History 407 Seminar: Stalinism

Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:50, McKenzie 475

Course description: This seminar will explore the history and English-language historiography of the Stalin era, a formative period in Russian, Soviet, and contemporary European history. Like other seminars, it has methodological as well as substantive aims; class discussions and assignments will focus on the practice of writing history as well as the specific historical subject matter of assigned texts. At the end of the quarter, students will submit an original research paper of approximately 20 pages on an aspect of the Stalin era.

Grading policy: Final grades will be based on the grade you receive on your research paper. You are nonetheless expected to turn in all assignments and to come to class prepared for discussion. Failure to complete assigned reading or to submit a written assignment may lower your grade. Since assignments are closely connected to in-class exercises, I will not accept them late.

Books available for purchase:

Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century*
Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*
Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*
Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*

Wednesday, Jan. 7  Research workshop. After introductions, move to Library Room 144 (Edmiston Classroom) to meet librarians Heghine Hakobyan and John Russell. Afterwards, students may work independently on their library assignments.

Library assignments are due by 11:00 on Monday, January 12, under my office door at 351 McKenzie.

Wednesday, Jan. 14  Who was Stalin? An interpretive overview.


b) Research workshop: Discussion of possible research topics. Assignment: submit in writing (typed) four possible topics for a seminar paper. Even if you think you know what you want to do, you have to submit four distinct topics, with the following specific requirements.

   -- at least one should be about a person
   -- at least one topic should be focussed on a specific event

The list that you should submit must include both the topic and a research question that you could conceivably try to answer (2-3 sentences). I will email comments by Monday afternoon.

Wednesday, Jan. 21  What was Stalinism? A look from a new industrial city

Reading: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 1-237. Note: To get through this assignment, I strongly recommend that you skip the endnotes. Instead, just glance over them at some point to see what kinds of sources Kotkin uses.

Wednesday, Jan. 28  Stalin’s prison camps


b) Research workshop: Discuss paper proposals. Assignment: Paper proposals due in class. Proposals should be roughly two pages long, and they should be accompanied by an annotated bibliography of at least 6 sources (primary and secondary).

Wednesday, Feb. 4  The Gulag, continued.


Wednesday, Feb. 11  Two unconnected articles
a) Research workshop: framing and organizing a long paper. Reading (follow the links on Blackboard):
Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubny”
Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite”

b) Assignment: Book review (2-3 pages) due in class of a secondary source that is particularly valuable for your research. A recently published (since 1995) history book is preferable. Identify key arguments and how the author develops them, paying attention to both evidence and argumentation.

Wednesday, Feb. 18 Stalinism exported
Reading: Jan T. Gross, Revolution from Abroad

Wednesday, Feb. 25 No class (work on papers).

Wednesday, March 4 No class. Rough drafts due at noon Wednesday. Bring one hard copy of your paper to my McKenzie office (slide it under my door if I am not there) and post a copy on Blackboard. Check assignment grid to see whose papers you need to read (note: the people whose papers you are going to read are not necessarily the ones who will be reading yours). Download and fill out a checklist for each paper that you read, and also come prepared to talk about the papers with the authors.

Wednesday, March 11 Research workshop to discuss rough drafts.

Final papers due at 10:00, Wednesday, March 18.