Our course begins with the reign of Alexander II (1855-1881) and the era of Great Reforms (1860s) and then proceeds to study Imperial Russia’s struggle with “modernity”: the tensions associated with industrialization and the creation of an urban working class; the impact of rapid socio-economic change on the village; the emergence of “middling classes” which began to demand civil rights; and the problems of maintaining a multi-ethnic empire. Next we examine the revolutionary crisis of 1905 and its aftermath, the descent into World War I and the Revolutions of 1917. The second half of the course studies the Soviet period, with emphasis on the process of state-building and the transformation of society and culture under Stalin; Soviet Russia’s experience in World War II; and the origins of Cold War. We then explore post-Stalinist attempts at reform and some of the reasons for the dramatic collapse of the regime in 1991. The course concludes with a brief reflection on the problems and possibilities of the post-Soviet years.

Course Objectives:
- to introduce students to the major actors, events and institutions which have shaped late Imperial and Soviet Russian history and thereby lay the foundation for further study of Russian/Soviet history, politics and culture;
- to provide opportunities to engage important interpretative debates;
- to gain experience in analyzing primary documents.

Course Requirements

1) Students are expected to attend all class sessions and stay current with the reading. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during the lecture and to meet with me during office hours or by appointment. If you are having trouble with any aspect of the course please see me sooner rather than later.

2) Written work:

Essay #1 will be due in class on March 5 (25% of grade)
Document Analysis will be due in class on March 24 (15% of grade)
Essay #2 will be due in class on April 28 (30% of grade)
Take Home final will be due no later than 9pm May 19 (30% of grade)
All written work is governed by the Honor Code, see:
http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html
[This link will take you to a pdf of student rules and regulations.]

3) Late paper policy: For an extension to be considered, you must consult me in advance of the due date. Unexcused late papers will be penalized a grade step for each day (24 hours) late, that is, A goes to A-, etc.

Credit for the course will not be given if all written work is not turned in.

4) All books and articles assigned in this course are available on Blackboard (BB), Electronic Reserve (ERes), or regular Reserve. The following books have been ordered at the bookstore:

Chukovskaia, L Sofia Petrovna (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988)

E. F. Kozhina, Through the Burning Steppe: a wartime memoir Translated by Vadim Mahmoudov (New York: Riverhead Books, 2000) [Please order from Amazon; the bookstore only has a few copies]


A note on the textbook: There are two editions of this textbook: one that begins in the earliest period of Russian history, the other which begins in 1800. You will see below that I have put in page numbers for both the longer (hardback) and shorter (paperback) version which roughly correspond to the periods/topics we will be studying; however, these are only roughly matched and I ask you to read along chronologically as appropriate.

is a web site that posts a huge array of documents, music, images and video clips. Select a year and a pop up menu will appear with a wide selection of topics and events. We will utilize this site for the Soviet period (1917-1991); at times I will assign specific materials, but I encourage you to routinely explore this site as an important supplement to the semester’s work and as a source for your essays.

A final note: Please turn off cell phones, pagers, beeping watches and the like for the entire class period. Please arrive for the class on time.
Lectures and Readings (Approximate Schedule)

Feb. 8: Introduction

Feb. 10-24: The Crisis of the Nicholean System; Mid-Century Reforms and Response of Society


Evtuhov and Stites, PB = pp.98-141. HB=pp. 406-449

Feb. 26-March 3: The Dilemmas of Modernity


Evtuhov and Stites, PB = pp.142-198. HB = pp. 450-506.

First Essay due March 5 in class

March 5- March 10: Constitutional Russia? the Revolution of 1905 and its Aftermath


Evtuhov and Stites, PB = pp.199-254. HB = pp. 507-562
March 12-March 22: War and Revolution

Petrograd Soviet’s “Appeal to the Peoples of the World” [Handout]  
Miliukov’s “Note” [Handout]  
Lenin “The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution” [“April Thesis”]  
[17 Moments/BB]

17 Moments/BB–documents on 1917. While I have assigned specific documents, be sure to explore “1917” in general. The images and photo essays are quite interesting.


March 24-26: Civil War and War Communism


17 Moments/ BB- 1921: look at the images and video concerning the famine and homeless children.


March 24: Document analysis due in class

March 27-April 4: Spring Break

April 5-9: Early Soviet Polity and Society


17 Moments/ BB- 1921: Lenin on ‘communism = soviet power + electrification’

Evtuhov and Stites: PB = pp.318-354. HB = pp. 626-662
April 12-19: Stalin’s Russia: Building Socialism

17 Moments/ BB – 2 documents from 1929
-the first document is a speech given by Stalin on the “Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class”
-for the second - please look at the images and video for Magnitogorsk and read the three documents listed under “text” – Construction Accidents, Personal Letter from Magnitogorsk, and Time Forward!


Chukovskaia, Sofia Petrovna (entire)

17 Moments/ BB – 3 documents from 1936

Evtuhov and Stites: PB = pp.355-387. HB = pp. 663-695

April 21-28: World War II and Late Stalinism

E. F. Kozhina, Through the Burning Steppe: a wartime memoir Translated by Vadim Mahmoudov [entire]

17 Moments/BB-2 documents from 1943. Look at the images, video, photographic essay on Leningrad


April 28: Second Essay due in class

April 30-May 5: Reform and Retreat: The Khrushchev and Brezhnev Eras

Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, begin reading
Text:

17 Moments/BB – 4 documents from 1973 and 1980

May 7-14: Reform, Collapse and New Directions?

Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, finish reading
Reis, “Honest Bandits” and “Warped People”: Russian Narratives about Money, Corruption, and Moral Decay” in Ethnography in Unstable Places [BB]


17 Moments/ BB- 2 documents from 1985; 1 from 1991
May14: Last Class
Final due no later than 9pm on May 19.