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**History 507 [Seminar] THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

Wednesday, 3:00-6:00, McKenzie 471

(3:00-5:00 with undergraduates, 5:00-6:00 grad students only)

**Course description:** This five-credit seminar will explore the history and English-language historiography of the Russian Revolution. Topics include the causes of the revolution, the events of 1917, the Russian civil war, and the aftermath of the revolution in the context of the New Economic Policy. Like other history seminars, the course has methodological as well as substantive aims; class discussions and assignments will focus on the practice of researching and writing history as well as on the specific subject matter of assigned texts. Graduate students will meet with undergraduates for the first half of the course and separately in the second half.

**Library assignments:** Part of historical training involves becoming familiar with primary sources. For the Oct. 13 and 20 sessions, this course asks you to spend two hours perusing a major primary source and writing up an informal 2-page response paper, due in class. Students who read Russian should try to use the Russian sources, as against English-language alternatives. Response papers should address as many of the following questions as possible: What was your source? If you have read only part of a bigger source, which part? What range of topics does this source address? For what kinds of research topic could it be used? How would you assess its reliability? What questions does the source raise?

**Book review:** In weeks six through eight, graduate students will be meeting to discuss major monographs on the first decade of Soviet power. Please write a brief book review of one of the three books (your choice). This assignment is intended both to help you elucidate your thoughts on the book before our discussion, and to familiarize you with a major genre of academic writing. For the format of the book review, I would suggest that you peruse the review sections of some recent journals in the field, such as *Slavic Review*, *Russian Review*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Kritika*, and *The Journal of Modern History*.

**Seminar paper:** A 507 seminar ordinarily involves writing a major paper (roughly 25 pages) based on primary research. This is the expectation for any first-year graduate students in Russian history. Second-year students who are working on their theses, and any graduate students in fields other than Russian history who are planning to take a seminar more directly in their field, may elect to write a shorter (11-15 page) historiographical paper in lieu of the seminar paper. For those students writing a traditional seminar paper, my recommendation would be to define your problem around one of the recently published document collections (a partial list appears in the library assignment for Oct. 20), or a newspaper from 1917-22 (available on microfilm through Interlibrary Loan -- see me for ideas). For students choosing the historiographical option, I expect you to read roughly three major historical monographs and a few articles on a broad interpretive issue, as against a traditional research paper devoted to resolving a narrow historical problem. If you are taking the course as a 605 reading course for 3 credits, you may opt out of the library assignments and simply write three book reviews (two for assigned graduate readings, one on a book of your choice).

**Paper proposals:** The following applies only to those students who are writing a traditional seminar paper. If you are eligible for the historiography option, please simply let me know what you plan to do, and float the texts past me at some point. For a primary research paper, it is important to start early and to get some feedback at an early stage as to whether your topic is feasible and your approach sound. You are therefore required to submit a formal paper proposal on Oct. 29. For the proposal, try to formulate your topic in terms of a historical problem, which is to say that you should frame it in the form of a question, but also give some sense of why this question is interesting or significant, based on the reading that you have already done. In addition, you should try to give a sense of how you plan to go about answering the question (your research strategy, and, if already possible, your hypothesis or argument). Aim for roughly two pages. You should also append to your proposal a preliminary bibliography of at least eight items.

**Grading:**

- 60% Class preparation and assignments
- 40% Seminar paper

**Required texts available at the bookstore:**

Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*

Additional required readings for Oct. 13, Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 3, Nov. 10, and Nov. 17 are best obtained through the library's Summit system. Summit takes 3-4 days to deliver the book, so make sure that you order your books in advance. Another possibility is to place a special order for Suny/Martin (Oct. 27) and Hessler (Nov. 17) at the bookstore, or buy new or used copies on line. Used copies of Koenker et al. (Oct. 20) and Stites (Nov. 10) may also be available.

