

HIST 471F9: Moscow-Washington: Capitals of the Cold War Past and Present?



Narkomfin House and the African American History Museum

Instructor: Prof. Steven E. Harris

University of Mary Washington – Fall Semester, 2018

This class meets T, 6:00pm-8:45pm, Monroe Hall 233

Office hours: T, 3:30pm-6pm; TR, 10am-11am; R, 1:30pm-2pm and by appointment

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Description

This seminar explores the history of Russian and American relations through the lens of each country's capital city, how their histories have become entangled, and how they have followed different paths. With their origins in very different national and local histories before the 20th century, Moscow and Washington suddenly intersected during the Cold War as the metropolises of two global, entangled empires that displaced those of Western Europe after World War II. Over the next four decades, these two cities grew in tandem as urban centers showcasing their political values and socio-economic systems to the rest of the world, while simultaneously denying their status as empires and hiding many of their state secrets, methods of fighting the Cold War, and even their social failings within their very urban fabric. Frequently lost in discussions of relations between Moscow and Washington are the cities themselves, their urban geography and architecture, their subway systems and infrastructure, their musical and literary scenes, ethnic and racial tensions, and the everyday lives of their residents. This seminar recaptures the urban history of these two metropolises and asks what they can tell us about the broader state of Russian and American relations, which have arguably constituted the most consequential international relationship for both countries from the early 20th century to the present.

Assignments

Class participation

Book review

Individual paper proposal on topic relating to Moscow or Washington

Paper comparing Moscow and Washington (to be written with one other student)

Individual paper

Paper topics: You will write an individual term paper about either Moscow or Washington on one of the following seven topics (only one student per topic/city): 1) sacred (religious and secular) spaces; 2) sports, leisure, and recreation; 3) subway systems and transportation; 4) central squares; 5) memorializing the past; 6) pivotal years 1968 and 1991; and 7) museums. You will also write a joint, comparative paper on your topic with the student who has chosen the same topic but for the other city.

Readings

Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Stephen Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Timothy Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995).

Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

Maria Rogacheva, *The Private World of Soviet Scientists from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Blair Ruble, *Washington's U Street: A Biography* (Washington, DC and Baltimore: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

Zachary Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

Schedule

August 28: Introduction

* "Washington" (course blog)

* "Moscow" (course blog)

September 4: * Colton, *Moscow* (Introduction, chapters 1-4)

* Musgrove and Asch, *Chocolate City* (Introduction, chapters 2, 4, 5-6)

First discussion of individual and group papers

September 11: * Colton, *Moscow* (chapters 5-8)

* Musgrove and Asch, *Chocolate City* (chapters 10-14, epilogue)

September 18: * Rogacheva, *The Private World of Soviet Scientists*

September 25: Rogacheva on campus

October 2: * Ruble, *Washington's U Street*

October 9: * Individual paper proposal presentations
* Individual paper proposal due today
* Group paper presentation

October 13-16: Fall Break

October 23: Musgrove on campus

October 30: * Bittner, *Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw*

November 6: Bittner on campus

November 10: Trip to DC

November 13: * Schrag, *Great Society Subway*

November 20: * Friedman, *Covert Capital*

November 22: Thanksgiving

November 27: Friedman on campus

December 4: * Group project presentations
* Individual papers due today

Final Exam: Group paper deadline: Tuesday, December 11, 7:00pm