



*In Defense of the USSR!*  
(V. Kulagina, 1930)

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

**History 3250Y: The Soviet Experiment**  
**2009-10 FW**

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**T**he general aim of this course is to examine the history of the Soviet Union—the first large-scale experiment with revolutionary socialism and communism—from the Revolution of 1917 to the end of the Soviet project in 1991. As one historian has observed, “The Soviet Union was always in the minds of its supporters more than just a state; it was a dream. Even when the dream descended into a nightmare, the expectations remained that prosperity or reform would fulfill the aspirations of the founders.” For others—especially in the West during the Cold War—the Soviet experiment came to be seen as an aberration, devoid of idealism and promoted by men who ruthlessly craved power, lacked popular support, and who were willing to employ violence and terror against a recalcitrant population. With the opening of Soviet archives in the late 1980s, historians have had a fresh opportunity to move beyond these simple binary models and to reconceptualize the nature of the Soviet system. HIST 3250 will consider the history of the Soviet Union through the lens of this new scholarship with a particular focus on the complexities and contradictions of the Soviet experiment. We will look at this history from the “top down” as well as from the “bottom up” and will explore, through memoirs, letters, short-stories, and other primary sources, the existential terrain in between.

## Course Format

HIST 3250 consists of a weekly two-hour class as well as five 90-minute tutorials per term. (The exact dates of the tutorials are listed in the Course Schedule below.) Since lectures, assignments, and tutorials are intended to complement—not duplicate—each other, preparation and participation are essential to the successful completion of History 3250 and are obligatory for all students in the course.

## WebCT and The Green Initiative

Making and recycling paper are energy intensive processes. In an effort to conserve energy, I will be using as little paper as possible in HIST 3250 and will be relying on myLearningSystem(WebCT) instead. All assignments will be posted on the WebCT site (<http://www.trentu.ca/admin/it/webct/welcome.shtml>). I also *strongly encourage* you to submit your written work to me by email rather than in hard copy form. You can send your assignments to me as an attachment (to [oandriewsky@trentu.ca](mailto:oandriewsky@trentu.ca) or through the WebCT mail function). Your assignment will then be graded and returned to you by email. If you have difficulty submitting your assignment in this form, please let me know and we will find a solution or work out an alternative arrangement.

## Course Requirements and Grading

The course is specifically designed to help students develop their reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills—as well as their knowledge of history—over the course of the year. Additional information concerning essays, quizzes, and exams will be provided in class.

*Please note:* **Students are required to keep all notes for their essays and may be required to hand them in. Failure to do so can result in an F on the essay.** All deadlines are **firm** and late assignments will be marked down **by 5 points per day**. **The instructor reserves the right NOT to provide comments on essays that are handed in late.** (Exceptions for medical or personal reasons will only be made with proper documentation.)

Grading in History 3250 will be divided as follows:

Map Quiz	3	%	October 14
First Writing Assignment	7	%	October 23
Second Writing Assignment	15	%	December 4
Mid-Year Exam	10	%	December 9
Third Writing Assignment	15	%	February 1
Fourth Writing Assignment	7	%	March 22
Tutorial participation	25	%	
Final exam	20	%	

## Access to Instruction

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, [disabilityservices@trentu.ca](mailto:disabilityservices@trentu.ca)) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

## Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. All History 3250 students have a responsibility to educate themselves – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: [www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

## Textbooks

The following textbooks are required reading and can be purchased in the bookstore:

- Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*
- Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened*
- Miron Dolot, *Execution by Hunger*
- Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*
- Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*
- Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era*

## COURSE SCHEDULE

FALL TERM	LECTURE/TUTORIAL
SEPT. 16	<b>Studying Soviet History</b>
SEPT. 23	<b>The Imperial Legacy</b>
SEPT. 23	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>Introduction to 3250</i>
SEPT. 30	<b>The Revolutions of 1917</b>
OCT. 7	<b>Civil War and War Communism</b>
OCT. 7	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
OCT. 14	<b>The New Economic Policy</b>
OCT. 14 ★	▶ MAP QUIZ (In Class)
Oct. 21	<b>Living the Revolution</b>
OCT. 21	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>Homeless Children: A Case Study in Early Social Reform</i>
OCT. 23 ★	▶ FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

