



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

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
TRENT UNIVERSITY

History 3250Y: The Soviet Experiment
20011-12 FW
Oshawa Campus

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The 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, autobiographies, and other primary sources, the existential terrain in between.

General Expectations and Outcomes

History 3250 is designed to help students further develop their skills in historical research, analysis, and interpretation. Students will be encouraged to explore a wide variety of genres of historical writing, including both primary and secondary sources, to assess evidence critically, and to situate their own original arguments in the context of the existing scholarship. In essays and seminar discussions, students will refine their ability to communicate their ideas effectively and logically. By the end of the course, students should recognize the complexity of the task of trying to understand the past, comprehend the evolving nature of historical knowledge, appreciate the importance of personal initiative and accountability, and understand the rules of academic integrity and professionalism.

General Requirements and Grading

HIST 3250 consists of a weekly two-hour class as well as a two-hour seminar fortnightly. 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. Please check <http://www.trentu.ca/admin/mytrent/AcademicTimetable.htm> to confirm times and locations. Please note: **Attendance at lectures and in seminar is factored into the class participation grade.**

Grading in History 3250 will be divided as follows:

Map Quiz	3	%	October 13
First Writing Assignment (5 pages)	5	%	October 24
Mid-Year Exam	10	%	December 1
Second Writing Assignment (12-15 pp.)	17	%	December 8
Third Writing Assignment (12-15 pp.)	18	%	February 20
Class Participation	27	%	
Final exam	20	%	

Specific Requirements

Seminars: In preparation for seminar, all students will be required to read specific seminar readings and submit one question for discussion based on those readings. Questions must be posted on myLearningSystem(WebCT) and are due by Wednesday at 10 a.m. before the seminar. (Seminar dates and readings are listed below.) The questions will then used as a basis for discussion.

Class Participation: The class participation grade (27%) is calculated on the basis of the quality of participation in seminar discussions, submission of relevant questions for seminar discussion, attendance in seminar, and attendance at lecture (3%). The grading scheme will be explained more fully in the introductory lecture and seminar.

Essays: There are three writing assignments in HIST 3250: a 5 page assignment due on October 24; a 12-15 essay due on December 8; and a 12-15 page essay due on February 20. At the beginning of the year, students will choose an avatar, i.e., assume an identity of a person born in 1900. Each writing assignment will take the form of a personal narrative, i.e., the three assignments will be written from the perspective of this character at different points in Soviet history. Assignment will be posted on WebCT well in advance of the due date and further information will be provided in class.

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 3 points per day**. **Assignments that are more than one week late will not receive comments.**

Quizzes and Exams: There is one 20-minute map quiz in the course worth 3% of the final grade, a one-hour in class midterm examination worth 10% of the final grade, and a two-hour final exam worth 20% of the final grade. The midterm and final exams will consist of identifications and essay questions. Further information will be provided in class.

MyLearning 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 heavily on **MyLearningSystem(WebCT)**. All documents relevant to the course, including the syllabus and essay assignments will be posted on the WebCT site. You can access the site through <http://www.trentu.ca/admin/it/webct/welcome.shtml>

You should familiarize yourself with the course site as early in the fall as possible and continue to check in regularly. Course announcements will be posted on the site. You will also be submitting seminar questions and essays through MyLearning (WebCT) throughout the year. Assignments will be graded and returned to you through the drop box. 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.

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.

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 (Room 111, 905-435-5100, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Textbooks

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

- Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, Second Edition
- Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In the Shadow of Revolution*
- 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*
- Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children* (available in paperback Nov. 2011)

