



STUDY & INTERN ABROAD PROGRAMS

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 48 Broadway, Suite 2, Haverstraw, New York 10927 USA

HIS 381 Russian History

Russian history is a long story about the struggles of the Russian people to create a state that clearly represents the objectives of all the people not simply a small group that is privileged. From tsarist times through the Soviet period and to the present day Russian history is complicated. Historians for two generations asked “Why Revolution?”, “Why Lenin?”, “Why Stalin?” and wrote volumes on those subjects. Russian history is much more than leaders and their personalities. The Russian people have been resilient through centuries of chaos, wars, famines and revolution. It is a history rich in culture and texture far different from America’s. Russian history is a complex story that has been greatly debated and contested in the west for the past fifty years. We will sample the different interpretations, primary documents and some literature to discuss the evolution of Russia in the twentieth century. Come with enthusiasm and all will be well.

Textbooks:

- *Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida*, Penguin Classic
- David Marples, *Motherland: Russia in the Twentieth Century*
- Martin McCauley, *Stalin and Stalinism*

Credits: 3

Objectives	Measures
Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of Russian history: political, economic, social and cultural taking into account the issues that are prevalent in Russian political history.	Essay examinations or writing assignments to ascertain the student’s ability to put the subject under examination into a framework.
Students will demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in Russian political history and how they have affected different groups and the collective. (the common institutions of Russian history)	Essay examinations and/or writing assignments will examine the student’s ability to understand the common institutions of Russian political history.
Students will demonstrate knowledge of Russia’s evolving relationships with the rest of the world.	Essay examinations or writing assignments where the student will be expected to analyze the complexities of Russia’s relationships with the rest of the world.
Students will demonstrate skills required to succeed in a political history course: the ability to write a formal essay, marshal and evaluate evidence and to think in a critical manner.	Essay examinations or writing assignments where the student demonstrates the skills that are necessary for success in a history course.

Structure of the Course

Readings will be assigned for completion before each meeting. We meet each week for three hours. The course will consist of lectures and discussions, not necessarily strictly segregated. I will build into each lecture discussion time and this does not need to be neatly packaged at the end. Indeed, I am very happy to have a free flow exchange of ideas. Questions and comments will be welcome during the lectures. Do not worry about interrupting a pre-prepared flow (as long as you at least wait for the end of the sentence!). It is far better in my view to address directly your conceptions, thoughts, and worries than to have a rigid agenda. I will provide you with possible discussion questions that will help in your preparation. These are not intended to be the only "approved" items for discussion. It would be strange indeed if your perspectives and mine were identical. Please bring your ideas and insights to bear in these discussions. I will be grateful to listen and to share thoughts with you.

Assessment and Deadlines

Assessment will consist of four elements.

- Two - Five Page Papers (20% + 20%)
The guidelines for writing a history paper follow the plagiarism section of the syllabus. The topics will be discussed in class, so that you may choose. One will be due the last class of October and the other the last class of November.
- A Final Exam (30%)
I will present you with the questions well in advance so we can discuss different aspects of the questions.
- Class Participation (30%)
Please do the reading before the class so we can discuss the various aspects and interpretations that the author expresses. We have been invited to participate in walking tours of parts of Moscow. These tours are on Sat. mornings. Since the tours last three to four hours that will be your class for the week. We will discuss the tour in a follow up class.

Grading

Grades on each element of the assessment will be based on the thoroughness of your completion of the task (the ability to make specific references to the material studied and to make informed and thoughtful comments on it). You should note that in written and oral assignments presentation does matter. Inarticulate expression and poor presentation of written assignments tend to create a negative atmosphere for the reception of your work and get in the way of points you try to make. That said, I try to give encouragement and some leeway in grading for people who show significant improvement over the semester. Grading criteria for each assignment are given above under Assessments & Deadlines.

Writing an Essay for a History Class

The rules for writing a History essay are similar but not the same as for other subjects. Remember, what makes History different from other subjects is that it is all about time and the effects of the passage of time. You can only do well on History essays if you make sure you show the effects of the passage of time.



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The main difference between writing for history at college and writing in high school is that in college you will be asked to answer a specific question. For example, you may have written an essay in high school on the New Deal. In that essay, no doubt well written and full of facts, you will have told a story, much like you might find in a newspaper telling what happened. In college we want you to question WHY things happened the way that they did, what were the CONSEQUENCES, and to try to determine what factors were more important and what were less important in your INTERPRETATION of what happened. Such an approach can be seen in the wording of the questions we ask you to write on. Using the New Deal example again, in college you will be asked to answer a question like “Did the New Deal have great impact on American History in the twentieth century?”

All essays, no matter what the subject, have the same basic structure:

1. Introduction- A good introduction should not only grab the reader’s attention but should give an idea of the scope and limits of the essay. Here you need to reference the question directly, if nothing else it shows you have understood and its dimensions.
2. Middle- The middle carries the main burden of the essay. In history this is where you supply the argument and evidence to back up the argument. This is where you do not simply list what the components of the New Deal were but instead assess what programs really did help Americans get out of the Great Depression and if there were other factors (like President Franklin Roosevelt’s personality and political skill) that also had an impact and what that impact was. This is where you need to make decisions about how you will answer the question and try to make an argument that continues throughout the essay. So, if you have decided that the New Deal accomplished very little, this is where you cite and analyze the evidence that led you to that conclusion. A good essay does not, of course, list all the things that support your argument and ignore all those inconvenient things that might suggest the answer is not so straightforward. You need to demonstrate you know about the awkward factors and have some sort of answer. (Hint: Hardly anything is cut and dried. All judgments are made by weighing the evidence. Some of it does not easily fit. Most judgments are made on the balance of evidence, not because absolutely everything points to an inescapable conclusion. Historians do not all agree or make the same argument about any given question.)
3. Conclusion- It is of necessity the shortest part of the essay, a paragraph or two. This is not the place to introduce new facts or arguments. All of that should be done in the middle section of the paper. The conclusion states your overall judgment of the paper based on the information that you have presented. For example: “The New Deal was a noble experiment. Americans felt that the government was working hard in their interests to get them out of the Great Depression and back to work but in the end it solved very little. It took the natural recovery of the markets and the outbreak of World War II to solve the problems that the country had faced since 1929 with the stock market crash.”

Topics Covered

Readings must be completed before the sessions for which they are required.



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- Week 1: Introduction.
Overview of the course, its structure, its requirements
- Week 2: Nicholas II: Crisis of the Old Order
Reading: Marples, Chapter 1
- Week 3: Revolution and Civil War
Reading: Marples-Chapter 2
- Week 4: NEP and Collectivization
Reading: Marples-Chapter 3
- Week 5: How Stalin Rose to Power
Reading: McCauley-Chapter 2
- Week 6: Economic Woes and Purges
Reading: McCauley-Chapter 3
- Week 7: The Great Patriotic War
Reading: McCauley-Chapter 4
- Week 8: Literature and Culture 1900-1940
Reading : Chandler Short Stories pages 148-265
- Week 9: The Last Red Tsar
Reading : McCauley-Chapter 5, Stories, 266-317
- Week 10: Hot War to Cold War
Reading : Marples-Chapter 6
- Week 11: Krushchev: Secrets and Change
Reading: Marples-Chapter 7, Stories, 318-338
- Week 12: The Brezhnev Years
Reading: Marples-Chapter 9, Stories, 339-373
- Week 13: Gorbachev
Reading: Marples- Chapter 10
- Week 14: The Roaring Nineties
Reading : Marples, Chapter 11
- Week 15: New Man of Steel?
Reading: None