

ECON 472N/HIST 402N
Russian Economic and Social History
Fall 2020

100 Huck Life Sciences, MW 2:30-3:45

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Course Description: During the twentieth century, Russia and its former empire embarked on a great economic experiment. This experiment changed the economic and social system of an already great power. It involved tremendous changes, tragedies, and development. In this course, we will examine this experiment, but we begin with a focus on Russian economic history before the Soviet period. This is necessary to understand the weaknesses that allowed such an experiment to be possible. We study the birth of the Soviet system and its early development, how it was able to successfully fight during WWII, and the postwar economic and social problems that eventually led to its demise.

The final part of the course offers a history of the present. The current challenges Russia faces reveal both the enduring foundations and even appeal of the Soviet past, as well as those democratic and capitalist principles that have met with rejection. We will consider such questions as: How has the market economy evolved in this part of the world under multiple political regimes? Which Soviet economic practices, institutions, and dynamics have endured in spite of the collapse of the planned economy? What can both the building of the Soviet system and its demise tell us about the Russian economy? The answers to these questions will help us examine what lies ahead for this strategically important area of the world that offers such potential for greatness and for peril.

The readings in this class will include historical documents, monographs, scholarly articles, novels, economic analyses, memoirs, films, and other media to examine economic and social life in Russia under a multitude of political systems. We will get a feel for everyday life in a society that was dramatically different from our own. We will also analyze the interrelationship between how economics shaped political and social life in the USSR and how political and social conditions constrained economic development. This will give us insight as to how the communist system functioned in practice, what the sources of discontent were, and the options for addressing them in the Soviet Union and in post-Soviet Russia.

Goals of this Course: The aim of the course is to provide a review of Russian economic history and social history together, including the main concepts that explain the peculiarities of economic and institutional development of the country. The course combines historical narratives with formal economic analyses to consider pivotal moments of development from multiple angles. We also aim to sharpen your analytical and critical skills by evaluating the Soviet experience of communism, its collapse and aftermath as revealed in a variety of sources from a diverse disciplinary perspectives, each with their own biases and shortcomings. You will hone your analytical and critical abilities by

thinking conceptually about such complex (and yet entirely taken for granted) factors that shape our everyday lives, such as the interdependence of economic and social life, economics and belonging to a nation, and the costs of civic responsibility. The learning outcome is that, first, students will achieve working knowledge of Russian historical statistics, economic institutions, their evolution over time, and an understanding of the implications of economic research in the field of Russian history and of how economics in any temporal and geopolitical context shapes social and political change more broadly.

Second, we will work to substantially strengthen your ability to cogently express an opinion, orally and in writing, by furnishing evidence and building a compelling argument. The intensive reading and writing components of this class are intended to improve your ability to express yourself clearly, concisely, and correctly. Combined, the goal is for you to improve your ability to think critically about social change, formulate opinions, and to express those ideas in a clear and effective manner.

If you are having any difficulty keeping up with the reading assignments or understanding them, please ask for help. It is always better to tell you what you *can* do rather than what you *should have* done.

Course Requirements: Your grade for the class will be determined by several criteria: a) two mid-term exams made up of essay questions and short answer questions, each worth 25% each of your grade b) a final exam worth 40% of your grade; c) and 10% for attendance and participation. The tests will cover material presented in the readings and in class lectures and discussions.

Students are expected to keep up with the weekly reading assignments and be prepared to discuss them. Excessive unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.

Social Distancing

Students should remain at least six feet away from others in our classroom. Policies require *all of us* to wear masks appropriately to cover our mouths and noses while we are in our classroom. Students who do not want to distance themselves appropriately or wear a mask during class may not attend class in person. Attending this class without wearing a mask properly constitutes a classroom disruption, a violation of several articles of the student Code of Conduct (<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>), and a violation of policy AD 57 (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad57>). Anyone in the classroom who is not wearing a mask appropriately will be asked to do so or to leave. We are required to end class if anyone refuses this request. Failure to comply may result in a conduct violation. Students who believe they should be granted a health or safety exception to this policy should consult with Student Disability Resources about reasonable accommodations and present their accommodation letter to me if an exception is granted.

COVID Safety Information

Students experiencing any illness and especially COVID-19 related symptoms should not attend class in person. Those students are strongly encouraged to contact a health care provider and their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Academic Integrity Statement: Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts or academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

Websites and Additional Sources of Background Information on the Soviet Union:

All students are strongly encouraged to read *The New York Times*, to subscribe to one or more of the many listservs that track current developments in the former Soviet Union, and to visit websites that report on historical and contemporary issues in an informative way. See the following sites:

- Russian History Audio Archives:
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1424&fuseaction=topics.media
- Library of Congress online exhibition of photos from Nicholas II's court photographer, Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, (see especially "people at work," and "ethnic diversity") at: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire>
- Vintage photos of Imperial Russia: <http://www.vintag.es/2012/12/black-white-photos-of-moscow-before.html> and http://www.flickr.com/photos/beinecke_library/sets/72157624042159604/
- Duke University Library Photo Collection of early Soviet Life:
<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/>.
- Photo collection of Soviet Life, 1930s:
<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/?keyword=soviet&facet=Date%3D1930>.
- The Stalin Digital Archive: <http://www.stalindigitalarchive.com/frontend/>
- <http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/page/welcome>
- <http://hiddengalleries.eu/exhibition/hidden-galleries-clandestine-religion-in-the-secret-police-archives/>
- <http://hiddengalleries.eu/exhibition/faith-trust-secrecy-religion-through-the-lenses-of-the-secret-police/>
- Soviet Art: <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/?keyword=soviet>
- Soviet Children's books: <https://hyperallergic.com/387716/an-interactive-database-helps-you-explore-the-art-of-soviet-childrens-books/>
- News and Information about Ukraine: <http://www.brama.com>
- Ukrainian Traditional Folklore web site: www.arts.ualberta.ca/uvp/
- Shetel Life and World War II in the USSR: U.S. Holocaust Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org/>
- Yad Vashem: <http://www.yadvashem.org/> and Yad Vashem victims' names database: http://www.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/IY_HON_Welcome
- <http://www.sporcle.com/games/oldkent/ussrcapitals>
- Putin's Revenge (Part 2): <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-revenge/#video-2>

- **Gorbachev's Economic Program: Problems Emerge**

United States. Central Intelligence Agency; United States. Defense Intelligence Agency.[Classification Unknown], Intelligence Report. June 1988: 40 pp. **DNSA collection: Soviet-U.S. Relations, 1985-1991**

- **Soviet Union: Economic Outlook, Status of Reforms, and Support Measures**

United States. Department of State. Confidential, Background Paper. c. July 3, 1991: 4 pp. **DNSA collection: Soviet-U.S. Relations, 1985-1991**

- **The Soviet Economy in a Global Perspective**

United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Intelligence.[Classification Excised], Intelligence Report. March 1989: 52 pp. DNSA collection: Soviet-U.S. Relations, 1985-1991

Required Texts:

- Bulgakov, Mikhail, *Heart of a Dog* (New York: Grove Press, 1968) ISBN 0-8021-5059-4. Any edition.
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (New York: Signet, 1998) ISBN 97-62429. Any edition.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Any edition. If you cannot get this book, you may use Geoffrey Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union*, which the PSU library has as an ebook that can be read online. Read the Hosking chapter with a corresponding chapter heading.
- Spufford, Francis, *Red Plenty*. London, Faber and Faber, 2010.
- Nove, Alec, *An Economic History of the USSR: 1917-1991*, 3rd Edition. Penguin, 1993. (required chapters will be posted on Canvas)

Articles are available on our course Canvas site and on Prof. Ickes' site (<http://www.personal.psu.edu/i04/>).

Course Outline

8/24 Introduction to the Class

8/26 Russian backwardness in historical perspective. BWI

The nature and causes of Russian economic backwardness. The persistence of serfdom. The end of serfdom and its economic impact.

- Domar, Evsey D. 'The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom: A Hypothesis', *The Journal of Economic History*, 30 (1): 18-32;
- Gerschenkron, Alexander. Economic backwardness in historical perspective, a book of essays, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962. Chapter 1.
- Domar E.D., Machina M.J 'On the Profitability of Russian Serfdom', *The Journal of Economic History*, 1984, 44(4): 919-955;
- Markevich, Andrei and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. 'Economic Effects of the Abolition of Serfdom: Evidence from the Russian Empire', *American Economic Review*, vol. 108, no. 4-5, April 2018: 1074-1117.

8/31 **Russian Industrialization before the 1917 revolution. BWI**

Russian industrialization prior to 1917 was significant. How did it compare with other powers? How might this have proceeded had World War I been avoided?

- Nove, ch. 1.
- Goldsmith, Raymond W. 'The Economic Growth of Tsarist Russia 1860-1913', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 1961, 9(3): 441-475.
- Gregory, Paul R. *Before Command. An Economic History of Russia from Emancipation to the First Five-year Plan*, ch. 4;

9/2 **The Imperial Legacy CW**

What were the social and political conditions that existed in the Russian Empire that made it susceptible to revolutionary change? What made the tsarist monarchy so fragile as a system of government? What aspect of this system inspired loyalty? Who felt allegiance to preserving such a form of rule and to the social structures that characterized it?

Film: Battleship Potemkin

- Suny, Introduction and ch 1, "The Imperial Legacy"

9/7 **Revolutionary Visions CW**

What did Marx and Engels find objectionable in a capitalist system? What did they identify as sources of economic and political instability and oppression? What were the solutions they proposed?

- Manifesto of the Communist Party, Ch 1 Bourgeois and Proletarians and Ch 2. Proletarians and Communists (Part I and Part II);
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/> While at the Marxist Archive, check out the other writings of Karl Marx and those who subscribed to them. <https://www.marxists.org>

Optional: Engels' Contribution to Theories of Social Evolution

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, "The Family" and "Barbarism and Civilization"

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/index.htm>

9/9 **The First World War, Civil War, War Communism and economic crises. BWI**

WWI effectively destroyed the Tsarist system. Why was Russia so ill-equipped to compete in the Great War? What was the economic impact of War Communism and the Civil War? What did this succession of economic crises imply for the development of the Soviet economy?

- Nove, ch. 2
- Gatrell, Peter, "[Poor Russia, Poor Show: Mobilizing a Backward Economy for War](#)," in Broadberry and Harrison, *The Economics of World War I*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Markevich Andrei and Mark Harrison. 'Great War, Civil War, and Recovery: Russia's National Income, 1913 to 1928', *The Journal of Economic History* 2011, 71, (3): 672 – 703;

9/14 **Building State Capitalism CW**

How did Lenin adapt Marxism to the conditions in the Russian Empire? What were the challenges the Bolsheviks faced? Where and how did they receive unexpected assistance in furthering their revolutionary goals?

- Suny, finish chs 2 - 3, “The Double Revolution” and “Socialism and Civil War”

Optional:

Lenin, *State and Revolution*, Chapters 3 and 5

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/>

New York Times coverage of Lenin’s death, online at:

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/990121onthisday_big.html

9/16 **The New Economic Policy (NEP) and Development Debates BWI**

What was NEP? What problems did it solve? What was the great development debate about? What is missing from the standard analysis?

- Nove, chs., 4,5.
- Gregory, Paul R. *Before Command: an Economic History of Russia from Emancipation to the First Five-Year Plan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, chapters 5-6;
- Ellman, Michael. ‘On a Mistake of Preobrazhensky and Stalin,’ *The Journal of Development Studies*, 1978, 14(3);
- Sah, R. K. and Stiglitz, J. E. 'The Economics of Price Scissors', *American Economic Review*, 1984, 74: 125-38.

9/21 **Transition from Market to Plan: Empire as a Developing Country CW**

How was the Imperial form of government experienced by national minorities? How did the Soviet leadership grapple with diversity? What were the cultural politics of difference? What were some of the compromises Lenin and the Bolsheviks were obliged to make to realize their visions of a revolutionary new society? What were the governing mechanisms put in place during this pivotal period to ensure that the Revolution would be successful and lasting?

