History 500.003. Readings in Russian History
Spring 2009
Wed., 5:30-8:00.
Prof. Eric Lohr
Office hours: Tues. and Fri. 9:30-11:00, 1:30-2 and Tues. 3:45-5:30
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This course is designed as a reading-intensive introduction to selected major problems in the interpretation of the history of modern Russia. The primary aim of the course is to develop a broad knowledge of the field and the national history. The course should help graduate students prepare for a comprehensive field exam in Russian history. (It is a grad level course, so there is no distinction in the assignments for undergraduates taking the course). After reading several of the classic comprehensive interpretive histories, we will focus our readings upon the more specific question of the place of Russia and Russian nationalism within the Imperial and Soviet contexts. If you are preparing for a field, this is a good time to read additional titles and bring them into the class discussion (or outside of class). I can help provide additional reading suggestions.

The primary focus of the course is on reading and discussion rather than on a large research paper. The writing assignments are meant to facilitate and complement our collaborative efforts to master a large list of long, challenging texts.

In terms of planning your semester, you may assume that this course has a very heavy load through the semester, but relatively little at the end. There will be a cumulative oral exam to assess knowledge of the books we have read during the semester, but if you have kept up with the readings and truly grasped the main points of each book, that will not be difficult. The best way to prepare for the final (and midterm) oral exams is to take careful notes and write short essays or memos to yourself about the main arguments made by each author, and how he or she makes the arguments.

Assignments and course requirements:

One highly recommended way to become familiar with debates surrounding the books on the list is to call up reviews of the books (using Historical Abstracts, JSTOR, Project Muse, Google, etc.—or the old fashioned way, by going to the stacks to look at journals and their indexes for the 3-5 years after the year of publication of the book).

Writing assignments: Three 5-page essays and in-class presentations.
1. A team of 2-4 students will be responsible for preparing discussion questions and opening the discussion with a brief presentation on the book of the week. For that chosen week, each student will also write an essay (5 pp.) analyzing the central argument(s) of the author. For this essay, it is very useful to make use of book reviews and review essays of the book. Use of additional outside sources is welcome but not expected. The essay is due on the day of the class discussion.
Readings. If you are not familiar with the broad outlines of Russian history from previous coursework or readings (and even if you are), I would recommend one or more of the following:


One of the best ways to quickly become familiar with the field is to spend a few hours or days browsing, skimming, and selectively reading articles and book reviews from the last few years of the major journals in the field. These include:

- *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*
- *Russian Review*
- *Slavic Review*
- * Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*
- *Russian History/Histoire Russe*
- *Cahiers du monde Russe et Soviétique*
- *Europe-Asia Studies*
- *Journal of Modern History*
- *American Historical Review*
Grading:
Writing assignments: 40%
Class participation: 25%
Midterm exam: 10%
Oral final exam: 25%

The oral final exam consists of a series of questions about the main arguments of each required reading and how effectively the author developed his or her argument. There will also be questions about the central theme of the course: the place of Russia and the Russian nation in the imperial and soviet contexts.


PART I. Interpretive Histories


PART II. Russian Nation and Russian Nationalism in the Context of Imperial and Soviet History


For additional reading on the “Russian Question,” see:


