

## **GRADUATE READING SEMINAR ON SOVIET HISTORY**

Tuesday 1:30 - 4:30

Location TBA

Prof. Benjamin Nathans  
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“There was not and there could not have been any ‘socialism’ in the Soviet Union.”

Moshe Lewin

“There is no such thing as socialism, and the Soviet Union built it.”

Martin Malia

This seminar is devoted to intensive analysis of recent works of history ranging across the entire Soviet era. Topics include the 1917 revolution and its afterlife, the construction of the world’s first socialist economy, everyday life in a revolutionary society, the “Soviet subjectivity” debate, Soviet nationhood, war and society, communism and globalization, “developed” socialism, and the system’s unexpected collapse.

Starting in Week 2, we will operate according to “Australian Rules” (thanks to Peter Sahlins), as described below. These rules require collaborative work in advance of seminar meetings, short weekly writing assignments, and a high degree of engagement. An historiographical essay, on a topic to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, is due at the end of the term. This 20- to 25-page essay may include, but should not be limited to, readings assigned in the course.

### Australian Rules

This seminar format seeks to:

1. encourage active presentations
2. cultivate a common vocabulary and set of problems by the beginning of class each week so that class time is spent exploring the week’s issues in depth
3. make writing an essential part of intellectual dialogue
4. develop skills in identifying and engaging key arguments
5. create an atmosphere of collegial participation and cooperation as the foundation of intellectual inquiry and exchange

The seminar is divided into three groups. In our first week of operation, group A will meet several days before class and develop a set of three or four written questions based on the readings. These questions, generally a short paragraph each, can treat the substance of the readings and/or problems of historical method and reasoning. They should be interpretive, rather than factual; that is, concerned not only with *what* authors say but

how they frame or construct their major arguments. In general, interpretive questions are phrased in ways that do not invite simple yes-or-no answers. They tend to favor “how,” “why,” “in what sense,” “what is at stake in...” and other gestures that stimulate conversation. Questions must be posted to our Canvas site by **6pm on Friday**, and should be labelled “Questions for Week X,” where “X” is the coming week on the syllabus.

Group B, after discussing Group A’s questions, will respond in written form, devoting no more than 500 words to each one. Responses should address questions directly, but can also critique the questions and move beyond them, according to the collective judgment of Group B. Responses must be posted to the Canvas site by **6pm on Sunday**.

Group C meets Sunday evening or Monday during the day to develop a commentary on the questions and responses. Group C will need to rehearse its positions - which may include issues raised in the week’s readings but not addressed by the original questions and responses - and to divide speaking responsibilities. Group C’s main goal should be to launch a stimulating discussion, using the work of Groups A and B as a platform. The idea is to make useful connections and distinctions, suggest areas in need of clarification, pose follow-up questions, and offer Group C’s own take on what it considers the largest and most interesting issues.

The following week, people migrate: those who were in Group A become Group B, those who were in Group B become Group C, and those who were in Group C become Group A. The week after that, people migrate again, so that everyone has a chance to work in all three modes. After each three-week cycle, the composition of the groups will be scrambled.

Needless to say, the success of this format depends upon getting the readings done well in advance and sticking to deadlines.

### Readings

Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles are available on-line through JSTOR or other databases. Articles and individual book chapters unavailable on-line will be posted on the course Canvas site (C). Copies of the following books can be purchased at the Penn Book Center (34th and Sansom) and are also available in Rosengarten Reserve at Van Pelt Library:

- Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003)
- Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000 [1981])
- Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) [digital text available on-line via Franklin]
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008 [3rd edition])
- Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006) [digital text available on-line via Franklin]
- Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005)
- Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002) [digital text available on-line via Franklin]

Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) [digital text available on-line via Franklin]  
 Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008 [updated edition])  
 David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2009)  
 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010)  
 Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006)  
 Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)

### Calendar

#### **Week 1. Sept. 2      SETTING THE STAGE(S)**

Ronald Grigor Suny, "Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century: How the 'West' Wrote its History of the USSR," in idem, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2006): 1-64 [digital text available via Franklin]  
 Moshe Lewin, "Russia/USSR in Historical Motion: An Essay in Interpretation," *Russian Review* vol. 50, no. 3 (July 1991): 249-66  
 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 1-39  
 Vladimir Andrieu, *A Social History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994): ix-xi, 1-74, 86-119 [C]

#### **Week 2. Sept. 9      WARS AND REVOLUTIONS**

Mark von Hagen, "The First World War, 1914-1918," in Suny, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3: 94-113 [digital text available via Franklin]  
 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 40-92  
 Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," *American Historical Review* vol. 88, no. 1 (Feb. 1983): 31-52  
 Andrieu, *A Social History of Twentieth-Century Russia*, 74-85, 120-42 [C]  
 Stephen Kotkin, "'One Hand Clapping': Russian Workers and 1917," *Labor History* vol. 32, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 604-20  
 Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution*, 1-205, 241-88  
 -----, "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work': Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 69, no. 3 (Sept. 1997): 415-50

#### *Recommended:*

Dietrich Geyer, *Die russische Revolution: historische Probleme und Perspektiven* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977) [English translation available]  
 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1996)

### **Week 3. Sept. 16 BUILDING SOCIALISM**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 93-148

Peter Gatrell, "Economic and Demographic Change: Russia's Age of Economic Extremes," in Suny, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3: 383-410 [digital text available via Franklin]

Alvin Gouldner, "Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism," *Telos* 34 (1977-78): 5-48 [C]

Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003): 1-186 [don't sweat the equations, but do give close attention to the graphs]

Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004): 1-69, 130-49, 161-73, 191-98, 243-47, 293-95, 329-36 [digital text available via Franklin]

Paul R. Gregory and Andrei Markevich, "Creating Soviet Industry: The House That Stalin Built," *Slavic Review* vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 787-814

#### *Recommended:*

Hans Raupach, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Sowjetrusslands: 1917-1977* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979)

János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992)

### **Week 4. Sept. 23 STALINISM AND SOCIAL HISTORY**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 149-72

Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* [feel free to skim or skip Chapters 3 and 7 but read as many of the substantive endnotes as possible]

Jochen Hellbeck and Igal Halfin, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's 'Magnetic Mountain' and the State of Soviet Historical Studies," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* vol. 44, no. 3 (1996): 456-63

Mark Edele, "Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 8, no.2 (2007): 349-73

Anna Krylova, "Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament," *Contemporary European History*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2014): 167-192

#### *Recommended:*

Alain Blum and Martine Mespoulet, *L'anarchie bureaucratique: pouvoir et statistique sous Staline* (Paris: Découverte, 2003)

Malte Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006) [translated into Russian]

Wendy Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007)

### **Week 5. Sept. 30 SOVIET SUBJECTIVITIES**

Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (feel free to skip or skim Chapter 7)

Eric Naiman, "On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them," *Russian Review* vol. 60, no. 3 (July 2001): 307-15

- Alexander Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 6, no. 1 (2005): 171-86
- Benjamin Tromly, "Intelligentsia Self-Fashioning in the Postwar Soviet Union: Revol't Pimenov's Political Struggle, 1949-57," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 151-76
- Benjamin Nathans, "Thawed Selves: A Commentary on the Soviet First Person," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 177-183
- Malte Griesse, "Soviet Subjectivities: Discourse, Self-Criticism, Imposture," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 9, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 609-24.

Recommended:

- Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003); on-line version available via Franklin
- Lorenz Erren, *"Selbstkritik" und Schuldbekennntnis: Kommunikation und Herrschaft unter Stalin, 1917-1953* (Munich: Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2008)

**Week 6. Oct. 7      EMPIRE AND ETHNOS**

- Jeremy Smith, "Non-Russians in the Soviet Union and After," in Suny, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3:495-521 [available on-line via Franklin]
- Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* vol. 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414-52
- Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in idem and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2001): 23-66 [C]
- Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," in *A State of Nations*, 67-90 [C]
- , "Modernization or Neo-traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000): 161-82 [C]
- Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, 1-18, 62-108, 138-73, 273-325
- Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* vol. 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 231-251
- Adrienne Edgar, "Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer, 2006): 252-272

Recommended:

- Juliette Cadiot, *Le Laboratoire impérial: Russie-URSS, 1860-1940* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2007)
- Jörg Baberowski, *Der Feind ist Überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003)
- Forum: "The Multiethnic Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 231-303

## **Week 7. Oct. 14      TOWARD A SOVIET AESTHETIC**

Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution*, ix-xii, 1-34

Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000 [1981]): preface, 3-176

Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham : Duke University Press, 1990): 3-23 [C]

Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 3-74 [C]

Абрам Терц [Андрей Синявский] “Что такое социалистический реализм” (Paris: Sintaksis, 1988 [samizdat ca. 1957]) <http://ruslang.susu.ac.ru/terz.pdf> [English translation available]

### *Recommended:*

Karl Schlögel, *Jenseits des grossen Oktober: das Laboratorium der Moderne. Petersburg 1909-1921* (Berlin: Siedler, 1988)