LECTURE, SEMINAR & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

FALL TERM	
SEPT. 8	LECTURE: Studying Soviet History
SEPT. 15	LECTURE: The Imperial Legacy
SEPT. 15	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>Introduction to 3250</i>
SEPT. 22	LECTURE: The Revolutions of 1917
SEPT. 29	LECTURE: Civil War and War Communism
SEPT. 29	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
OCT. 6	LECTURE: The New Economic Policy
OCT. 13	★ ◆ MAP QUIZ (In Class)
Oct. 13	LECTURE: Living the Revolution
OCT. 20	LECTURE: Nationalism, Communism, & the "Affirmative Action Empire"
OCT. 20	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>Constructing a Revolutionary Culture</i>
OCT. 24	★ ◆ FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
OCT. 24-28	★ ◆ READING WEEK
NOV. 3	LECTURE: Women and the Party-State
NOV. 10	LECTURE: Stalin and "Revolution from Above"
NOV. 10	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>The Affirmative Action Empire</i>
NOV. 17	LECTURE: The Year of Great Change (1928)
NOV. 24	LECTURE: The Peasantry and Collectivization
NOV. 24	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>Famine of 1932-33</i>
DEC. 1	★ ◆ IN-CLASS MID-YEAR EXAMINATION
DEC. 8	★ ◆ SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE

WINTER TERM	
JAN. 12	LECTURE: Understanding the "Great Terror"
JAN. 19	LECTURE: Everyday Stalinism
JAN. 19	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>The Terror</i>
JAN. 26	NO LECTURE
FEB. 2	LECTURE: The "Great Fatherland" War: Part I
FEB. 7	★ LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT PENALTY
FEB. 9	LECTURE: The "Great Fatherland" War: Part II
FEB. 9	🚩 SEMINAR: : <i>The Myth of War</i>
Feb. 16	LECTURE: Post-War Reconstruction and High Stalinism (1945-1953)
FEB. 20	★ ⬠ THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
FEB. 20-24	★ READING WEEK
MARCH 1	LECTURE: The Adventures of Nikita Khrushchev
MARCH 8	LECTURE: From De-Stalinization to Dissent
MARCH 8	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>The Thaw Generation</i>
MARCH 15	LECTURE: The Paradoxes of "Developed Socialism"
MARCH 22	The Making of Mikhail Gorbachev
MARCH 22	🚩 WEEK B SEMINAR: <i>The Unmaking of the Soviet Order</i>
MARCH 29	LECTURE: The Ambiguities of Perestroika and Glasnost'
APRIL 5	LECTURE: 1991 and the End of the Soviet Experiment
APRIL 5	🚩 SEMINAR: <i>Reflecting on the Soviet Experiment</i>

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*, 2nd edition) will provide you with the necessary background for lectures and Seminar readings. The "WebCT" designation is to alert you that the reading is linked through the History 3250 website.

FALL TERM

SEPT. 8 STUDYING SOVIET HISTORY

SEPT. 15 THE IMPERIAL LEGACY

READINGS: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, ch. 1 & 4

SEPT. 15	◆ SEMINAR: <i>Introduction to HIST 3250 (NO READING)</i>
	Seminar Reading: <i>Socialism and Communism (WebCT)</i>
SEPT. 22	THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1917
	READING: Suny, chap. 2
SEPT. 29	CIVIL WAR AND WAR COMMUNISM
	READING: Suny, chap. 3 & 5
SEPT. 29	◆ SEMINAR: <i>Experiencing Revolution/Interpreting Voices</i>
	Seminar Readings: S. Fitzpatrick and Y. Slezkine, eds. <i>In the Shadow of Revolution</i> , pp. 3-17; 30-65; 123-139
	Consider: How did social position (class, status), gender, and age affect individual experience and interpretation of the Revolution?
OCT. 6	THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY
	READING: Suny, chap. 6 & 7 (to page 200); Fitzpatrick, pp. 167-206
OCT. 13	★ MAP QUIZ (IN CLASS)
OCT. 13	LIVING THE REVOLUTION
	READING: Suny, chap. 7 (complete) & chap. 8
OCT. 20	NATIONALISM, COMMUNISM, AND THE “AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPIRE”
	READING: Terry Martin, “The Affirmative Action Empire: The Emergence of Soviet Nationalities Policy” (linked through WebCT)
OCT. 20	◆ SEMINAR: <i>Constructing a Revolutionary Culture</i>
	Seminar Readings: Victoria E. Bonnell, <i>Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin</i> , chap. 1 & 2 (linked through WebCT)
	Consider: What values were Soviet posters intended to promote? How are class and gender portrayed in the posters?

