

Eurasian Studies 201: Introduction to Russian Civilization

Syllabus - Spring 2000

Dr. Edward J Vajda

Textbook

1. ***A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond, 5th edition***, by David MacKenzie and Michael Curran (All reading assignments refer to this book.)

Course Grade

Three tests (the last given during exam week). Each counts equally as 1/3 of your final grade. Tests will be objective, with some discussion questions (given in advance on three study sheets handed out to you at the beginning of each segment of the course).

Description and Goals

This course surveys the history and culture of Russia from the earliest times to the present day. Students are not expected to bring to the class any extensive prior knowledge of the subject. The course systematically covers a variety of basic sociohistorical information on Russian civilization and identifies many unexpected similarities as well as a few celebrated but often misunderstood contrasts between Russia (or the Soviet Union) and Western countries, especially the United States. The pedagogical goals of this course are therefore twofold. First, the lectures and reading assignments will provide you with a solid factual overview of the entire sweep of Russia's 1,000-year history which will prepare you very well for any type of more specialized study of Russian history, culture or language that you may choose to embark upon in the future. Second, and most important, this course is designed to assist you in developing your critical thinking and analytical ability through open discussion of and creative writing on the most interesting and pivotal factors in Russia's past and present situation. I will consistently draw your attention to the often contradictory opinions and attitudes that scholars have developed with regard to the more controversial topics of Russian history. Both the textbook and the lectures will highlight these debates without presenting any particular side as necessarily and exclusively correct. In other words, there is no "political catechism" of any kind built into this course. I'll give you my opinions on the historical controversies discussed, but won't at all require you to agree with me on them to get a good grade. Instead, I will encourage each of you to develop your own opinions on controversial aspects of Russian history based on the factual material presented and your personal value judgments.

Schedule

Week 1	
	Introduction: Russia as a distant mirror
	Read pp. 3-9 (All readings refer to your textbook and can be read after the day's lecture.)
	Russian origins: When Europe met Asia Read pp. 11-17.
	Slavs or Vikings: Who founded Russia? Read pp. 17-22.
	Kievan Rus: princes, warriors, merchants Read pp. 24-35.

		Slavic Paganism and Orthodox Christianity: A match made in heaven?
		Read pp. 36-48 (top two lines only).
		Frescoes and fratricide: culture and politics in Kiev Read pp. 48-58.
		The Devil's horsemen and the Mongol yoke Read pp. 60-73.
		Novgorod: the first (and last!) Russian Republic Read pp. 74-84.
		The rise of Moscow: crime does pay Read pp. 85-94.
Week 2		
		Muscovite culture: the icon and the axe Read pp. 96-104.
		Tsars, two-headed eagles, and Moscow as "Third Rome"
		and capital of "All the Russias" Read pp. 105-115.
		Ivan the Terrible (He was!) Read pp. 116-126.
		Boris Godunov: the man who would be tsar (at least for a while)
		Read pp. 126-135.
		The Time of Troubles: When everything that could go wrong
		did go wrong Read pp. 135-142.
Week 3		
		A new dynasty: the early Romanovs Read pp. 143-149.
		The conquest of Siberia
		Read 149-151 and handout material on Russia's conquest of Siberia.
		General review
		<u>Test I (Early Russia)</u>
		From peasant to serf Read pp. 151-167.
Week 4		

	Peter the Great (He was, unless you care about peasants) Read pp. 171-188.
	The westernization of high culture in Russia Read pp. 189-98.
	The era of palace revolutions (or: all the crummy tsars and tsarinas between Peter and Catherine) Read pp. 199-210.
	Catherine the Great (She was too, if you don't mind censorship)
	Read pp. 211-228.
	Russia and Napoleon, or "Next time remind me to pack that extra parka" Read pp. 229-242.
Week 5	
	Cracks in the imperial armor: the Decembrist Revolt of 1825
	Read pp. 243-258.
	Russian imperialism, or "Wasn't Russia already the biggest country?"
	Read pp. 258-268.
	The Russian intellectual: hero, orphan, or hooligan? Read pp. 269-280.
	Nicholas I: barracks, trains, and Crimean War defeat Read pp. 281-291.
	Russia at the crossroads: East or West? Read pp. 291-296.
Week 6	
	The serfs get emancipated (sort of) Read pp. 299-315.
	Peasant and proletariat Read pp. 316-330.
	Russia in the age of European great power rivalry Read pp. 331-45.
	General review
	<u>Test II (Imperial Russia)</u>
Week 7	

	Revolutionaries: Who's who and who's what? Read pp. 346-362.
	Why 1904 was a lousy year to be tsar Read pp. 363-379.
	New cultural heights: writers, poets and artists Read pp. 380-392.
	World War I and the extinction of tsarism Read pp. 393-409.
	1917: A tale of two revolutions Read pp. 410-427.
Week 8	
	The Russian Civil War Read pp. 428-439.
	Russia under the Bolshevik regime Read pp. 440-448.
	Stalin finishes Lenin's revolution Read pp. 448-486.
	Communist culture and "the New Soviet Man" Read pp. 487-506 (optional: 632-654).
	The Great Fatherland War, or How the USSR became a superpower
	Read pp. 507-533.
Week 9	
	Memorial Day Holiday
	The "Cold War", or "The war that wasn't" Read pp. 533-566.
	Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev: the law of diminishing dictators
	Read pp. 566-603.
	From glasnost and perestroika to coup and disintegration
	Read pp. 604-631; 655-694.
	Beyond communism? (And beyond Dead Week too: Your final review)
Week 10	
	Final Exam (Revolutions, communism, and more revolutions) covers only material presented since test II and will be held in our regular classroom at the day and time officially scheduled by the university. I think it's Thursday, June 8 at 8AM but check the schedule to make sure)