

HIST 471F7: Sputnik, Spies, and Socialism: The Soviet Union's Last Decades



Novyi Arbat, Moscow. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/26093461@N00/5468570527>

Instructor: Prof. Steven E. Harris

University of Mary Washington – Spring Semester, 2018

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

Office hours: T, 3:15pm-6:00pm; R, 10:00am-11:30am, 3:15pm-4pm and by appointment

Office: Monroe Hall 224; tel. (540)-654-1390; e-mail: sharris@umw.edu

Description

This seminar explores the Soviet Union's reform and transformation from Stalin's death in 1953 through its dramatic (and largely unexpected) collapse in 1991. Following years of Stalinist terror and a cataclysmic world war, the USSR under the new leadership of Nikita Khrushchev revived the socialist project through de-Stalinization at home and waged the Cold War abroad on many new fronts. Through incredible advancements in science and technology, the USSR leap-frogged over its capitalist adversaries to put the first satellite, Sputnik, and then the first man, Yuri Gagarin, into space. In the long era of Leonid Brezhnev's leadership, Soviet society enjoyed its most stable period characterized by détente with the United States and the highest ever standards of living at home. And then, beginning in the mid-1980s, the Soviet system suddenly began to unravel when yet another leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, embarked on another

series of reforms that led to the USSR's end in 1991. How did all of this happen in a span of just 38 years? How did the Soviet Union's last decades shape the lives of its citizens from members of the Soviet ruling elite to ordinary people? And what effects did late Soviet history have on the wider world? These are some of the questions we will answer in this seminar.

Assignments

Class participation:	20%
Book review:	15%
Group project 1:	10%
Group project 2:	10%
Group project 3:	10%
Final paper:	35%

Readings

James Andrews and Asif Siddiqi, eds., *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

Schedule

January 16: Introduction to the course

January 23: * Suny, chapters 17-19 of *The Soviet Experiment*

January 30: * Zubok, *A Failed Empire*

February 6: * Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*

February 13: Group 1 presentation on Zubok
Group 2 presentation on Roth-Ey
Viewing and discussion of *Carnival Night* (1956)

February 20: * Andrews and Siddiqi, eds., *Into the Cosmos*

February 27: * Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*

March 5-March 9: Spring Break

March 13: Group 3 presentation on Andrews and Siddiqi
Group 4 presentation on Dobson
Viewing and discussion of *Wings* (1966)

March 20: * Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization*

March 27: * Mēhilli, *From Stalin to Mao*

April 3: Group 5 presentation on Sanchez-Sibony
Group 6 presentation on Mēhilli
Viewing and discussion of *Autumn Marathon* (1979)

April 10: * Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture*

April 17: * Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*

April 24: Group 7 presentation on Chernyshova
Group 8 presentation on Raleigh
Viewing and discussion of *The Cold Summer of 1953* (1988)

Final Exam: Historiography Paper deadline: Tuesday, May 1, 7:00pm