Course description and goals

History 172 examines the revolutionary period in Russia (1890-1922) to study how historians ‘do history.’ The goal of the course is to learn how to think as an historian and how to use historical methodologies to do original research. It is my hope that this experience of ‘doing history’ will encourage you to pursue an honors project in your senior year. It is also my hope that you will come to see the relevance of these skills and habits of mind to your understanding of contemporary events.

In various ways we will be exploring such questions as why Russians rebelled in 1905 and 1917? What motivated them to overthrow an autocrat? What turned ordinary people into activists? How did Russian society become so deeply polarized as to lead to civil war? You could ask these questions of Ukrainians today or Egyptians in Tahir Square in 2011.
The course will operate on two levels: what we do together in class and what you do as part of a collaborative research project with fellow students.

In class we’ll be reading and analyzing primary documents: thinking about the sorts of questions to ask of a document, thinking about different types of documentary sources. We’ll also focus on reading and analyzing secondary sources: how historians have interpreted evidence, crafted a narrative and engaged in debates with other historians. I’ll provide mini-lectures for context, but the class will be discussion based. It is my expectation that everyone reads the assigned materials for every class and everybody contributes to the discussion.

A few weeks into the course I’ll ask you to propose topics you’d like to research. We’ll divide into several small groups and for the remainder of the semester each team will work together to refine the topic, identify primary and secondary sources, develop an annotated bibliography and draft an honors prospectus. Throughout the semester we’ll take time to discuss progress and problems with your research; to share strategies for finding and interpreting sources; and to draft and workshop your analyses of primary and secondary sources.

Course Readings

These texts are available for purchase at the Oberlin Bookstore and also will be on reserve in the library. All other readings are posted on Blackboard under the relevant week.

Rex Wade, ed. Revolutionary Russia, New Approaches, Routledge 2004

Assignments and Grading

Attendance and Participation
Since this course is based on participation and active collaboration, a student with three or more unexcused absences will be unable to earn better than a “C” in the course.

Primary document analyses (5) and working papers (5)
These brief writing assignments are typically due once a week. While I will explain them in detail in class, I note here that one key objective of these assignments is to facilitate discussion
therefore unexcused late papers will not be accepted and will receive a “0.”

Group Research project
   Annotated Bibliography of Secondary sources  10%
   Primary Sources 10%
   Honors Prospectus 20%

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

All written work is governed by the Honor Code. Please be sure to ask me if you have any questions about how it applies to the work in this class.

Special Needs: If you have a documented disability and would like to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

I have always disliked trying to conduct classes on the day before break and the day before Thanksgiving and I’m pretty sure most students do too. So we will not have class on Oct. 17 and Nov. 26. To make up for these missed classes we will have two films to be scheduled by mutual agreement of the class on an evening or weekend in the first part of the semester. Please note that Group Assignment #2 is due no later than 1:30pm Oct. 17.

Week 1: Wed., Sept. 3 – Introduction

Introduction to the professor, the students, discussion of class rules, and responsibilities to each other.

Logic of syllabus: primary documents, interpretive debates, the research process, ‘doing history.’ The purpose of the assignments. Keeping a journal.

Over the next two weeks (by Friday, Sept. 19) please read one of the following textbooks which I have placed on reserve:
Chs. 8 & 9 in Russia, A History ed. by Gregory Freeze
Chs. 30 through 36 in A History of Russia by Nicholas V. Riasanovsky,
Mark D. Steinberg
Chs. 12 through 16 in *A Concise History of Russia* by Paul Bushkovich

Fri., Sept. 5 Setting the themes – Doing History/Thinking about Russia in the early 20th c.

-Steinberg, “Russia’s Fin de siècle, 1900-1914” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp. 67-72 (History as Event) [download a pdf of the chapter]

For Monday: write out and bring to class 2-3 questions of fact; 2-3 substantive points to raise for discussion. For your own journal: What issues are raised? What do you find interesting, confusing?