- Suny, chs, 4 – 5, “Nationalism and Revolution” and “The Evolution of the Dictatorship”

9/23 **Socialism in One Country CW**

How did the Soviet leadership react to the failure of world revolution? What is the significance of becoming an 11-time-zone island of socialism? How did the Soviet leadership forge a nation from such extraordinary ethnic diversity? What role did institutionalizing difference play?

- Suny, chs 6 - 7 “Socialism in One Country” and “NEP Society”

9/28 **The Crisis of NEP and Collectivization BWI**

Was NEP fatally flawed? What problem was collectivization supposed to solve? How was collectivization implemented? What was the economic impact of collectivization?

- Nove, chs 6 - 7

9/30 and 10/5 **Revolutionary Culture CW**

How can a populace be mobilized to overturn the existing social, political and economic order?

How can state authorities influence the values and priorities over those they rule? What recourse to criticism and reform did Soviet citizens have? What forms of protest were available to them?

- Suny, ch 8, “Culture Wars”
- Finish *Heart of a Dog* by 10/5

10/7 and 10/12 **Stalin and Taking the Country by Storm CW**

How was a Stalinist system created? What made it “Stalinist”? Does Stalinism constitute a “Revolution from Above” (meaning driven by political and ideological elites) or a “Revolution from Below” (meaning driven by individual citizens who became invested in the system)? Should Stalinism be considered a counter-revolution, an ideology, or a civilization? In what ways, if at all, did the regime Stalin created differ from the one Lenin tried to put in place? Does Stalinism represent an extension of Leninism or a break with Leninism?

- Suny, ch 9, “The Stalin Revolution”
- Start reading Nove

10/14 and 10/19 **Soviet Command Economy: The First Two Five Year Plans. BWI**

How was the command economy organized under the first five year plan? How was the command economy different from the earlier Soviet economy? How successful were the first two five year plans?

- Nove, chs., 7,8
- Wheatcroft, Stephen and Robert Davies. ‘The Crooked Mirror of Soviet Economic Statistics’ in DHW;
<http://www.famine.unimelb.edu.au/documents/Crooked%20mirror%20of%20Stats%20from%20EcoTransformation%20Soviet%20Union.pdf>
- Grossman, Gregory, “Notes for a Theory of the Command Economy,” *Soviet Studies*,
- Gregory, Paul R., and Mark Harrison. ‘Allocation Under Dictatorship: Research in Stalin's Archives,’ *The Journal of Economic Literature*, 2005, 43(3): 721-61;
- Gregory, Paul R., and Andrei Markevich (2002). ‘Creating Soviet Industry: The House That Stalin Built,’ *Slavic Review*, 2002, 61(4): 787-814;
- Harrison, Mark. ‘Prices, Planners, and Producers: An Agency Problem in Soviet industry, 1928-1950’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 1998, 58 (4)

10/21 **Purges and Punishment BWI**

How to control an unruly population? Why did Stalin resort to purges? How was this experienced for the majority of the population?

- Belova Eugenia and Paul Gregory. ‘Political economy of crime and punishment under Stalin,’ *Public Choice*, 2009, 140: 463–478;
- Harrison, Mark. ‘The Fundamental Problem of Command: Plan and Compliance in a Partially Centralized Economy,’ *Comparative Economic Studies*, 2005, 47(2): 296- 314;

10/26 **The Zeitgeist Under Stalin CW**

How was socialism as a “system” constructed in the USSR? What role did the camps play in this process? How did the mass media, high culture and propaganda create and project Soviet culture? Why could Stalinism be characterized as Terror as Usual? How does terror operate?

- Begin reading *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
- Suny, ch 11, “Building Stalinism”
- Film: Volga! Volga!

10/28 **Life in the Camps CW**

What was life like in the camps? How might the legacy of the GULag have infiltrated Soviet culture and the thinking and instincts of Soviet citizens? Above all, why would Nikita Khrushchev have authorized publication of this book?

- Finish reading *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and come prepared for discussion

11/2 **The USSR and the Second World War BWI**

What were the tensions that were mounting that contributed to the outbreak of World War II? How did the Soviet economy cope during wartime?