Evgenii Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997)

Vladimir Paperno, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002)

Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012)

## **Week 8. Oct. 21      CATAclysm**

Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (feel free to skip or skim pp. 187-312)

Amir Weiner, “The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities Within the Soviet Polity,” *Russian Review* 55:4 (October 1996): 638-60

Amir Weiner, “Saving Private Ivan: From What, Why, and How?” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 305-336

Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), 12-27

### *Recommended:*

Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001)

Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002)

## **Week 9. Oct. 28      COMMUNISM AND GLOBALIZATION**

David Priestland, *The Red Flag* (feel free to skip or skim pp. 61-102, 132-81, 273-303, 315-330, 339-50, 446-469, 532-41)

Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2014), 1-12, 25-28, 56-88, 245-53

Austin Jersild, “The Soviet State as Imperial Scavenger: ‘Catch Up and Surpass’ in the Transnational Socialist Bloc, 1950–1960,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 116, no. 1 (February 2011): 109-132

Elidor Mëhilli, "Building the Second World: Postwar Socialism in Albania and the Eastern Bloc," (unpublished 2011 PhD Dissertation, Princeton University), 1-42  
Steven Smith, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of Communism," in idem, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford, 2014), 1-36 [digital text available via Franklin]

## **Week 10. Nov. 4      SECOND-GENERATION SOCIALISM**

Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (feel free to skim or skip pp. 121-140, 163-192, 321-362)  
Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 1-8, 279-303, 313-322, 355-62 [C]  
Benjamin Nathans, "Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era," in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 166-190 [C]  
Александр Даниэль; "История самиздата," в книге *Госбезопасность и литература: на опыте России и Германии (СССР и ГДР)* под редакцией Т. В. Громы и Е. В. Шукшины (Москва: Рудомина; 1994): 93-104 [C]  
В. А. Козлов, "Ведение," в книге *Крамола: Инакомыслие в СССР при Хрущеве и Брежнев 1953-1982 гг.*, под редакцией В. А. Козлова и С. В. Мироненко (Москва: Материк, 2005): 5-64 [C; abbreviated English translation available in Vladimir Kolzov, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Sergei Mironenko, eds., *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 25-64

### *Recommended:*

Cécile Vaissié, *Les ingénieurs des âmes en chef: Littérature et politique en URSS (1944-1986)* (Paris: Belin, 2008)  
Anke Stephan, *Von der Küche auf den Roten Platz: Lebenswege sowjetischer Dissidentinnen* (Zürich: Pano Verlag, 2005)

## **Week 11. Nov. 11      GENERATION «Я»**

Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, 1-206, 273-298  
Kevin Platt and Benjamin Nathans, "Socialist in Form, Indeterminate in Content: The Ins and Outs of Late Soviet Culture," *Ab Imperio* no.2 (2011): 301-324  
James R. Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism" *Slavic Review* vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 694-706  
Joseph Berliner, "Forward," in James Millar, ed., *Politics, Work and Daily Life in the USSR* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987): vii-xii [C]  
Allen, *Farm to Factory*, 189-211

### *Recommended:*

Caroline Humphrey, *Marx Went Away, but Karl Stayed Behind* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002)

Margaret Paxson, *Solovyovo: The Story of Memory in a Russian Village* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005)

See the detailed timeline of cultural events in the 1970s in К. Ю. Рогов, ред.-составитель, *Семидесятые как предмет истории русской культуры* (1998):29-74.

## **Week 12. Nov. 18   IMPLOSION**

Charles Maier, "The Collapse of Communism: Approaches for a Future History," *History Workshop* no. 31 (Spring, 1991): 34-59

Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008 [updated edition])

Donna Bahry, "Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika," *Slavic Review* vol. 52, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 512-54

Stephen F. Cohen, "Was the Soviet System Reformable?," *Slavic Review* vol. 63, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 459-88.

David Rowley, "Interpretations of the End of the Soviet Union: Three Paradigms," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 2, no. 2 (2001): 395-426

### *Recommended:*

Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation During Perestroika* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997)

Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007)

## **Week 13. Nov. 25   NO CLASS   (Thanksgiving week schedule)**

## **Week 14. Dec. 2    RETROSPECTACLE (final class)**

Katherine Verdery, *What was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996): 3-38 [C]

Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 1-49 [C]

Johan Arnason, "Communism and Modernity," *Daedalus* vol. 129, no. 1, Multiple Modernities (Winter, 2000), pp. 61-90

Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009): xi-56 [C]

## **Week 15. Dec. 9   no class**