HIST 202: Stalin and Stalinism

Course Description

“For scholars of Soviet history,” writes the historian David Hoffman, “no problem looms larger than that of Stalinism.” This is undeniably true. Stalinism, defined as the system that came into being between 1929 and 1953, forces historians to confront certain uncomfortable questions: how did the October Revolution result not in a communist utopia but instead in a brutal dictatorship? Why did the idealistic project to create a perfect society lead to widespread repression, to bloody purges and gulag prison camps, which in turn produced human trauma felt in Russia to this day? For decades scholars have grappled with these questions, and in this course we shall ask these questions again and consider many of the answers already put forward.

The personality and personal history of Stalin has often been put forward to explain the murderous excesses of the period that bares his name. Stalinism has become a byword for brutal dictatorship. And Stalin himself is often described as paranoid and cruel – a lunatic murderer who transformed the Soviet Union into a prison-state and condemned its population to nearly three decades of uncompromising terror and oppression. But new archival research has revealed an altogether more complex portrait of the Soviet capo and, perhaps more importantly, a more sophisticated and nuanced historical picture of the Soviet Union under Stalinist rule. To entangle Stalin from the historical vines of Stalinism – that is one of the primary goals of this course. Not to excuse his dictatorship, but to explain the relationship between the man and his time.

Required Texts


Other readings will be available on Blackboard. The books listed above are available at the Oberlin College Bookstore and on reserve at the Mudd Center library.

Contact

Email: chris.stolarski@oberlin.edu
Office: Rice Hall 308
Office Hours: MW 3-5 PM, Th 1-3 PM
Telephone: 440-775-8059

The easiest way to reach me is by email or by coming to my office hours. I check my email daily on weekdays and Sunday evenings. Please note that it may take up to 24 hours for me to respond to your email.
Course Objectives

- To identify key figures, concepts, and themes of Soviet and Stalinist history, from the Revolution of 1917 to the early years of the Cold War (1917-1953);

- To recognize important historical debates about Stalin and Stalinist Russia, and through course assignments and class discussion, to participate in these scholarly conversations;

- To analyze a wide variety of written and visual primary sources, covering the political, social, cultural, and economic histories of the Soviet Union;

- To engage critically in discussion of historical problems with your classmates in a respectful and productive manner;

- To synthesize course readings in written assignments, and to communicate in clear and concise written prose.

Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in or out of class, and for which you may require accommodations, please let me know how your learning needs may be appropriately met. For documentation, please visit the Office of Disability Services in Peters Hall, Room G-27/28. For more information: http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/

Learning

It is important that everyone in this course help make our classroom a supportive learning community. Our work in this class will thrive if we create a space where we all are allowed to explore new ideas, perhaps change our minds, and participate in honest yet respectful debate. Since everyone comes to this course with different sets of skills and knowledge, we may have differences of opinion at times – and it is not the aim of this course for us all to reach consensus. We do need to consider each other’s perspectives respectfully, however, and to sharpen our own skills and perspectives through dialogue and learning from each other.
Graded Assignments

I will provide more detailed instructions about the assignments during the semester. See page 8 for due dates.

Participation
Students are expected to participate actively in class. This – one’s oral contributions to discussion – will be the SOLE criterion considered in regards to your grade in this category. Most classes will combine a formal lecture with a more informal discussion of the week’s assigned readings. Please come prepared to talk about course content. Students are recommended to bring copies of assigned texts in order to ground discussion in documentary evidence.

Map Quiz
Students will fill out a blank map of the Soviet Union with a list of geographic landmarks, cities, and regions.

Quizzes (2)
Each quiz will consist of a visual source and/or short answer section (term identification). Study guides will be distributed one week in advance.

Reading Responses (6)
You will select a minimum of THREE sources and then write a brief (350 word) critical analysis of their contents in connection to the week’s assigned readings more broadly. You may select any of the given week’s readings, except in Weeks 8 and 13 when you must select Journey into the Whirlwind and Everything Flows respectively, as one of the primary documents. Each response will be graded individually and is meant to reflect your meaningful engagement with the readings. These responses are meant to help you to express your thoughts precisely and concisely in any academic or professional setting. Your FIVE best papers will contribute to the final grade for this assignment.

Film Review
Students will review the film Chapaev. This assignment should place the film in its proper historical context, offer critical analysis of the film’s narrative, and it should incorporate at least TWO of the course readings.

Final Exam
The final examination is cumulative in coverage and it will consist of a combination of key term identification, primary source analysis, as well as a short essay. The exam will be held on 12 May 2016, from 2-4 PM.

