

# **Russia, the Soviet Union, and the CIS**

HIS 240, Spring 2020

Tues/Thurs 12:50-2:35, Old Main 203

<https://www.russiasovietunionciss20.theleahgoldman.com/blog/>

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Office Hours Mon 10-12, Tues 11-12, or by appointment

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## **Course Description**

In this course, we will explore Russia's unique journey through the twentieth century, an era that saw the death of the Empire, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, and the founding of the Russian Federation, a young country that remains in flux. Our journey will focus primarily on the triumphs and tragedies of the Soviet era, which we will examine from a variety of angles, including power politics, economic development, everyday life, and creative expression. As we make our way from revolutionary utopianism to authoritarianism, from stagnation to thwarted rebirth, we will listen to a variety of voices. Though close reading and discussion of primary sources, supplemented by lectures, we will discover the perspectives of workers-turned-Stalinist elites, "modernized" minorities, liberated but overburdened women, dissidents dreaming of a better world, and more. Throughout the semester, our goal will be to make sense of the Soviet experience and begin to understand how the events of the past hundred years have contributed to the development of the Russia we know today.

## **Course Requirements**

**Attendance:** You are required to attend all meetings of this class and do so **on time**. Our primary method of knowledge creation is discussion, so we must all commit to learning together as a classroom community. I will take attendance at the start of each class. You get **three** absences for free, no questions asked. After that, further absences will negatively affect your grade. If you have already accumulated three absences and must miss class again due to an extraordinary circumstance, please contact me in a timely manner to discuss your situation.

**Participation:** Not only do you have to show up, you have to talk! And that means you have to do the reading before class on the day it is assigned. Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. Bring those materials with you, along with your notes. Even more important, bring your thoughts, ideas, and questions, and be prepared to share them with your colleagues. If you feel anxious about speaking in front of a group, please contact me during the first week so we can work out a plan for your success. All comments must be respectful, constructive, and to the point. Ad hominem attacks and rambling digressions have no place in my classroom.

**Discussion Leadership:** Each student will sign up for **one** day on which you and a partner will **lead discussion** of the assigned materials. You will need to give a brief introduction which summarizes the sources and places them in context and have 7-8 written discussion questions. You must meet with me in advance to go over your lesson plan. We will start this assignment in Week 4, after we have gotten the feel for our classroom discussions.

**Blog Posts:** Over the semester, the class will work together to create a blog, which will help shape our intellectual journey. There are two types of posts you can make. A **conversation starter** is a new post. It should be at least one paragraph long, include a properly cited quotation from one of the sources, and pose a discussion question (one that requires analysis, not a yes/no question). A **response** is a nested post that you write in the “Comment” box under an existing post. It should be at least three sentences long and respond to the post in a substantive way. You may give an answer, pose a related question, counter the original post, comment via meme, etc.

You must post **two conversation starters** and **five responses** in each half of the course. That means 2+5 before Spring Break and 2+5 after Spring Break. You may make extra posts of either type for extra credit. \*Please note, posts are due **before the start of class**. If you post later, it will not count.

**Debates:** Three times this semester, we will devote a day of class to debating a major event in Russian history. You will participate in **one** of these debates as part of a **team**. I will assign the teams a position on the issue and provide some guiding questions. All team members must contribute to both preparation and presentation. During the other two debates, you will participate as an **active audience member**, asking questions and contributing to the discussion. We will go over this assignment in more detail before the first debate.

**Primary Source Analysis:** To help build your historical skills, you will write a **1500-word** primary source analysis. For this assignment, your task is to closely engage with and analyze a primary source of your choosing, place it in its historical context, and use it as the basis for making a unique historical argument. You may choose any primary source from our syllabus.

