

HIST 468: HISTORY OF STALINISM



“Long Live the Stalinist Order of Hero Stakhanovites!” (1936) Source: www.soviethistory.org.

Instructor: Prof. Steven E. Harris

University of Mary Washington – Spring Semester, 2015

This class meets TR, 12:30pm-1:45pm, Monroe Hall 233

Office Hours: M, 11am-12:00pm; 1:30pm-4:00pm; TR, 3:15-4:00pm; and by appointment

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Description

This seminar examines the Stalin period in Soviet history (1929-1953) and the main historiographical schools of thought that have shaped our understanding of this era. One of the most brutal dictators of the 20th century and leader of one of the century’s most ruthless totalitarian regimes, Stalin has long held center stage among historians attempting to make sense of the Soviet Union, socialism, and totalitarianism. The political system, economy, society, and cultural life over which he ruled have also captivated the imagination of historians seeking to explain how people in the Soviet Union lived, died, survived, fought in wars, and worked for a regime such as Stalin’s. Stalinism, historians argue, was more than a political ideology but a way of life and a civilization distinct from anything the modern world had yet experienced.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, historians have gained unprecedented access to state and party archives in the former Soviet Union, which they have used to re-examine much

of its history, especially the Stalin era. From the inner workings of the Politburo and Stalin's own archival file to diaries of committed communists and letters of complaint from ordinary citizens, historians have cultivated many new sources to study the Stalin period. In this seminar, we will focus upon a selection of the most formative works of this new historiography, their interpretative frameworks, methodological tools, and contentious debates. To appreciate this new historiography fully, we will begin by examining the schools of thought and methodologies that preceded it and continue to shape our understanding of Stalin and Stalinism. The major project for each student in this course will be a historiography paper on a topic in studies of Stalin and Stalinism. The goals of this assignment are to study a subfield of Soviet history in detail and, more generally, to learn how to master a body of literature on a specific topic.

Course assignments

Class participation (including blog entries):	20%
Book review:	20%
Paper proposal and bibliography:	20%
Final paper and presentation:	40%

Course readings

Steven Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, 2011).

Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Nikolai Kremontsov, *The Cure: A Story of Cancer and Politics from the Annals of the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (Picador, 2007).

Elena Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire: Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Schedule

January 13: Introduction to the course

From the Russian Revolution to the Stalin Revolution

January 15: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (intro., chapters 1-2)
In-class review of paper instructions for this course (blog)

January 20: Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (chapters 3-6; conclusion)

Thermidorian Reaction and the Great Retreat

January 22: Trotsky, excerpt from *The Revolution Betrayed* (blog)
Timasheff, excerpt from *The Great Retreat* (“The Scope and the Meaning of the Great Retreat”) (blog)

Suggested reading:

Articles in “Ex Tempore: Stalinism and the ‘Great Retreat’” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 4 (Fall 2004).

Totalitarianism: The Classic Model of Stalinism

January 27: Arendt, excerpts from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (“The Masses” and “Totalitarian Propaganda”) (blog)
Malia, excerpts from *The Soviet Tragedy* (“And They Built Socialism, 1929-1935”) (blog)

Suggested reading:

Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, excerpt from *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).
Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).
Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1993).

The Revisionist Turn: Social Histories of a Totalitarian Regime

January 29: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite” (blog)
Moshe Lewin, “The Social Background of Stalinism” (blog)
* **Historiography paper proposal due today.**

Suggested reading:

Articles on revisionism in *Russia Review* 45, no. 4 (1986).

Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1973).

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Stalinist Ideology and Modernity

February 3: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

February 5: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

Suggested reading:

Igal Halpin, *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at the Leningrad Communist University* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

David Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Stalin

February 10: articles from *Stalin: A New History* (blog)

February 12: articles from *Stalin: A New History* (blog)

Suggested reading:

Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin. Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: Norton, 1990)

Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).

The Soviet Empire and Gender Relations

February 17: Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire*.

February 19: Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire*.

Suggested reading:

Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology, 1910-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Stalinism and the West

February 24: Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*.

February 26: Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*.

Suggested reading:

Katerina Clark, *Moscow, The Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.)

György Péteri, *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

February 28-March 8: Spring Break

Stalinist Cinema

March 10: Viewing and discussion of the film *The Bright Path* (1940).

March 12: Viewing and discussion of the film *The Bright Path* (1940).

The Great Purges and The Gulag

March 17: Barnes, *Death and Redemption*.

March 19: Barnes, *Death and Redemption*.

Suggested reading:

Robert Conquest, *Inside Stalin's Secret Police: NKVD Politics, 1936-1939* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985).

Wendy Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. Vadim Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

The Soviet Union in World War II

March 24: Merridale, *Ivan's War*.

March 26: Merridale, *Ivan's War*.

* Start viewing *War of the Century* (2005)

March 31: Viewing and discussion of *War of the Century* (2005)

April 2: Viewing and discussion of *War of the Century* (2005)

Suggested reading:

Susan J. Linz, ed., *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985).

Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Stalinism and Science

April 7: Krementsov, *The Cure*.

April 9: Krementsov, *The Cure*.

Suggested reading:

James Andrews, *Science for the Masses: The Bolshevik State, Public Science, and the Popular Imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917-1934* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Stalinism outside the Soviet Union

April 14: Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*.

April 16: Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*.

Suggested reading:

Deborah Kaple, *Dream of a Red Factory: The Legacy of High Stalinism in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2012).

Class Presentations on Historiography Papers

April 21: Presentations

April 23: Presentations

Final Exam: Historiography Paper deadline: Thursday, April 30, 12:00pm