**Week 2: Mon., Sept. 8 The Romanovs**

-Steinberg, “The political ideology of autocracy” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3, pp. 70-72.
-“Dear Nicky, Dear Sunny” (1916), The Correspondence of Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra, *The Russian Reader*, ed. by Barker and Grant.
-Gurko, On Nicholas II, his Character and his Duties

**Wed, Sept. 10 Ideology of Autocracy**

-Read and Discuss “Pobedonostsev’s Criticism of Modern Society” (1898) Primary Doc Assignment #1

For Friday: write out and bring to class 2-3 questions of fact; 2-3 substantive points to raise for discussion. For your own journal: What issues are raised? What do you find interesting, confusing?

**Fri., Sept. 12 Rural Russia**

-Steinberg, “In the countryside” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp.86-89

**Week 3: Mon., Sept. 15  Industry and Urbanization**

-Steinberg, “In the Public Sphere,” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp. 77-top 80
-Excerpts from “A Secret memorandum of Sergei Witte on the Industrialization of Imperial Russia” March 1899

*Primary Doc Assignment #2*

For Wed: Write out and bring to class 2-3 questions of fact; 2-3 substantive points to raise for discussion. For your own journal: What issues are raised? What do you find interesting, confusing?

**Wed., Sept. 17  Workers**

-Steinberg, “Proletarians” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp. 82-top 86
-Steinberg, “Workers in Suits” in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* pp. 128-132
-Excerpts from *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia* [Ch 1,2,3,5,8,9.]
  [I’ve also placed the book on Reserve.]

For Fri: What is the picture that emerges from these newspaper reports? What’s the narrative? Who are the players? How is the government and its ministers portrayed? For your own journal: What issues are raised? What do you find interesting, confusing?

**Fri., Sept. 19  Workers, Students, Protests, Dissent**

-Steinberg, “Intellectuals and ideologies of dissent” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp. 72-76
-English language newspaper accounts of 1901 [March 7, 16, 20, 24; April 21,25, 28; June 23]

*Group Assignment #1: topics to be posted to Bb by Thursday, Sept. 25 5pm.* Each student proposes a topic (1 paragraph) and posts for the entire class. Please do not repeat a topic already posted. Read the posts of your classmates and come to class prepared to identify 2-3 topics you would be interested in studying. In class we will
divide into groups – each group will work together over the rest of the semester on the same topic exchanging ideas, bibliography, drafts.

**Week 4: Mon., Sept. 22  Bloody Sunday**

- English language newspaper accounts: *New York Tribune* Jan 21, 22, 23, 1905
- Gapon’s Petition

**Wed., Sept. 24  October Manifesto and its Aftermath**

- The Letters Tsar Nicholas to his Mother

**Fri., Sept. 26  Constitutional Russia?**

- Dissolution Decrees of 1st and 2nd Duma

**Week 5: Mon., Sept. 29  On the eve of the war**

- “Czar on Trial” *New York Times*  October 9, 1913
- “The Bloody Repression of a Siberian Strike” *Outlook* June 1, 1912.
- “Discontent in Russia” *Economist* November 15, 1913
- Durnovo Memorandum (Feb. 1914)

Discussion of working paper assignment (example attached). Review your notes on Steinberg, “In the Public Sphere” *Cambridge History of Russia* vol. 3 pp. 77-top 80 [from Sept 15]

**Wed., Oct. 1 Library Session**

**Fri., Oct. 3  Historiographical debate: Stability or Revolution**
- Shulgin *Days*, pp. 104-115
- Mstislavskii, *Five Days Which Transformed Russia*, p. 19-56

**Discussion of Group Assignment #3 due Nov. 21**

**Wed., Oct. 29  February Days**

- Miliukov speech at the Tauride Palace, March 2, 1917
- Abdication Document of Nicholas II  March 2/15, 1917
- Golder, *Documents of Russian History* Chapter 20, pp. 305-07; 308-309; 310- top 318.