Course Etiquette

- This class depends on discussion and community learning, and thus it is important that you attend every class. However, since the academic semester is unpredictable, there will be days when you will be unable to attend. Throughout the semester, I will not keep track of attendance, but I shall rely on your observance of the Honor Code when you miss class due to illness, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances.
- Please make sure to turn off and put away your cell phones. Laptops and tablets are allowed for consulting the readings. However, I recommend taking notes with pen and paper. If it becomes clear that laptops are used for other purposes during class, I will no longer allow laptops or tablets in class.
- You are expected to participate actively in class discussions. As our discussions are an important component of the course, it is crucial that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Please come see me to discuss strategies if you feel uncomfortable or unable to participate in class discussion.
Plagiarism & the Honor Code:
“The word plagiarism derives from the Latin roots: *plagiarus*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal. The expropriation of another author’s work and the presentation of it as one’s own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship.” [American Historical Association, Statement on Standards of Professional Contact]. Presenting the work of others as one’s own goes against everything that a liberal education is about. It is a serious affront to the other students in the course, to me as a member of the course, and to the plagiarizer him/herself. The College requires that students sign an “Honor Code” for all assignments. This pledge states: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For further information, see the student Honor Code, which you can access via Blackboard. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me or raise it in class.

Late Work
Reading response papers will be graded on a five-point scale: 5 for excellent, 4 for good, 3 for adequate, 2 for inadequate, 1 for incomplete, and 0 for no submission. These papers are due in class during our regular Friday discussion sections. Any paper submitted after this deadline will receive a deduction of 0.5 points, and an extra 0.5 points will be deducted for every day late after that.

Late assignments will receive deductions of one-third of a letter grade per day. So, an “A” Film Review handed in one day late will receive a “B+”, two-days late, a “B”, and so on.

Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be given in case of emergency/illness or if you ask for an extension because of a heavy workload during the week. In the latter case, an extension will be granted if students provide me with no less than two (2) days notice.

All written work must be turned in for students to achieve a passing grade. All course work must be received by Thursday, May 12, 2016 at noon (12 PM).

Support
If you find yourself unable or struggling to finish the assigned readings, or to contribute to class discussion, please meet with me so that we can discuss some possible strategies going forward. Please reach out to me if you ever feel you need extra help, or if you would like to discuss the readings more fully, or if there is anything else that concerns you. I am available during my regularly scheduled office hours, as well as by appointment.

Image: Isaak Zelensky as he appeared in Aleksandr Rodchenko’s copy of Ten Years of Uzbekistan, 1934

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you wish to dispute a grade, I request that you do so in writing. Please explain your justification carefully. After writing, we shall follow up in person during office hours. Disputes must be submitted to me at least twenty-four hours in advance of an appointment. Please note that a dispute does not guarantee a better grade.
WEEK 1
Tuesday 2/2: **Introduction**
No Readings

Thursday 2/4: **What is Stalinism?**
Blackboard:
- Roy A. Medvedev, from *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, pp. 553
- Graeme Gill, from *Stalinism*, pp. 57-8

WEEK 2
Tuesday 2/9: **Revolutionary Russia**

Thursday 2/11: **The Rise of Stalin**
Blackboard:

WEEK 3
Tuesday 2/16: **The Great Break**
Blackboard:

Thursday 2/18: **Industrialization/Map Quiz**
Blackboard:
- John Scott, “A Day in Magnitogorsk,” from *Behind the Urals*, pp. 9-51

WEEK 4
Tuesday 2/23: **Collectivization**
Blackboard:
- Joseph Stalin, “Problems of Agrarian Policy in the USSR,” 27 December 1929
- Maurice Hindus, from *Red Bread*, pp. 27-34
- Elena Osokina, from “1929-1930: Dizzy with…Hunger” in *Our Daily Bread*, pp. 42-46
Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, pp. 3-79

Thursday 2/25: **Resistance/Reading Response 1**
Blackboard:
- E. Osokina, from “Supply Crisis: Moments of Truth for Socialist Trade” in *Our Daily Bread*, pp. 155-161

WEEK 5
Tuesday 3/1: **Everyday Stalinism**
Blackboard:
- “Cow or Poetry Reading” in Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope*, pp. 300-301
Class Schedule (continued)

- Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Palaces on Monday” in Everyday Stalinism, pp. 67-88
- Nikolai Ostrovsky, from How Steel was Tempered (1932-1934) in James von Geldern and Richard Sistes, eds., Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 163-172
- Film: Chapaev (Georgi & Sergei Vasiliev, 1934)

Thursday 3/3: Nations of the Union/Reading Response 2
Blackboard:
- Diakov, Report on Terror in the Villages of Uzbekistan, January 1928
- V. Aлев, The Victory of the Latin Script, July 1930
- S. Iakovov, The Struggle against Offenses Rooted in the Traditional Way of Life (May 1930)
- M. Nadezhdin, How the National School is Made Indigenous: Results of an Investigation, 1933

WEEK 6
Thursday 3/8: The Stalinist Self
Blackboard:
- “Diary of Stepan Filippovich Podlubny” in V. Garros et al. eds., Intimacy and Terror, pp. 291-331

Tuesday 3/10: Stalinism as Modernity/Quiz 1
Blackboard:
- Robert Service, Stalin: A Biography, pp. 299-309

WEEK 7
Tuesday 3/15: Stalinist Art @ the Allen Memorial Museum

Thursday 3/17: Socialist Realism/Reading Response 3
Blackboard:
- Katerina Clark, The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual, pp. 2-45, 82-89
- Matthew Cullerne Bown, Art Under Stalin, pp. 89-95

March 19-27: Spring Break!