OCT. 28	READING WEEK
NOV. 4	<b>Nationalism, Communism, and the “Affirmative Action Empire”</b>
NOV. 11	<b>Women, Gender and the Party-State</b>
NOV. 11	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>The Affirmative Action Empire</i>
NOV. 18	<b>Stalin and “Revolution from Above”</b>
NOV. 25	<b>The Year of Great Change (1928)</b>
DEC. 2	<b>The Peasantry and Collectivization</b>
DEC. 2	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>Famine of 1932-33</i>
DEC. 4 ★	▶ SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
DEC. 9 ★	▶ IN-CLASS MID-YEAR EXAMINATION
JAN. 13	<b>Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars</b>
JAN. 20	<b>Understanding the “Great Terror”</b>
JAN. 27	<b>Everyday Stalinism</b>
JAN. 27	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>The Terror</i>
FEB. 1 ★	▶ THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
FEB. 3	<b>The “Great Fatherland” War: Part I</b>
FEB. 9	LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT PENALTY
Feb. 10	<b>The “Great Fatherland” War: Part II</b>
FEB. 10	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>Ivan’s War</i>
FEB. 24	<b>Post-War Reconstruction and High Stalinism (1945-1953)</b>
MARCH 3	<b>The Adventures of Nikita Khrushchev</b>
MARCH 10	<b>From De-Stalinization to Dissent</b>
MARCH 17	<b>The Paradoxes of “Developed Socialism”</b>
MARCH 17	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>The Thaw Generation</i>
MARCH 22 ★	▶ FOURTH WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
MARCH 24	<b>The Making of Mikhail Gorbachev</b>
MARCH 31	<b>The Ambiguities of Perestroika and Glasnost’</b>
MARCH 31	◆ TUTORIAL: <i>The Unmaking of the Soviet Order</i>
APRIL 7	<b>1991 and the End of the Soviet Experiment</b>

## READINGS

Reading assignments should be read in the order listed and should be completed by the date indicated. The Suny readings (Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment* ) will provide you with the necessary background for lectures and tutorial readings. The “WebCT” designation is to alert you that the reading is on electronic reserve and can be linked through the History 3250 website.

**FALL TERM**

SEPT. 16      **STUDYING SOVIET HISTORY** (no reading)

SEPT. 23      **THE IMPERIAL LEGACY**

READINGS: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, pp. 3-34, 96-120

SEPT. 23	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Introduction to HIST 3250</i> (NO READING)
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SEPT. 30      **THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1917**

READING: Suny, pp. 35-55; Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (WebCT)

OCT. 7         **CIVIL WAR AND WAR COMMUNISM**

READING: Suny, pp.56-95; 123-139

OCT. 7	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
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OCT. 7	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
	◆ <b>TUTORIAL READINGS:</b> S. Fitzpatrick and Y. Slezkine, eds. <i>In the Shadow of Revolution</i> , select pages (WebCT)

OCT. 7	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
	◆ <b>TUTORIAL READINGS:</b> S. Fitzpatrick and Y. Slezkine, eds. <i>In the Shadow of Revolution</i> , select pages (WebCT)
	◆ <b>CONSIDER:</b> How does social position (class, status) affect memory and personal narratives? Did women experience revolution differently from men?

OCT. 14	▶ <b>MAP QUIZ (IN CLASS)</b>
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OCT. 14      **THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY**

READING: Suny, pp. 140-183; Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened*, pp. 1-126

OCT. 21      **LIVING THE REVOLUTION**

READING: Suny, pp. 183-213

OCT. 21	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Homeless Children: A Case Study in Early Social Reform</i>
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OCT. 21	◆ <b>TUTORIAL:</b> <i>Homeless Children: A Case Study in Early Social Reform</i>
	◆ <b>TUTORIAL READINGS:</b> Alan M. Ball, <i>And Now My Soul is Hardened</i> (complete)

**Consider:** What caused homelessness among children? Why did efforts to overcome the problem fail?

**OCT. 23** ► **FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

**OCT. 28** READING BREAK

**NOV. 4** NATIONALISM, COMMUNISM, AND THE “AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPIRE”

**READING:** Terry Martin, “The Affirmative Action Empire: The Emergence of Soviet Nationalities Policy” (WebCT)

**NOV. 11** WOMEN, GENDER, AND THE PARTY-STATE

**NOV. 11** ◆ **TUTORIAL:** *The Affirmative Action Empire*

**Tutorial Readings:** Review Martin; “The Code of Laws on Marriage and Divorce, the Family and Guardianship, November 19, 1926” (WebCT); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, select pages (WebCT)

**Consider:** How and why did the Party-State promote the equality of minorities and women? How did the campaign to end the seclusion of Muslim women play out on the ground?

