

## **The History and Politics of the USSR**

History 434  
Tuesday, Thursday 2:40-4:00

Political Science 489 005  
Winter 2007

Professor Ronald Grigor Suny  
Office Hours: 4-5 Tuesday and 5-6 Wednesday  
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GSI: Ray Patton

After centuries of expansion, the tsarist empire collapsed in political crisis and military defeat. Within months the Bolsheviks had come to power in Russia and established what they claimed to be the first socialist government in history. This course will explore the fate of that government and the people it ruled, the seventy-four years of "socialist" experimentation, industrial transformation of a backward peasant economy, the establishment of a new type of party-state dictatorship, and the attempts after 1985 to transform the Soviet system that led to the collapse of the state.

Various critiques and explanations of Soviet society, ranging from Western sovietological to Marxist, will be introduced and examined through the semester. The goal of the course is to establish the basis for a broader and deeper understanding of Soviet history and to provide material for analysis of the USSR, Russia, and the successor states from a variety of viewpoints.

### **Required Readings:**

Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962).

Evgenia Semyonovna Ginzburg, Journey into the Whirlwind, trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967).

Moshe Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle (1968) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Michael McFaul, Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Ronald Grigor Suny, The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Ronald Grigor Suny, The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

### **Requirements:**

1. Complete all the readings. Attend discussions and lectures.
2. Complete one take-home examination (6-8 pages, to be typed double-spaced) on the readings, lectures, and discussions.
3. 4. Read a work of fiction (minimum length 100 pages) by a Soviet author. Write a short critical review of the work (4-6 pages, double-spaced, typed).
4. Write a final examination (6-8 pages, to be typed double-spaced) on the readings, lectures, and discussions.

**Lectures and Readings:**

**Section I: Revolution and Civil War.**

**January 4** –The Imperial Legacy.

**January 9** – The Double Revolution.

**January 11** – October.

**Reading:** Ronald Grigor Suny, The Soviet Experiment, pp. xiii-xvii, 3-55.

Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., Structure of Soviet History, pp. xi-xviii, 3-47.

**January 16** – Civil War and War Communism.

**January 18** – Nationalism, Class, and Revolution.

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp. 56-120.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 48-86.

**Section II: Retreat and Revolution from Above.**

**January 23** – Evolution of a Dictatorship.

**January 25** – Socialism in One Country.

**Reading:** Moshe Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle (1968) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Soviet Experiment, pp. 123-194.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 89-147.

**January 30** – Revolution From Above.

**February 1** – **Film:** *Chapaev* (Vasil'ev Brothers, 1934).

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp.195-251.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 151-231.

**February 6** – Stalinism.

**February 8** – The Great Terror.

**Reading:** Evgenia Semyonovna Ginzburg, Journey into the Whirlwind.

Soviet Experiment, pp. 252-308.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 232-263.

**Mid-Term Examination Handed Out.**

**Section III: Hot War and Cold War.**

**February 13** – The Great Fatherland War.

**February 15** – The Grand Alliance and its Tensions.

**Reading:** Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin.

Soviet Experiment, pp.309-362

**February 20** – Divided Europe, Two Camps.

**February 22** – Balance of Terror.

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp.363-384.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 264-325.

**Mid-Term Examination Papers Due at Beginning of Class.**

**Winter Break                      February 24 – March 4, 2005**

**Section V: Reform and Stagnation.**

**March 6** – Struggle for Succession.

**March 8** – Destalinization.

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp. 387-420.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 329-358.

**March 13** – **Film: *Burnt by the Sun*** (Mikhalkov, 1994).

**March 15** – **Film: *The Second Russian Revolution: Enter Gorbachev***  
(Brian Lapping, 1991).

**Review of work of Soviet fiction due.**

**March 20** – USSR and the World.

**March 22** – Brezhnev's Long Reign.

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp. 387-420.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 359-399.

**Section VI: Revolution, Collapse, Reconstruction.**

**March 27** – The Gorbachev Reforms.

**March 29** – The Gorbachev Revolution.

**Reading:** Soviet Experiment, pp. 449-485.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 403-475.

**April 3** – Unraveling.

**April 5** – Collapse.

**Reading:** Michael McFaul, Russia's Unfinished Revolution, pp. 1-117.

**April 10** – Post-Soviet Russia.

**April 12** – Post-Soviet Disunion.

**Reading:** McFaul, Russia's Unfinished Revolution, pp. 121-227

Soviet Experiment, pp. 486-506.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 476-532.

**Final Examination Handed Out.**

**April 17** – Transition, Transformation, or More of the Same.

**Reading:** McFaul, Russia's Unfinished Revolution, pp. 228-371.

Structure of Soviet History, pp. 533-573.

**April 20** – Final Examination Papers Due by 5:00 pm.