**Fri., Oct. 31  War Aims and the April Crisis**

- Petrograd Soviet “Appeal to the Peoples of the World”
- Miliukov’s “Note” of April 18
- Lenin, “April Thesis”

**Primary Doc Assignment #5**

**Week 9: Mon., Nov. 3**

Group work on Assignment #3

**Wed., Nov. 5  Workers Revolution**

- Smith, “Petrograd in 1917: the view from below” and
- Koenker and Rosenberg, “Strikes and revolution in Russia, 1917” in Rex Wade, ed. *Revolutionary Russia, New Approaches*

**Fri., Nov. 7  Peasant Revolution**

- Figes, “The Russian Revolution of 1917 and its language in the village” in Rex Wade, ed. *Revolutionary Russia, New Approaches*

**Week 10: Mon., Nov. 10**

Group work on Assignment #3
- Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917" excerpted as "Dual Polarization in Urban Russia, 1905-1917" in Suny and Adams, The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Victory

Week 6: Mon., Oct. 6 World War I

- "Peasant reaction to military mobilization and requisitioning" July 1914, in Competing Voices for the Russian Reader, Michael Hickey ed.
- Prologue to Revolution: Notes of A. N. Iakhotov on the Secret Meetings of the Council of Ministers. – Meeting of 30 July 1915

Wed., Oct. 8 World War I on the home front

- "Russia Faces Most Profound Crisis of War: Bureaucracy and Democracy" New York Times Nov 26, 1916
- Excerpts from Miliukov's Speech to the Duma, November 14, 1916
- Excerpts from the Letters of Prince F. F. Yussoupov to Princess Z. N. Yussoupov.

Fri., Oct. 10
Group work on Assignment #2

Week 7: Mon., Oct. 13 Historiographical Debate: War and Revolution

- Lohr, Ch 31 "War and Revolution, 1914-1917" in Cambridge History of Russia vol 2 [download a pdf of the chapter]

Wed., Oct. 15
Group work on Assignment #2

Fri. Oct. 17: No class
Submission of Group Assignment #2 due no later than 1:30pm

Break Week – Oct. 18-26

Week 8: Mon., Oct. 27: February Days
Wed., Nov. 12 Toward October

Rosenberg: “Visualizing 1917” in Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture, pp. 142-147

Kolonitskii, “Democracy” in the political consciousness of the February Revolution,” in Rex Wade, ed. Revolutionary Russia, New Approaches

Fri., Nov. 14 Debating October

-Wade, “All power to the soviets”: the Bolsheviks take power” in Rex Wade, ed. Revolutionary Russia, New Approaches

Week 11: Mon., Nov. 17 Debating October


[Working paper #4]

Wed., Nov. 19 First Actions of the new government

-17 Moments >1917 > First Bolshevik Decrees. Read the subject essay and then click on “peace” and “land” to read these documents. Then >1917 >Constituent Assembly. Read the subject essay and then, on the right, click on “Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and read the document.”

Discussion of Group Assignment #4 due Dec. 5

Fri., Nov. 21 – Group work [ASEEES]

Group Assignment #3 due Nov. 21 due no later than 1:30 pm

Week 12: Mon., Nov. 24


[Working paper #5]

Wed., Nov. 26 No class

Thursday-Sunday, Nov. 27-30 Thanksgiving
Week 13: Mon., Dec. 1 Civil War years: domestic conditions

- 17 Moments >1917 > Depopulation of the Cities. Read subject essay then click on "food shortages." On the right of the subject essay, read The Winter of 1918 and Life in a Provincial City.

Wed., Dec. 3
Group work on Assignment #4 [work shopping drafts]

Fri., Dec. 5 Kronstadt

- 17 Moments >1921> Kronstadt Uprising. Read the subject essay then scroll to the right and read Demands of the Kronstadt Insurgents.

Group Assignment #4 to be posted by 1:30 pm, Dec. 5; hard copy submitted to instructor at the end of class.
Students read the prospectuses of the other groups and be ready for discussion on Mon/Wed.

Week 14: Mon/Wed Dec. 8/10 Class presentations

Fri., Dec. 12 – Last class