

Take-Home Essay

Select one topic and write a five to eight page, double-spaced response for each. *Your exam is due Friday, April 26 at 3:00PM.* You must submit it by email to both cew10@psu.edu and bwickes@psu.edu.)

You may reference and draw upon any or all of the readings you have done for this class. The goal of this essay is to think analytically about the issues we have discussed and form your own analysis of them. In your response to the question, use the material in the readings as evidence to support the points you raise. All citations and quotations must be referenced. You must include mention of the author of the text and the page number from where you are drawing the information within the body of your essay. Please include a bibliography at the end of your paper with the full references.

You will be graded on content as well as on style. Anyone who anticipates having difficulty with writing is encouraged to make use of the services offered by the Writing Center, 219 Boucke, tel: 863-3240.

Choose from the following questions.

1. Prior to the collapse of the USSR, national groups and individuals were fixated on the past. How can we explain this obsession with history as individuals and national groups prepared to enter a new era? Why did the past take on such acute meaning at this juncture? How did individuals or national groups attempt to recast their own history, away from the Soviet version to a newly revised one, in an effort to influence the future?
2. An industrial planned economy was critical to the victory of the USSR in World War II. Over time, what role did this economic system play in its demise? Specifically, why did performance deteriorate over time? What were the economic forces that weakened its production abilities and why? How did the USSR become ever more tied into a global economy and why did this prove problematic in the long run for the Soviet economy?
3. The USSR proved surprisingly resistant to reform, both economically and politically. Why was the economic system resistant to reform, even from the very top leadership? For reformers and others critical of the government, what recourse did they have to protest? What were the means available to voice discontent? How were possibilities for critical discussion of social and political issues closed off?