**Final Paper:** For your final project, you will write a **2500-word** analytical paper. You will make historical argument using primary sources we have read and discussed as evidence for your claim. I will give you several topics to choose from. You may also create our own topic, but you must get my approval before you start writing. You are not required to do any outside research. As part of this assignment, you must meet with me in advance to discuss your thesis statement and writing plan. This assignment has three steps:

- 1) Thesis Statement and Abstract Meeting (Week 11)
- 2) Rough Draft + Peer Critique (Week 13)
- 3) Final Draft (Finals Week)

We will go over each of these steps in more detail when we get closer to them.

**Academic Integrity:** My policy on **plagiarism** is simple: **Don't do it!** Plagiarism is a very serious offence, which can destroy your academic career and professional prospects. If you plagiarize, rest assured that I will catch you, and **you will automatically fail my class**. In addition, W&J upholds academic honesty in the College community by pursuing cases of academic misconduct. Please read the College's Academic Dishonesty Policy here: <https://wiki.washjeff.edu/display/CATALOG2018/The+Principle+of+Academic+Honesty> . You are responsible for abiding by this policy. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or about the Academic Dishonesty Policy, please talk to me before your work is due!

**Resources for Student Success:** This is a challenging course, and I highly recommend that you make use of the many helpful resources available to you on campus:

- **PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) Tutors**, located on the ground floor of Alex Hall, can help you with all stages of the writing process. You don't need to make an appointment. Just drop by Sunday -Thursday, 7-9pm. You can check their schedule and other information here: <https://www.washjeff.edu/pal>
- **Information and Technology Services** can help you with hardware, software, and more. Visit the Help Desk in Technology Center Room 121 and learn more here: <https://wiki.washjeff.edu/display/IT/Information+and+Technology+Services>
- **Clark Library** can help you with books, information, research help, and more. We will also spend one day of class familiarizing ourselves with library resources.
- **Office of International Student Initiatives** provides a variety of support services for international students: <https://www.washjeff.edu/international-student-services>
- **Office of Diversity & Leadership Initiatives** offers programs that work to strengthen cultural awareness, diversity education, and leadership development: <https://www.washjeff.edu/diversity>

### Grading

Attendance and Participation	10%
Blog Posts	15%
Discussion Leadership	10%
Debates	15% (10% team grade, 5% audience grade)
Primary Source Analysis	20%
Final Paper	30% (5% thesis statement and abstract, 10% rough draft + peer critique, 15% final draft)

\*\*\*If you fail to complete work in any one of these categories, you will fail the class! \*\*\*

### Course Policies

**Office Hours:** I welcome you to stop by to discuss our class! I'll be in my office Mondays 10-12 and Tuesdays 11-12 unless otherwise noted. If you know you want to come see me, you can make an appointment; otherwise, just drop in. If you have a conflict with my regular office hours, please email or speak to me to make an appointment for a different time.

**Email:** Please feel free to email me any time with questions about the class or to schedule an appointment for office hours. I will respond within 24 hours. You must SIGN your email with your name. I won't write back if I can't figure out who you are. In the professional world, you will be expected to communicate via formal emails, so this is good practice for the future. **You are responsible for checking your W&J email at least once per day.** Email is my only way to communicate with you outside of class, and I need to be able to reach you.

**Technology:** You may bring computers or tablets to class for taking notes and viewing pdfs. If you fool around online instead of paying attention, you are only failing yourself. It's up to you to take responsibility for your own learning process. However, if you use your device to distract your colleagues, I will make you to put it away for the rest of class.

**Cell Phones:** Turn them off or set them to vibrate. Please do not take a call unless it is an emergency. If you must do so, leave the room quickly and quietly. **You may not use your cell phone for course work. You may not use your phone for any reason in office hours.**