**NOV. 18** STALIN AND THE “REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE”

**READING:** Suny, pp. 217-232

**NOV. 25** 1928: THE YEAR OF GREAT CHANGE”

**READING:** Suny, pp. 233-251

**DEC. 2** THE PEASANTRY AND COLLECTIVIZATION

**DEC. 2** ◆ **TUTORIAL:** *The Famine of 1932-33*

**Tutorial Readings:** Review Suny, pp. 221-228; Miron Dolot, *Execution by Hunger* (entire); Select reading *Black Deeds of the Kremlin* (WebCT)

**Consider:** How does Dolot explain the famine? How might his account have been affected by the time and place of its writing?

	Compare Dolot's interpretation of the famine with those of eyewitnesses who gave their accounts immediately after World War II.
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<b>DEC. 4</b>	<b>▶ SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>
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<b>DEC. 9</b>	<b>▶ MID YEAR EXAMINATION (IN CLASS)</b>
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## WINTER TERM

**JAN. 13**      **STALIN AND THE SOVIET SCIENCE WARS**

**JAN. 20**      **UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT TERROR**

**READING:** Suny, pp. 252-268; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s" (WebCT); Begin reading Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*

**JAN. 27**      **EVERYDAY STALINISM**

**READING:** Suny, pp. 269-290

<b>JAN. 27</b>	<b>◆ Tutorial:</b> <i>The Great Terror</i>
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**Tutorial Readings:** Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* (entire); Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts" (WebCT)

**Consider:** How did Ginzburg experience the terror? How did she find meaning in her ordeal? How does her memoir compare to the autobiographical texts described by Hellbeck?

<b>FEB. 1</b>	<b>▶ THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>
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**FEB. 3**      **THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR": PART 1**

**READING:** Suny, pp. 291-336; Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*, pp. 1-187

**FEB. 10 THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR": PART 2**

READING: Suny, pp. 309-336

<b>FEB. 10</b>	<b>◆Tutorial:</b> <i>The Myth of War</i>
	<b>Tutorial Readings:</b> Catherine Merridale, <i>Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945</i> (complete)
	<b>Consider:</b> In what ways did the myth of the war shape the memory of its survivors? Why, do you think, did the survivors have such difficulty remembering "what the war was really like"?

**FEB. 17 READING BREAK**

**FEB. 24 POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AND HIGH STALINISM (1945-53)**

READING: Suny, pp. 337-384

**MARCH 3 THE ADVENTURES OF NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV**

READING: Suny, pp. 387-420; Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" to the XXth Party Congress (WebCT)

**MARCH 10 FROM DE-STALINIZATION TO DISSENT**

READING: Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (begin reading)

**MARCH 17 THE PARADOXES OF "DEVELOPED SOCIALISM"**

READING: Suny, pp. 421-446

<b>MARCH 17</b>	<b>◆Tutorial:</b> <i>The Thaw Generation</i>
	<b>Tutorial Readings:</b> Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, <i>The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era</i> (complete); Yuli Daniel, "This is Moscow Speaking" (WebCT)
	<b>Consider:</b> How does Alexeyeva explain the rise of the dissident movement? Why was Daniel arrested in 1966 and sentenced to 5 years of hard labor for writing this story?

MARCH 22	▶ FOURTH ESSAY DUE IN SEMINAR
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MARCH 24 THE MAKING OF MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

READING: Suny, pp. 449-468

MARCH 31 THE AMBIGUITIES OF PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST'

READING: Suny, pp. 469-484

MARCH 31	◆ <b>Tutorial:</b> <i>The Unmaking of the Soviet Order</i>
	<b>Tutorial Reading:</b> <i>Dear Comrade Editor: Readers' Letters to the Soviet Press under Perestroika</i> select pages (WebCT); Michael Urban, "Glasnost, Mass Media and the Emergence of Political Society" (WebCT)
	<b>Consider:</b> What were some of the most common themes and complaints in the letters to the press in the late 1980s? What role, according to Urban, did the mass media play in the dynamics of glasnost and perestroika?

APRIL 7 1991 AND THE END OF THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT