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 Feb. 27 (25% of grade)
- Document Analysis will be due in class on March 20 (15% of grade)
- Essay #2 will be due in class on April 17 (30% of grade)
- Take Home final will be due no later than 9pm May 13 (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)

A note on the textbooks: In the past I have simply placed several textbooks on reserve as recommended reading. More recently, and following comments from student evaluations, I am strongly encouraging students to select a textbook and read it consistently throughout the semester. My own preference is for C. Evtuhov, et. al., A History Of Russia; Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces because it is the most up to date and comprehensive, and because it includes commentary on social and cultural history. Freeze, Russia, A History is also reasonably up to date, treats social and cultural topics, but is substantially shorter. I have ordered these textbooks at the bookstore.

N. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia is a more traditional text although some sections have been revised in light of current scholarship. I have placed this textbook on Reserve.

You will see below that I have put in page numbers for the various textbooks that 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.

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; once class has begun, please refrain from taking breaks and leaving the room.
Lectures and Readings (Approximate Schedule)

Feb. 2: Introduction

Feb. 4-Feb. 11: The Crisis of the Nicholean System; Mid-Century Reforms and Response of Society


Text:
Evtuhov and Stites, PB = pp.98-141. HB=pp. 406-449
Or
Freeze, pp. 170-193.

Feb. 13-March 6: The Dilemmas of Modernity


Text:
Evtuhov and Stites, PB = pp.142-254. HB = pp. 450-562
Or
Freeze, pp. 193-230
Feb 27: First Essay due in class

March 9-March 20: War, Revolution, Civil War
--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 – next 4 documents on 1917

Text:
Or
Freeze, pp. 230-253

-- Civil War


Text:
Evtuhov and Stites: PB = pp.297-317. HB = pp. 605-625
Or
Freeze, pp. 253-262

March 20: Document analysis due in class

March 21-29: Spring Break

March 30-April 3: Early Soviet Polity and Society

17 Moments/BB- 2 documents from 1921- look at the images and video concerning the famine.

Text:
April 6-April 20: Stalin’s Russia (1929-1953)

--Building Socialism

17 Moments/ BB – 2 documents from 1929; look at the images and video for Magnitogorsk


Chukovskaiia, Sofia Petrovna (entire)

17 Moments/ BB – 2 documents from 1936

Text:
Evtuhov and Stites: PB = pp.355-387. HB = pp. 663-695
Or
Freeze, pp. 291-318

--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

Text:
Or
Freeze, pp. 319-346.

April 17: Second Essay due in class
April 22-27: Reform and Retreat: The Khrushchev and Brezhnev Eras

Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, begin reading

Text:
Or
Freeze, pp. 347-382

17 Moments/BB – 4 documents from 1973 and 1980

April 29-May 6: 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]

Text:
Or
Freeze, pp. 383-421

17 Moments/BB- 2 documents from 1985; 1 from 1991

May 8: Last Class
May 13: Take home final due not later than 9pm.