

History 510:375:01

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TTh 3-4:20 in 429 Cooper Street, #104

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Syllabus¹ – Russia under the Tsars



Russian noblemen gambling away their slaves - from an 1854 cartoon by Gustave Doré

Since the collapse of communism in 1991, observers have been struck by the similarities between contemporary Russia and the society that existed before the Revolutions of 1917. With Russian literature and first-hand accounts as our guides, we will explore pre-revolutionary Russian history from the emergence of the Romanov dynasty in 1613 until the first revolution to shake the tsarist state in 1905. En route we will encounter not only the reigns of tsars like Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and the last Romanov Nicholas II, but of peasants, gentry, workers, and revolutionaries. Why did autocracy emerge as the form of rule in Russia? What was the relationship between Russia and the West? What are the historical roots of the contemporary struggle between Russia and Ukraine? Was the collapse of the Romanov dynasty and Imperial Russia inevitable? Finally, what was unique and what was not about Russia's historical path?

¹ Please keep in mind that a syllabus is like a contract: it tells you what you should expect from this course, and what is expected from you. As a student in a college-level classroom, you are expected to meet the requirements specified below. If any of this poses a problem for you, please consider taking a different course.

Required reading:

Be sure to buy the eighth edition of this text

Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 8th edition
(Oxford University Press, 2010) ISBN-13 9780195341973

Be sure to buy these specific versions of our translated works of fiction

Anton Chekhov, *Five Plays* (Oxford University Press, 2008) ISBN-13 978-0199536696

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Best Short Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky* (Modern Library, 2001) ISBN-13 978-0375756887

Nikolai Gogol, *The Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, and Selected Stories* (Penguin Classics, 2006) ISBN-13 978-0140449075

Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin* (Oxford University Press, 2009) ISBN-13 978-0199538645

Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Short Stories* (Dover Publications, 1993) ISBN-13 978-0486278056

Primary sources² listed below and available on Sakai Resources

Requirements:

Conduct, attendance, and participation (10 points)

Students are expected to attend every class, to arrive on time, to come prepared in terms of the reading and writing assignments, and to participate civilly in class discussions. Students are also expected to remain in the classroom during our sessions – exceptions will be made for emergencies *so long as I am notified in advance*. Electronic and mobile devices are to be turned off and out of reach during class time – exceptions will be made for students in the midst of family emergencies *so long as I am notified in advance*. There are no excused absences. Courtesy dictates that students who cannot attend a scheduled class should let me know via email or voicemail prior to that class. *NB: When you send me an email, please keep in mind that these are not texts among friends, but rather communications among professionals. In other words, emails should begin with a polite and formal address (like “Dear Dr. Bernstein,”); they should be written carefully, grammatically, and with attention to correct spelling; and they should be signed with your full name.*

Written comments on each week’s assigned reading (30 points total)

For the designated chapters (specific chapters and dates are marked on the syllabus), students are to submit prior to class via Sakai Assignments a double-spaced and carefully written paper that (1) puts something particularly striking from the assigned reading *in their own words with page references inside parentheses*; (2) contains an *informed reaction* to the

² When historians refer to “primary sources,” we don’t mean *main* sources but rather sources (or documents) that were created near or during the period we are investigating. Our text is a secondary source; all the documents on Sakai Resources are primary sources.

historical issue at hand; and (3) raises a *relevant question* for our class discussion. (This question will *not* count if it's something that can easily be looked up with a Google or other search.) Each short paper that adheres to all the guidelines will receive three full points. If students are absent, I will accept their papers as long as the comments arrive *prior* to the start of that day's class.

Quizzes on the reading (35 points total)

There will be a short quiz at the start of seven classes designated below to make sure students are prepared to discuss the assigned works of fiction and memoirs by Durova, Figner, Zasluch, and Liubatovich.

Midterm exam (10 points)

Midway through the semester, there will be an exam on the material in lectures and the assigned readings to date.

Take-home final exam (15 points)

Students will choose two related articles from among a list I distribute, and write a formal paper that compares and contrasts each author's interpretation of a related issue.

NB: Students with documented physical, mental, and learning disabilities should contact our Office of Disability Services for reasonable accommodations and services. Call the coordinator Timothy Pure (856-225-6442) or email him at tpure@rutgers.edu.

When you complete this course you will have learned:

The basic contours of Imperial Russian political, intellectual, and social history
How historians interpret primary sources of Russian history
How historians read and assess secondary sources
How to understand classic works of Russian literature in their historical context

Introduction to the course and Russian history

Tuesday, September 6

The rise of autocracy in Russia

Thursday, September 8

Familiarize yourselves with *A History of Russia*, chapters 17, 18, and 19
Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss document #1
(Krizhanich's Observations)

Peter the Great and Westernization

Tuesday, September 13³ and Thursday, September 15

Read *A History of Russia*, chapter 20

*Comments on chapter 20 (your first set) must be submitted via Sakai
Assignments before 3:00 pm on September 15

³ September 13 is the last day to drop a course without a W grade

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss document #2 (Peter's Relations with His Son)

The immediate Petrine legacy

Tuesday, September 20

Read *A History of Russia*, chapter 21

*Comments on chapter 21 (your second set) must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on September 20

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss document #3 (Anna Ivanovna's 'Conditions')

Catherine the Great and Russia's Enlightenment

Thursday, September 22 and Tuesday, September 27

Read *A History of Russia*, chapters 22 and 23

*Two sets of comments, one on chapter 22 and one on chapter 23 (your third and fourth sets), must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on September 27

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #4 (Nakaz), #5 (Pugachev rebellion), and #6 (Radishchev)

Alexander I's policies and role as the "savior of Europe"

Thursday, September 29 and Tuesday, October 4

Read *A History of Russia*, chapters 25 and 27

*Two sets of comments, one on chapter 25 and one on chapter 27 (your fifth and sixth sets), must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on October 4

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss document #7 (Karamzin)

The Cavalry Maiden

Thursday, October 6

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on document #8 (Durova)

Alexander Pushkin

Tuesday, October 11

Read and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

Nicholas I, the "iron tsar"

Thursday, October 13 and Tuesday, October 18

Read *A History of Russia*, chapters 26 and 28

*Two sets of comments, one on chapter 26 and one on chapter 28 (your seventh and eighth sets), must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on October 18

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #9 (Bestuzhev), #10 (Russia and the World) and #11 (Belinskii's letter)

Nikolai Gogol

Thursday, October 20

Read and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on Gogol, "The Government Inspector," pp. 211- 306 in *The Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, and Selected Stories*

Midterm exam

Tuesday, October 25

Alexander II and his "Great Reforms"

Thursday, October 27 and Tuesday, November 1

Read *A History of Russia*, chapter 29

*Comments on chapter 29 (your ninth set) must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on November 1

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #12 (Abolition of Serfdom) and #13 (Death of Alexander II)

The female face of Russian radicalism

Thursday, November 3

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on documents #14 (Figner), #15 (Zasulich), and #16 (Liubatovich)

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Tuesday, November 8

Read and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground," pp. 95-214 in *The Best Short Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky*

Leo Tolstoy

Thursday, November 10

Read and be prepared for a quiz and discussion on Tolstoy, "The Kreuzer Sonata," in *The Kreuzer Sonata and Other Short Stories*

The last two Romanovs: Alexander III and Nicholas II

Tuesday, November 15⁴ and Tuesday, November 22

NB: No class on Thursday, November 17 – Dr. Bernstein will be participating in the annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Read *A History of Russia*, chapter 30

*Comments on chapter 30 (your tenth set) must be submitted via Sakai Assignments before 3:00 pm on November 22

⁴ November 15 is the last day to withdraw and receive a grade of W.

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #17 (Alexander III), #18 (Pobedonoststev), #19 (Ukhtomskii), and #20 (Pogrom)

No class on Thanksgiving – Thursday, November 24

Revolution as “dress rehearsal” in 1905

Tuesday, November 29 and Thursday, December 1

Read *A History of Russia*, pp. 400-405 in chapter 31

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #21 (Lenin), #22 (Gapon), and #23 (October Manifesto)

Anton Chekhov

Tuesday, December 6

Read and be prepared to take a quiz on Chekhov, “The Cherry Orchard,” pp. 239-294 in *Five Plays*

Whither goes Russia?

Thursday, December 8

Read on Sakai Resources and be prepared to discuss documents #24 (The Speech from the Throne), #25 (The Reply of the State Duma), #26 (The Government’s Declaration to the First Duma), and #27 (The Duma’s Vote of No Confidence in the Government)

Review

Tuesday, December 13

Take-home exam due on day of final examination