**Syllabus**

Wednesday, Sept. 29 Introductory remarks: interpreting the Russian Revolution; *The Battleship Potemkin*, dir. Sergei Eisenstein. Note: Order your copy of Pethybridge for the Oct. 13 session now!

Wednesday, Oct. 6 Origins of the Russian Revolution.

Reading: *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 1-306

Extra reading for graduate students: Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities in Urban Russia, 1905-1912," in *The Structure of Russian History*, ed. Michael Cherniavsky (Knight Library reserve); Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *American Historical Review* vol. 107 (Oct. 2002): 1094-1123; Melissa Stockdale, "My Death for the Motherland is Happiness: Women, Patriotism, and Soldiering in Russia's Great War, 1914-1917," *American Historical Review* vol. 109, no. 1 (Feb., 2004): 78-117.

Wednesday, Oct. 13 The revolutionary year: 1917

Readings: *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 307-473

Extra reading for graduate students: Roger Pethybridge, "The Railways" and "The Telegraphs" from *The Spread of the Russian Revolution: Essays on 1917* (available through Summit)

Library assignment: Read as much as you can in two hours of one of the major Bolshevik political treatises: Lenin, *What is To Be Done*; Lenin, *State and Revolution*; Bukharin and Preobrazhenskii, *The ABC of Communism*; Trotsky, *The New Course*; Kollontai, *Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman* (all on reserve). In addition, peruse the contents of the Norton reader for your author, if there is one, or of the author's collected works. The library should have Russian versions of all of these texts, if your Russian is fluent. Write a response paper.

Wednesday, Oct. 20 From revolution to civil war.

Readings: *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 474-649.

Extra reading for graduate students: section I and two other sections (from II-V) of your choice in *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War*, ed. Diane Koenker et al. (on reserve at Knight, DK 265.9.D45 P37 1989 or available through Summit).

Library assignment:

\*For readers of Russian: Look up one of the following document collections: *Меньшевики в 1919 г.*; *Меньшевики в 1920 г.*; *Сибирская Вандея. Вооруженное сопротивление коммунистическому режиму в 1920 году*; *За советы без коммунистов. Крестьянское*

восстание в Тюменской губернии. 1921; Советская деревня глазами ВЧК-ОГПУ-НКВД, т. 1; Письма во власть, 1917-1927. Write a response paper.

\*In English: Read/peruse a diary from the revolutionary period and write a response paper: Semen Kanatchikov, *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia* (trans. and ed. Reginald Zelnik); Pitirim Sorokin, *Leaves from a Russian Diary*; Iu. V. Got'e, *Time of Troubles*; Alexis Babine, *A Russian Civil War Diary*.

Wednesday, Oct. 27 The early NEP.

Readings: *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 650-825.

Extra reading for graduate students: *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War*, which we read for Oct. 20, provided a good overview of current historiographical trends when it came out in 1989. The most important development since then has been the heightened emphasis on the Russian empire in the revolutionary upheaval. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Knight reserve DK 266.S8 2001 or get from Summit) offers a good introduction to recent work on this subject. Read a few of the articles (esp. from parts II and III) and prepare to talk about them in class. How do the experiences of the non-Russian periphery alter our understanding of the revolution and early Soviet period?

**\*\* Friday, Oct. 29 (by 3:00 pm) Paper proposal due for students writing a research paper**

Wednesday, Nov. 3 Revolution in the capital: an in-depth study (grad students only).

Reading: Mary McAuley, *Bread and Justice* (available from Summit). See note on book reviews.

Wednesday, Nov. 10 Cultural currents in the revolutionary period (grad students only)

Reading: Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams* (available from Summit).

Wednesday, Nov. 17 Society, economics, and the legacy of the Revolution (grad students only)

Reading: Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade* (available from Summit).

Wednesday, Nov. 25 **No class: independent work on papers and Thanksgiving holiday**

Wednesday, Dec. 1 **No class: independent work on papers.**

**Final papers due at 12 noon, Thursday, Dec. 9.**