**Student Support and Accommodations:** To serve our mission to promote academic excellence, W&J is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with documented physical, learning, and psychological disabilities. The College's goal is to make its programs and facilities available to all students so that students with disabilities can be integrated as completely as possible into the W&J community. Ensuring equal access for all students is a collaborative effort between the Director for Academic Success, students, and faculty. All participants have a role in making education accessible. It is your responsibility to self-identify to the Director for Academic Success as early as possible when accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids are services are needed and to seek information, counsel, and assistance as necessary. Once I have been informed of your approved accommodations, it is my responsibility to provide them in a timely manner. Please help me help you by letting me know about any documented disabilities as early as possible in the semester. For more information about how to obtain documentation, please contact the Director for Academic Success Richard Barber by email at [rbarber@washjeff.edu](mailto:rbarber@washjeff.edu), by phone at 724-223-6008, or on the ground floor of Clark Library. You can find more information here: <http://wiki.washjeff.edu/display/disabilitysupport>

**Notice of Nondiscrimination:** W&J does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, age, marital status, national origin, the presence of any physical or sensory disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, state, and local laws, and has a firm commitment to promote the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws. W&J is committed to creating an environment in which every student feels safe and empowered to learn, and I, too, am strongly committed to this goal. That doesn't mean we won't argue with each other in this class, sometimes intensely. We will do so often! But we will do so respectfully. To ensure that respect, I reserve the right to intervene as I deem necessary, while doing my utmost to safeguard your right to free speech. If something happens in class that upsets you or makes you feel unsafe, *please* come talk to me about it, or if you prefer, leave an anonymous note on my office door.

## **Course Materials**

The following books are required for HIS 240 and are available for purchase or rental at the W&J Bookstore. You are welcome to purchase or borrow your books elsewhere, but you are responsible for ensuring you have the **correct edition**. Shorter readings and all other materials are available to you on Sakai. Always bring the text under discussion to class.

Choi Chatterjee, Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, and Deborah A. Field. *Russia's Long Twentieth Century: Voices, Memories, Contested Perspectives* (Routledge, 2016) ISBN 978-0-415-67037-1

Natalya Baranskaya. *A Week Like Any Other: Novellas and Stories* (Seal Press, 1989) ISBN 978-0-931188-80-0

Arkady Ostrovsky. *The Invention of Russia: The Rise of Putin and the Age of Fake News* (Penguin, 2017) ISBN 978-0-399-56417-8

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1: Russia on the Eve**

**Jan 23:** Why did Russia have a revolution? What was the Soviet Union? What is Russia today?

**In class:** Alexander Blok, "The Scythians"

## **Week 2: The Revolution and the Civil War**

Jan 28: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 2  
Vladimir Lenin, "What Is To Be Done?," pp.362-378

Jan 30: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 3  
Anna Litveiko, "In 1917"  
Isaac Babel, "The Life Story of Pavlichenko," *Red Cavalry*, pp.144-149

## **Week 3: The New Economic Policy**

Feb 4: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 4  
Boris Arvatov, "The Proletariat and Leftist Art," pp.238-241  
"AKhRR Manifesto"  
Art for the Revolution Slide Show

Feb 6: Alexandra Kollontai, "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle," pp. 1-13  
*Bed and Sofa* (film, watch online)

## **Week 4: The First Five Year Plan**

Feb 11: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 5  
John Scott, *Behind the Urals*, pp.9-21, 27-39

Feb 13: Joseph Stalin, "Problems of the Collective-Farm Movement (Dizzy With Success)"  
Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, chapters 1-4, 8-9

## **Week 5: Stakhanovism and Socialist Realism**

Feb 18: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 6, pp. 111-121  
Joseph Stalin, "Speech at the First All-Union Congress of Stakhanovites"  
Pasha Angelina, "The Most Important Thing," pp. 305-322  
"Jahon Obidova," pp. 309-316

Feb 20: Andrei Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature – the Richest in Ideas"  
Nikolai Ostrovsky, "How the Steel Was Tempered," pp. 387-435

## **Week 6: The Cult of Personality and the Great Purges**

Feb 25: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 6, pp. 121-130  
Cult of Personality Slide Show  
Joseph Stalin, "On the Inadequacies in Party Work," pp. 54-58  
Start reading: Evgenia Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, chapters 3, 8-12 (We will discuss this text on Thursday)

Feb 27: Evgenia Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, chapters 13, 15-20

## **Week 7: The Great Patriotic War**

Mar 3: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 7  
**\*Debate #1: Assessing Stalinism**

Mar 5: Ol'ga Berggolts, "This is Radio Leningrad!"  
Dmitrii Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 7 "Leningrad,"* Fourth Movement  
Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Fate of a Man*, p.487-507

**\*Primary Source Analysis DUE 10pm, Friday, March 6\***

## **Spring Break!**

### **Week 8: Late Stalinism and the Cold War**

Mar 17: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 8  
Andrei Zhdanov, "New Aspects of World Conflict"

Mar 19: Central Committee Resolution on the Literary Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*  
Mikhail Zoshchenko, "The Adventures of a Monkey," pp. 316-324  
Andrei Zhdanov, "The Duty of a Soviet Writer"  
Great Soviet Encyclopedia, "Aviation"

### **Week 9: Khrushchev's Thaw**

Mar 24: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 9  
Nikita Khrushchev, "The Secret Speech" (abridged)  
Evgeny Evtushenko "Mourners Crushed at Stalin's Funeral (Precocious Autobiography)" and "Stalin's Heirs"

Mar 26: Vasilii Aksenov, "In Search of Melancholy Baby"  
*I Walk Around Moscow* (film, watch online)

### **Week 10: Brezhnev's Stagnation**

Mar 31: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 10  
**\*Debate #2: Assessing De-Stalinization**

Apr 2: Natalya Baranskaya, "A Week Like Any Other," pp.1-62

### **Week 11: Dissident Movements**

**\*Thesis Statement Meetings this week!\***

Apr 7: Lyudmilla Alexeyeva, *Thaw Generation*, 3-7, 83-84, 94-105, 119-136, 206-211  
Laura Hoptman and Tomáš Pospiszyl, eds., "A Case Study: Repression. Bulldozer Exhibition and Izmailovsky Park Exhibition, Moscow, 1974," pp.65-77  
Dissident Artwork Slide Show

Apr 9: Andrei Sakharov, "Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom (Liberal Dissent)"  
Alexander Solzhenitsyn "Letter to the Soviet Leaders (Conservative Dissent)"  
Roy Medvedev, "On Socialist Democracy (Marxist Dissent)"

### **Week 12: Perestroika, Glasnost, and Collapse**

Apr 14: *Russia's Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 11  
*My Perestroika* (film, watch online)

Apr 16: “Gorbachev Challenges the Party (Glasnost)”

Svetlana Alexeivich, *Voices From Chernobyl*, pp.1-23, 138-149

Oscar Holland, “Photographs Capture an Abandoned World Inside the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone,” *CNN.com* (June 12, 2019)

Viktor Kurchatov, “What Society Owes the Afghanistan Veterans”

### **Week 13: Yeltsin’s Wild Ride**

**\*Rough Drafts DUE at 5pm, Monday, April 20\***

Apr 21: **Rough Draft Peer Critique Day**

Apr 23: *Russia’s Long Twentieth Century*, chapter 12

Tatyana Tolstaya, “The Price of Eggs,” pp. 206-215

Anna Politkovskaya, *A Small Corner of Hell*, pp. 17-23, 96-106

Kombinatsiya, “American Boy”

### **Week 14: Putin’s Russia**

Apr 28: Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia*, chapter 9

Vladimir Putin, “Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy” (Feb. 10, 2007)

Singing Together, “A Man Like Putin”

“Vladimir Putin: 20 Years in Power—In Pictures,” *The Guardian* (Aug. 9, 2019)

Apr 30: Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia*, chapter 10

Ilya Budraitskis, Ilya Matveev, and Sean Guillory, “Not Just an Artifact,” *Jacobin* (Aug. 1, 2017)

Pussy Riot “Punk Prayer,” “Putin Will Teach You How to Love,” and “Chaika”

### **Week 15: Russia Without Putin?**

May 5: **Debate #3: Assessing Russian Democracy**

**\*Final Papers due at 10pm, Friday, May 8\***

**Good luck!!!**