OCT. 24	★ FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
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OCT. 24-28 READING BREAK

NOV. 3 WOMEN AND THE PARTY-STATE
 READING: Fitzpatrick, pp. 167-208, 213-18

NOV. 10 STALIN AND THE "REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE"
 READING: Suny, chap. 9

NOV. 10	◆ SEMINAR: <i>The Affirmative Action Empire</i>
	Seminar Readings: Vladimir Brovkin, "Women: False Promises, Dashed Hopes, and the Pretense of Emancipation," <i>Russia After Lenin : Politics, Culture and Society, 1921-1929</i> (linked through WebCT); Douglas Northrop, <i>Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia</i> , select pages (linked through WebCT); Review Fitzpatrick, pp. 167-208, 213-18
	Consider: How and why did the Party-State promote the equality of minorities and women? How did the campaign to emancipate women play out on the ground?

NOV. 17 1928: THE YEAR OF GREAT CHANGE"
 READING: Suny, chap. 10, Fitzpatrick, pp. 252-281

NOV. 24 THE PEASANTRY AND COLLECTIVIZATION

NOV. 24	◆ SEMINAR: <i>The Famine of 1932-33</i>
	Seminar Readings: Miron Dolot, <i>Execution by Hunger</i> (entire)
	Consider: How does Dolot explain the famine? How might his account have been affected by the time and place of its writing?

DEC. 1	★ MID YEAR EXAMINATION (IN CLASS)
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DEC. 8	★ SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
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WINTER TERM

JAN. 12 UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT TERROR

READING: Suny, chap. 11; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s" (WebCT); Begin reading Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*

JAN. 19 EVERYDAY STALINISM

READING: Suny, chap. 12, Fitzpatrick, pp. 367-390

JAN. 19	◆ Seminar: <i>The Great Terror</i>
	<p>Seminar Readings: Eugenia Ginzburg, <i>Journey into the Whirlwind</i> (entire)</p> <p>Consider: How did Ginzburg experience the terror? How did she find meaning in her ordeal?</p>

JAN. 26 NO LECTURE

FEB. 2 THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR": PART 1

READING: Suny, chap. 13; Begin reading Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*

FEB. 9 THE "GREAT FATHERLAND WAR": PART 2

READING: Suny, chap. 14

FEB. 9	◆ Seminar: <i>The Myth of War</i>
	<p>Seminar Readings: Catherine Merridale, <i>Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945</i> (complete)</p> <p>Consider: 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"?</p>

FEB. 16 **POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AND HIGH STALINISM (1945-53)**
READING: Suny, chap. 15 & 16, Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp. 23-59

FEB. 20	★ THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
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FEB. 20-24 **READING BREAK**

MARCH 1 **THE ADVENTURES OF NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV**
READING: Suny, chap. 17; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp. 60-161

MARCH 8 **FROM DE-STALINIZATION TO DISSENT**

MARCH 8	◇ Seminar: <i>The Thaw Generation</i>
	Seminar Reading: Review Zubok's <i>Zhivago's Children</i> to page 161
	Consider: How does Zubok explain the rise of the dissident movement? What were the limitations of the dissident movement?

MARCH 15 **THE PARADOXES OF "DEVELOPED SOCIALISM"**
READING: Suny, chap. 18, Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp. 161-334

MARCH 22 **THE MAKING OF MIKHAIL GORBACHEV**
READING: Suny, chap. 19

MARCH 22	◇ Seminar: <i>The Unmaking of the Soviet Order</i>
	Seminar Reading: Review Zubok, <i>Zhivago's Children</i> , pp. 161-334
	Consider: What, according to Zubok, happened to the dissident movement during the Brezhnev era?

MARCH 29 **THE AMBIGUITIES OF PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST'**

READING: *Dear Comrade Editor: Readers' Letters to the Soviet Press under Perestroika* select pages (linked through WebCT)

APRIL 5 **1991 AND THE END OF THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT**

APRIL 5	◆ Seminar: <i>Reflecting on the Soviet Experiment</i> (NO READING)
	Consider: Was the Soviet experiment a failure?