STALIN AND HIS ERA:
SOURCES, DEBATES, APPROACHES

HIST 6160: Graduate Seminar in European History
Fall 2015, Wed. 4:30-7:00pm, History Conference Room

Professor:
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Office Hours:
T 4:40-5:30 or by appointment
Main 321K

Course Description:
This seminar explores historians’ attempts to grapple with one of the most significant figures of the twentieth century, the conditions that enabled his rise to power, and his impact on the wider world. Surpassing even Hitler in terms of the scale of the regime’s brutality, Stalin remains a surprisingly popular figure in contemporary Russia due to his role in modernizing the country and defeating the Nazi war machine. Among historians, the nature of Stalin, the system of rule he introduced and his part in determining wider historical processes remain hotly debated. This course will focus on major historical debates and approaches, as well as the diverse array of sources historians have used to understand Stalin and his era.

Required Texts:

• For those without a background in Russian/Soviet history, I strongly recommend any concise textbook on modern Russia. I recommend Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia*, but there are countless other good texts in the library. Ask me if you want other recommendations.
• Additional Readings will be posted on Canvas

Learning Outcomes:

• Historical Knowledge
  o Describe the influence of political ideologies, economic structures, social organization, cultural perceptions, and natural environments on historical events
  o Discuss the ways in which factors such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity influence historical narratives
• Historical Thinking
  o Emphasize the complex and problematic nature of the historical record
• Historical Skills
  o Develop skills in critical thinking and reading
  o Develop research skills
  o Develop the ability to construct reasonable historical arguments
ASSIGNMENTS / GRADE COMPONENTS

- Attendance and Participation: 10pts
- Weekly Response Papers: 25pts
- Topic Presentation(s): 10pts
- Historiographical Paper Outline or Introduction or Thesis: 10pts
- Oral Exam: 5pts
- Presentation of your Paper Topic/Thesis: 5pts
- Peer Review: 5pts
- Historiographical Paper: 25pts

95 points total

Attendance and Participation (10pts):
Attendance and participation are absolutely crucial components of the seminar, especially given that we meet only once per week. If you have a university-approved absence or cannot come to our seminar, you are required to submit an extended 3–4 page Response Paper for the missed class.

Weekly Response Papers (25pts):
You are required to submit a weekly 1–2 page response paper responding to the weekly readings. The questions you should be answering are as follows: 1) What is the author’s central argument? 2) What types of sources does the author use to support his/her argument? 3) What broader debate is the author engaging? 4) What are the strengths/weaknesses of the author’s argument? 5) What, if anything, is still unclear about the readings? These are not formal term papers, but looser responses, and hence while the rules of grammar/spelling/structure apply, I will not be grading harshly in this regard. Rather, I want to see how you think about and engage with the readings. This has the added benefit of forcing students to do the readings and to be prepared to discuss the readings during seminar.

Topic Presentation(s) (10pts):
Each week pre-selected students will present a specific reading or part of a reading to spark further discussion. Depending on seminar numbers, students will present multiple times throughout the semester. Presentations should be short, between 5-10 minutes each, and based on the question format listed above regarding the Weekly Response Papers. In other words, this is really a slightly more in-depth presentation of your Weekly Response Paper. If you are clinically incapable of speaking in front of other people, please speak with me.

Historiographical Paper Outline or Introduction or Thesis (10pts):
You are required to submit a paper outline, introduction, or thesis statement at specified due date. This is designed to encourage students to start thinking about their final papers early. Students are required to determine a specific topic based either on one of the topics discussed in class or something outside of class. Papers are to engage in an historiographical debate, meaning the papers are not based on primary source research, but rather engage the historiography of Stalinism in some way. Your topic must be approved by me in advance and you are encouraged to begin consulting me as soon as possible in the semester. If you’d prefer to do a primary-source based research paper, this is possible as well. Speak with me.

Oral Exam (5pts):
Late in the semester you will have the opportunity to prove all you have learned about Stalin and Stalinism during the semester. Simply for participating in the “oral exam” you receive the 5pts. However, if your team wins the “oral exam,” you will receive a small amount of extra credit, in addition to glory and the respect of your peers.

Presentation of Your Paper Topic/Thesis (5pts):
Each student will give a presentation to the rest of the class on their Final Paper. This is an opportunity to practice your presentation skills, but also a chance to get feedback from the group. This is a great way of honing your ideas.

Peer Review (5pts):
As you finish the rough draft of your paper, you are required to exchange this paper with another student in the class working on a different topic. The student will then read your paper and provide feedback in the form of comments.
within 24-48 hours. This feedback should be marked on the rough draft itself, or can be typed in Word via the “track changes” tab. Feedback will need to be submitted to me as part of your grade. You will also read another student’s paper and provide feedback.

**Historiographical (Final) Paper (25pts):**
This is the biggest component of your grade. This will be a paper roughly 20 pages in length, double-spaced, with 12pt font. As stated above, this can be based on a historiographical debate discussed in class or something not discussed in class. The idea is to engage the literature on a given topic, and also present your own thesis based on your reading of the broader literature. Perhaps there is a weakness in the literature that you would like to point out, or maybe you found a particular school of thought especially convincing and you would like to explicate why. Think of it as a literature review with a specific argument. After all, this is what you will be doing in your theses—finding strengths and weaknesses in a given literature and carving out a niche for your own ideas. I do not assign topics. Part of the challenge is exploring themes on your own. However, your topics must be approved in advance and you are encouraged to consult with me as soon as possible in the semester on your potential topics. It goes without saying, you will be graded not only on your argument and use of sources, but proper format, grammar, spelling, structure, citations, etc. For further information on proper citations, refer to the Chicago Manual of style available online:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

**ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

Computer Policy:
I will permit you to use a computer in class if you absolutely need to. However, browsing the internet is not allowed as I find it especially distracting for me and other students. If I have to ask you to stop browsing and pay attention, I will simply ban computers for the the whole class.

A Note on Plagiarism/Cheating:
Plagiarism is the taking of someone else's words or ideas and presenting them as your own. This includes using direct quotations or paraphrasing work without properly citing it. Please familiarize yourself with USU's policies regarding plagiarism at this link. Better to turn in a sloppy or late paper than a plagiarized one. The penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. See:

http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=1572&hl=%22Academic+Honesty%2FIntegrity%22&returnto=search

Students with Disabilities:
If you require special accommodation in this course due to a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. Please also notify me and make sure to let me know specifically what you need in advance of quizzes, exams, etc. The Disability Resource Center website can be found here: http://www.usu.edu/drc/

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Sep. 2: Introduction

Sep. 9: On Stalinism’s Origins
Readings:
- Review of Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled.*
- Fitzpatrick, “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” on Canvas.
- Suny, “Stalin and his Stalinism,” in Hoffmann.
- Priestland, “Stalin as Bolshevik Romantic,” on Canvas.
Sep. 16: The Modernity Paradigm
Readings:
- Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, all (it’s kind of dense, so start reading early).
- Holquist, “Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work,” on Canvas.

Sep. 23: Neo-Traditionalism or Modernization?
Readings:
- Martin, “Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism,” on Canvas.
- (Optional) David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism,” on Canvas.

Sep. 30: The “Great Retreat” and Stalinist Russocentrism
Readings:
- Brandenberger, “The People Need a Tsar,” on Canvas.
- Hoffmann, “Was There a Great Retreat from Soviet Socialism?” on Canvas.

Oct. 7: No class. I’m away for a conference.

Oct. 14: Maker or Breaker of Nations? Stalinist Nationality Policy
Readings:
- Suny and Martin, “Introduction,” in *State of Nations*.
- Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” on Canvas.
- Brandenberger, “It is Imperative to Advance Russian Nationalism as the First Priority,” in *State of Nations*.
- (Optional) My forthcoming conference paper

Oct. 21: Stalinist Terror and State Violence in the USSR
Readings:
- Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, (all).
- Burds, “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists’,” on Canvas.

Oct. 28: Gender, Resistance, and the Soviet Self
Readings:
- Davies, “Introduction” and “Chapter 11,” in *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, on Canvas.
- Halfin and Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject,” on Canvas.
- Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul,” on Canvas.
- (Optional) Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” on Canvas.

Nov. 4: Stalin and the Cold War; possible film screening
Readings:
• Zubok and Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin's Cold War, chs. 1-4.
• Cox and Kennedy-Pipe, “The Tragedy of American Diplomacy?” on Canvas.

Nov. 11: Film Screening Burnt By the Sun
Final Paper Topics Due

Nov. 18: Oral Exams/Pub Quiz (Will be held evening Nov. 17)
Outline/Introduction/Thesis Statement Due

Nov. 25: No class. Thanksgiving

Dec. 2: Presentations
Rough Drafts Submitted to a Peer Reviewer, would should be read, comment upon, and return comments to author within 24-48 hours

Dec. 9: Individual Meetings

Dec. 14: Final Papers due by the end of the day via TurnItIn and Hard Copy

Please note: I reserve the right to modify this syllabus as necessary, and will inform the class of any changes.