- Nove, chs., 9, 10.

11/4 **The Meaning of War CW**

Why is World War II referred to as the Great Patriotic War in the USSR? What was the legacy of World War II and of the Soviet victory?

- Suny, ch 13 “Communism versus Fascism” section of “Collective Security and the Coming of World War II” and Suny, ch 14, “The Great Fatherland War”

11/9 **Post-war developments BWI**

Post-Stalinist developments. Khrushchev’s reforms. The treadmill of economic reforms

- Nove, chs., 11-13.
- Kontorovich, Vladimir, Soviet Economic Reform (February 12, 2006). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=913431> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.913431>
- Kontorovich, Vladimir. ‘Lessons of the 1965 Soviet Economic Reform,’ *Soviet Studies*, 1988, 40(2): 308-316;

11/11 **Declining of rates of economic growth. BWI**

Why did Soviet economic performance deteriorate? Why did growth rates fall? What does this imply about the nature of the Soviet economy?

- Ofer, Gur. ‘Soviet Economic Growth: 1928-1985,’ *Journal of Economic Literature*, 1987, vol. 25, 4, Dec 1987.
- Weitzman, Martin L. ‘Soviet Postwar Growth and Capital-Labor Substitutability,’ *American Economic Review*, 1970, 60: 676-692.

11/16 **Cold War tensions CW**

How did the Cold War geo-political climate shape Soviet internal economic and political policies? How did the USSR’s status as a superpower affect its relations with other countries? What is the greater significance of the emergence of two superpower countries, each proposing a different political and economic system as superior?

- Suny, ch 15, “The Big Chill: The Cold War Begins”
- Begin reading *Red Plenty*

11/18 **The Thaw CW**

What does a process of destalinization entail? What were the motivations for this? Can a single political party critique and reform itself at the same time? What responses does such a system offer its populace? What was the significance of the Cuban Missile Crisis?

- Suny, ch 17, “From Autocracy to Oligarchy”
Optional: Suny, ch 18, “The Paradoxes of Brezhnev’s Long Reign”

Thanksgiving Break

11/30 **Collapse of the system. BWI**

Gorbachev's economic reforms. Why did the Soviet economy collapse?

- Nove, ch. 14.
- Gertrude E. Schroeder "Soviet Economic Reform: From Resurgence to Retrenchment?" *The Russian Review*. Vol. 48, No. 3, Gorbachev Reforms: Special Issue (Jul., 1989), pp. 305-31.
- Bergson, Abram. 'The USSR Before the Fall: How Poor and Why,' *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 1991, 5(4): 29-44;
- Harrison, Mark 'Coercion, Compliance, and the Collapse of the Soviet Command Economy,' *The Economic History Review*, 2002, 55(3);
- Finish reading *Red Plenty*

12/2 **Sources of Discontent CW**

What were the sources of discontent that could no longer be restrained? Which groups were among the most critical in Soviet society? How did they assess the possibilities for reform? Is it possible to have a little "openness"? What were the structural factors that contributed to the collapse of communism? Which aspects of the socialist system endure in spite of its collapse?

- Suny, ch 21, "Reform and the Road to Revolution"

12/7 **Transition, Transformations or Simply a Vacuum? CW**

Why did most Western analysts not see the collapse of the USSR coming? How did the West guide change? How do individuals and groups cope with deceit, disappointment and nostalgia? As Lenin once asked, "Who is to Blame? What is to be Done?"

- Suny, ch 20, "The Second Russian Republic and the Near Abroad"

12/9 **The Economics of the Transition Period: Making a Market Economy BWI**

The creation of market economy in Russia. The difficulties of reforming a post-Soviet economy. What has the transition in Russia produced?

- Ericson, Richard, "The Classical Soviet-Type Economy: Nature of the System and Implications for Reform," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall, 1991.
- Roland, Gérard. 2002. "The Political Economy of Transition." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16 (1): 29-50.
- Ickes, Barry W., "Russia's Transition After Twenty-Five Years."
- Final Thoughts on this Social and Economic Experiment
 - **Final Exam Essay questions distributed.** Exact due date to be announced.