WEEK 8
Tuesday 3/29: The Moscow Show Trials
Blackboard:
- J. Stalin, “Problems of Party Leadership” & “Conclusions” from The Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U(b.), pp. 364-373
- “Bukharin’s Letter to Stalin, 10 December 1937” & “Yezhov’s statement before the USSR Supreme Court,” in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror, pp. 553-568
- Eugenia Ginzburg, Journey into the Whirlwind, pp. 3-270

Thursday 3/31: Massive Liquidation/Film Review
Blackboard:
- “Mandelstam’s Poem about Stalin (November 1933)” in Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope, pp. 13
- “Inside” in Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope, p. 74-79
- “Poliburo decision…,” “Stalin telegram on anti-Soviet elements, 3 July 1937,” “NKVD operational order ‘Concerning the punishment of former kulaks, criminals, and other anti-Soviet elements,’ 30 July 1937,” in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror, pp. 468-81
- “Molotov Justifies the Terror” in Philip Boobbyer, The Stalin Era, pp. 76-77
- Eugenia Ginzburg, Journey into the Whirlwind, pp. 273-418

WEEK 9
Tuesday 4/5: Consumption and Civilization
Blackboard:

Thursday 4/7: Gender and the Family/Reading Response 4
Blackboard:
- “The Father,” 27 June 2014
- From the Discussion in Izvestia, 29 May 1936
Class Schedule (continued)

- Anisimov, Telegram to Kalinin
- Frida Troib et al., “Engineers’ Wives” in S. Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., In the Shadow of Revolution, pp. 419-423

WEEK 10
Tuesday 4/12: Facing Fascism
- Viacheslav Molotov, The Meaning of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, 31 August 1939
- Strictly Secret Instructions Regarding the Manner of Conducting the Deportation of the Anti-Soviet Elements from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, 14 June 1941
- TASS, ‘None so Deaf as Will Not Hear,’ 14 June 1941

Thursday 4/14: The Great Patriotic War/Reading Response 5
Blackboard:
- Joseph Stalin, Radio Speech, 3 July 1941, pp. 21-24
- “Prikaz (Decree) of the USSR People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs Issued in 1941” in Martin McCauley, Stalin and Stalinism, pp. 132-133
- “The USSR NKVD Section for Combatting Banditry” in McCauley, Stalin and Stalinism, pp. 134
- “Epilogue” in John Barber and Mark Harrison, The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945, pp. 206-11
- Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, pp. 107-111
Robert Service, Stalin: A Biography, pp. 421-487

WEEK 11
Tuesday 4/19: The Origins of the Cold War
Blackboard:
- Joseph Stalin, Interview on Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech, 14 March 1946
- George F. Kennan, Sources of Soviet Conduct, 1947
- Joseph Stalin, Inevitability of Wars among Capitalist Countries, 1952
Robert Service, Stalin: A Biography, pp. 491-520, 551-559

Thursday 4/21: High Stalinism
Blackboard:
- Milovan Djilas, from Conversations with Stalin, pp. 147-161
- “The Bookcase” in Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope, p. 235-243
- “The Wave of Repression, 1949-1953” in Elena Zubkova, Russia After the War, pp. 130-138
- Elena Zubkova, “Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments” in David Hoffman, ed., Stalinism: The Essential Readings, pp. 275-301

WEEK 12
Tuesday 4/26: The Stalin Cult
Blackboard:
- “The Origins of the Miracle” in Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope, p. 145-149
- Excerpt from G.F. Aleksandrov et al., Joseph Stalin: A Short Biography, pp. 198-201
- Jan Plamper, The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power, pp. xiii-xviii, 29-86

Thursday 4/28: Destalinization/Quiz 2
Blackboard:
- Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech”
- “The Birth of the Anti-Stalinist Movement” in Elena Zubkova, Russia After the War, 109-129
Robert Service, Stalin: A Biography, pp. 590-604

WEEK 13
Tuesday 5/3: Stalinist Legacy
Vasily Grossman, Everything Flows (whole book)

Thursday 5/5: Memory/Reading Response 6
Blackboard:
- Svetlana Boym, Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia, pp. 238-249
Film: Burnt by the Sun (Nikita Mikhalkov, 1994)
Overview of Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>See class schedule</td>
<td>In class*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
<td>February 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>In class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>(Week 6)</td>
<td>In class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Review</td>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>(Week 8)</td>
<td>5 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>(Week 12)</td>
<td>In class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>2-4 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please submit your Reading Responses on Blackboard before our Thursday class sessions.

NB. I reserve the right to change the syllabus over the course of the semester. Any changes will be discussed in class at least one week prior to their implementation.

Bibliography


* Available on reserve in the Mudd Center library.