The Making and Unmaking of Communist Ideals
(Learning About Society Through Historiography, Literature, and Film)

In this seminar we will explore the development of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through historiography, literature, and film. In the first few weeks of the course we will cover the fundamentals of Marxist theory and look at its Leninist application in the Russian historical context. Next, we will explore the background and course of the two Russian revolutions of 1917 through the eyes of one of its main architects and Marxist historians--Leon Trotsky. The main part of the course is devoted to early revolutionary dilemmas, the relationship of intellectuals to the revolution both in Soviet Russia and the West, and the rise of Stalinism. Finally, we will document the process of the gradual disillusionment with Communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Throughout the course we will use historiography, literature and film for conveying sociological ideas and realities. The students are advised to remember that this is a sociology course and that the emphasis, both in their presentations and their research papers, must be on the sociological, not the literary or aesthetic content of the works analyzed. The topic of the research papers will be determined in consultation with the professor. Normally, the topic can be based on the works covered in the seminar but students will be expected to go beyond what was covered in class.

Course prerequisites. Two courses in sociology or consent of instructor.

Course requirements.

Attendance. class participation;
Attendance at all films, absolutely no exceptions;
One in-class presentation during the semester;
One short paper analyzing readings plus a feature film or documentary (5-6 pages)
One 15-page research paper based on the class readings/films.

Grading.

Class and film attendance, participation 25%
Oral presentation in class: 20%
Short paper (5 pages): 20%
Research paper: 35%
Films. All films will be screened in an assigned room in King Building at 8 pm on Sundays. If you cannot make the screening you can access the film from reserve in Mudd Library, but you should screen it before the assigned time and make sure the DVD is available to the instructor by 7.30 pm on Sunday.

Honor Code

This course and all its assignments are covered by the Oberlin College honor code. This means, most importantly, that—unless otherwise indicated—you are to produce your own work and honor the rules and conventions of scholarly quotation, attribution, and citation. While you are allowed to ask advice and help from librarians and official writing tutors, you are, in the end, to submit work produced by you. Any case of (suspected) plagiarism will be reported to the Honors Committee. For more details, see http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/10-Policies-Honor.pdf

Required Books (All books are in the bookstore and on hard copy reserve; additional copies are available through Ohiolink. All other readings can be found on the Blackboard course site under “Course documents.”

ISBN 9780393308693

ISBN 9780810111608

Ignazio Silone, Bread and Wine
Bread and Wine Signet Classics, 2005.


Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, Bantham Classic, 2005.
ISBN 9780553247770.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One. Marxism and Communism (Review)


Week Two. The Imperial Russian Historical Context

*Mon. 9/9*


Week Three. Marxism, Modernization, and the Leninist party.

*Film Screening*: Sunday, 9/15, 8 p.m. Documentary Film: *Red Empire*, part one (each tape has 2x20-minute episodes).

*Monday 9/16.*


Week Four. The February Revolution of 1917.

*Film Screening*: Sunday, 9/22, 8 p.m. *Red Empire*, part two.
Mon. 9/23


**Week Five. The October Revolution of 1917.**

*Film Screening*: Sunday 9/29, 8 p.m. Warren Beatty, *Reds*.

Mon. 9/30


**Week Six. Early Revolutionary Dilemmas.**

*Film Screening*: Sunday, 10/6, 8 p.m. Bernardo Bertolucci, *1900*, part one.

Mon. 10/7

Fyodor Gladkov, *Cement*.

**Week Seven. Communism, Fascism, Class Struggle, and Intellectuals**

*Film Screening*: Sunday 10/13, 8 p.m. Bernardo Bertolucci, *1900*, part two.

Mon.10/14

No Reading.

Discussion of *Reds* and *1900* and distribution of film response paper guidelines.

*Fall break 10/19-10/27*
Week Eight. Peasants, Fascism, and Communism: The Case of Southern Italy

Mon. 10/28

Ignazio Silone, Bread and Wine


Week Nine. From the Rise of Stalin to Collectivization

Film screening: Sunday, 11/3, 8 p.m. Red Empire, part three.

Mon 11/4

Short film response paper due on in class. No late papers!


Week Ten. The Terror and the Great Purge Trials

Film screening: Sunday 11/10, 8 p.m. Red Empire, part four.

Mon. 11/11


Week Eleven. The End of the Old Bolsheviks

Film Screening, Sunday 11/17, 8 p.m. Nikita Mikhalkov, Burnt by the Sun.

Mon. 11/18

Arthur Koestler, Darkness at Noon

Week Twelve. Stalinism and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe

Film screening Sunday, 11/24. 8 p.m. Istvan Szabo, *Mefisto*.

Mon. 11/25

Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*


Week Thirteen. Stalinism and Its Victims in the Khrushchev Era

Film Screening Sunday 12/1, 8 p.m. *Red Empire*, part six.

Mon. 12/2


Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Week Fourteen. Utopia and Its Discontents. Reckoning with the Stalinist Legacy

Film Screening: Sunday, 12/8, 8 p.m. Dušan Makavejev, *Mysteries of the Organism*

Mon. 12/9


*Final paper due on Saturday, December 21, by 11 a.m.*