Stalin and the Orthodox Church (2 pp.)
 - Stalin’s Analysis of Victory (4 pp.)
 - The *Internationale* (1871) and the Soviet State Anthem (1944) (2 pp.)
- For background on Russian/Soviet anthems, with downloadable audio versions, go to:
http://www.stanford.edu/class/slavgen194a/hymn/anthem_history.htm

WEEK NINE S P R I N G B R E A K

WEEK TEN

Mar. 13: **Victory and Devastation: Stalinism Triumphant**

- Hosking, 296-325 (29 pp.)

CANVAS

- Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*: “Through the Snow,” “A Day Off” and “Lend-Lease,” pp. ix-xvii, 3-4, 103-6, 275-83 (21 pp.)
- Benjamin Nathans, “To Hell and Back,” *New York Review of Books* vol. 65, no. 198 (Dec. 8, 2018), pp. 34-36 (3 pp.)
See also: <http://www.shalamov.ru/en/> (virtual library with texts by and about Shalamov)
- The Zhdanov Movement (4 pp.)
- Party Control of Science: The Case of Genetics (2 pp.)
- The Campaign against “Cosmopolitanism” (4 pp.)

Mar. 15: **From War to Cold War**

***** 1500-WORD ESSAY DUE ON MAR. 15 *****

- Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 1-93 (93 pp.)

CANVAS

- The following texts are from Martin McCauley, ed., *The Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1949*, pp. 131-41 (10 pp.):
George Kennan, The Long Telegram
Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” Speech
Stalin’s Reply to Churchill’s Speech
Byrnes’s Speech at Stuttgart
Henry Wallace, “The Tougher We Get...”
Molotov on “Equal Opportunity”
The Truman Doctrine, The Marshall Plan
The “Mr. X.” Article
Vyshinsky on the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan
- The Cominform (4 pp.)
- Comments to Stalin from Zhukov and Litvinov on American Proposals for Disarming and Demilitarization of Germany and Japan (SECRET) (4 pp.)

WEEK ELEVEN

Mar. 20: **The “Thaw”**

- Hosking, 326-362 (36 pp.)
- Tertz/Sinyavsky, *The Trial Begins*, 3-57 (54 pp.) [for discussion in Week 13]

CANVAS

- Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” (De-Stalinization) (4 pp.)
- Stalin’s Coffin (4 pp.)

Film: *Ballad of a Soldier*, (Grigorii Chukhrai, 1959; 88 minutes)

Mar. 22: **The Soviet Union as Superpower**

- Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp. 94-153 (59 pp.)

CANVAS

- The following texts are from Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ed., *The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union*, pp. 266-80 (15 pp.):
Khrushchev, “Speech to the Higher Party School of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CPSU”
Andrei Gromyko, “Some International Implications of the Cuban Missile Crisis”
Open Letter from CPSU Central Committee to Party Organizations and All Communists of the Soviet Union [re: China]”
- Khrushchev and Nixon: The Kitchen Debate
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CvQOUncY4>

WEEK TWELVE

Mar. 27: **Refrigerators and Apartments**

- Hosking, 363-401 (38 pp.)
- Tertz/Sinyavsky, *The Trial Begins*, 58-126 (68 pp.)
- Videos of communal apartments: <http://kommunalka.colgate.edu/cfm/about.cfm>
Click on “Video tours” (upper left), then choose your tours.

Mar. 29: **Cracks in the Monolith**

***** Quiz #2 in class *****

- Hosking, 402-445 (43 pp.)

CANVAS

- Excerpts from Andrei Sinyavsky’s Trial (34 pp.)
- Andrei Sinyavsky, “Dissent as a Personal Experience” (6 pp.)
- Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs*, pp. 190-95, 281-94 (19 pp.)
- Currents of Dissent - Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Roy Medvedev (10 pp.)
- Andropov [head of the KGB] to the Central Committee [of the Communist Party] on the spread of samizdat, Dec. 21, 1970 (SECRET) (3 pp.)
- Letter from Andropov to Brezhnev re: Solzhenitsyn, Feb. 7, 1974 (SECRET) (4 pp.)
- KGB and Central Committee report on Sakharov, Feb. 8, 1980 (SECRET) (4 pp.)
- Iurii Andropov on dissent, *Izvestiia* [News], September 10, 1977
- Vladimir Vysotskii, “They’re Hunting Wolves” (1 p.)
- Vladimir Vysotskii, Letter to the Central Committee Secretary (3 pp.)
- Vladimir Vysotskii Website (texts and songs in Real Audio):
<http://www.kulichki.com/vv/> (to the right of the photograph, click on “25+”)

WEEK THIRTEEN

Apr. 3: **Stagnation or Stability?**

- Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 1-57 (57 pp.)
- Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 192-264 (72 pp.)

CANVAS

- The Brezhnev Doctrine (3 pp.)
- The Helsinki Accords (4 pp.)
- Report from the KGB on the “Group for Implementation of the Helsinki Accords in the USSR” (SECRET) (2 pp.)
- Tatiana Zaslavskaja, “Novosibirsk Report” (4 pp.)
- James R. Millar, “The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism,” *Slavic Review* vol. 44, no.4 (1985): 694-706

FILM: *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (Vladimir Menshov, 1980; 150 minutes)

Apr. 5: **“Restructuring”**

- Kotkin, 58-112 (55 pp.)

CANVAS

- The Gorbachev Years: A Timeline
- Gorbachev’s Speech on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution (“Reopening the Past”) (5 pp.)
- Nina Andreyeva, “I Cannot Forego Principles” (3 pp.)
- Gorbachev, “The New Thinking” (4 pp.)
- Eduard Shevardnaze, Excerpts from *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (3 pp.)

WEEK FOURTEEN

Apr. 10: **The Soviet Economy: Ill or Terminally Ill?**

- Readings TBA

Apr. 12: **End of Empire**

- Kotkin, 113-141 (28 pp.)

CANVAS

- The following texts are from Victoria Bonnell et al., eds., *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup*:

- “Appeal to the Soviet People” from the State Committee for the State of Emergency (August 19, 1991), pp. 33-38 (6 pp.)
- Interrogation of Defense Minister Dmitrii Yazov (Aug. 22, 1991), pp. 55-63 (9 pp.)
- Moscow’s M. V. Khrunichev Machine-Building Factory Reacts to the August Coup, pp. 111-19 (9 pp.)
- The Rejection of Imperial Ambition: *Izvestiia*’s Comment, Jan. 28, 1992 (3 pp.)
- DDT – “Born in the USSR” (lyrics)

WEEK FIFTEEN

Apr. 17: **Rubble and Rubles: The New Russia**

- Kotkin, 142-196 (54 pp.)
- Documents TBA from Barker and Grant, eds., *The Russia Reader*
- Selections TBA from Svetlana Alexievich, *Second Hand Time*

Apr. 19: **The Presence of the Past: The Soviet Afterlife in Today's Russia**

- Readings TBA

WEEK SIXTEEN

April 24: **Vladimir Putin, Soviet Man**

***** Quiz #3 in class *****

- Readings TBA

April 26: **Concluding Thoughts and Q&A**

***** TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT IN CLASS -
DUE BY NOON ON FRIDAY MAY 5 *****