

# History 1290: History of the Russian Empire

*Meeting Time:* MWF, 10-11am

*Location:* CGIS South, room 354

*Instructors:* Kelly O'Neill (Assoc. Prof)

Megan Duncan Smith (Teaching Fellow)

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*Office Hours:* Wed 1:30-3pm (CGIS South 329) TBD (CGIS-North/Knafel, CGIS Cafe)

## **DESCRIPTION (or, WHY STUDY RUSSIA?)**

Between the annexation of Crimea, the smoldering conflict in eastern Ukraine, threats to cut the supply of natural gas to Europe on the cusp of a long cold winter, prominent new policies curtailing the rights of homosexual and trans-sexual citizens, and an increasingly hostile stance toward what President Putin perceives to be a decadent, declining West, Russia has secured a central place on the world stage - or at least in the headlines of western media outlets - in recent months.

Of course, this is hardly the first time Russia has risen to prominence and power. This course is for students interested in learning the rich history of Russia's imperial past. We will explore the early days of imperial expansion in the sixteenth century up to the heady violence of 1917. Topics include the nature of autocratic authority, Russian Orthodoxy, and the integration of non-Russian peoples and territories. We will explore a wide variety of technologies of imperial rule (mapmaking, censorship, religious policy, ethnographic description), as well as the relationship between subjects of the empire (elites, peasants, and everyone in between) and the built and natural environments they inhabited. No prior knowledge of Russian history is required.

Please note that while this is a lecture course, many of our meetings will be devoted to discussing and analyzing the readings. You will have the opportunity not only to write, but also to explore multimedia approaches to analyzing the past. No prior knowledge of Russian history is required.

## **COURSE PAGES AND LINKS**

- Explore the reading list and our online library [HERE](#)
- Access our course Omeka site [HERE](#) (check back soon)
- Find Research Resources [HERE](#)

## **REQUIREMENTS (for Undergraduates)**

### Attendance and participation (15%)

Yes, your physical presence is required. I expect you to have done the reading and to have arrived willing to contribute to discussion during both "lecture" and "section". You may miss one regular class meeting and one section meeting without incurring a penalty. To avoid penalty, additional absences must be cleared with Megan and will require a brief response paper or comparable assignment.

### Mini-Labs (30%)

Historians read (in my case, this often involves deciphering the handwriting of poorly-educated clerks working in small provincial towns in 18th-century Russia). They think. They write. They drink obscene amounts of coffee. But understanding the past in historical terms requires a great many other skills as well. Among them is the ability to analyze the role of geography, environment, landscape, and place - in brief, the spatial context of history. These 3 assignments are opportunities to acquire or hone that skill. Each is worth 10%. No previous experience with maps or spatial analysis is expected and detailed guidelines will be provided. We will devote time in class to discussing both progress and results.

- #1: Reading Maps: guidelines issued Feb 2, assignment due Friday, Feb 20 at 5pm
- #2: Mapping Texts: guidelines issued March 2, assignment due March 27 at 5pm
- #3: Mapping Maps: guidelines issued April 6, assignment due April 24 at 5pm

### Writing Portfolio (35%)

You will produce a series of essays adding up to 5,000-6,000 words total. The structure of the portfolio will be largely up to you: you will choose the number of essays, their length and topics. You are warmly encouraged to come talk about your ideas with Megan and Prof. O'Neill at office hours. Meanwhile, the ground rules are as follows:

- Each paper must make a historical argument and substantiate that argument with appropriate evidence. (That said, please note that I do not expect you to revolutionize our understanding of Russian history through these writing assignments - that would be incredibly unfair. The goal here is for you to read sources closely and critically and to put them in historical context. Most of all, I want you to have a chance to dig a little deeper into some of the elements of tsarist history that interest you most.)
- To that end, each paper must respond to or emerge from one (or more) of the assigned primary or secondary sources. Provide an analysis of that source in your paper. In almost every case you will find it necessary to bring in an outside reading or two (a journal article or book). Please speak with Megan or Prof. O'Neill if you feel you have an exception to the "need an outside reading" rule and/or to get suggestions on what to read. Your finished portfolio must reflect engagement with both primary and secondary sources.
- Minimum length of any single paper = 1,000 words; maximum length of any single paper = 3,000 words. Footnotes count.
- Include your name, date of submission, paper title, and word count on the first page of each paper.
- The body of the paper must be in 12-point font with reasonable margins. Single-spaced or double - either way is fine. The presence of page numbers is non-negotiable, as is the use of Chicago/Turabian style footnotes.
- All work must be submitted in doc format or Open Office equivalent via the course website.
- You can submit your essays any time you like. However, by 5pm on Friday, March 13 you will need to have submitted half of your work (more is fine). The portfolio must be complete by 5pm on April 29 (the last day of classes).

- You will receive comments along with a provisional grade on all work submitted prior to April 29. Should you choose to rewrite any earlier essay based on the comments you receive you are welcome to do so and submit that work by April 29. Just know that a rewrite is not guaranteed an improved grade.

### Final Project (20%)

The theme for our digital exhibit is "Imperial Pathways." Over the course of the semester we will explore the significance of space, place, distance, and connectedness from a variety of different angles. Your task will be to produce a digital exhibit that explores this theme through the lens of a topic of your choosing. You might elect, for example, to write the "biography" of a river, examine a series of historical maps, or produce your own map of an event or travel account - the possibilities are endless, though you will need approval from either Megan or Prof. O'Neill by April 29. Detailed guidelines will be provided after spring break, but think of this as something along the lines of a take-home exam. Your contribution must be complete by 5pm on May 7. In between then and 5pm on May 14 you will review the work of everyone in the class and generate a 300-word reflection on the collective exhibit.

### **IMPORTANT NOTES**

- *Laptop policy:* Laptops and tablets are powerful tools but can prove very distracting. If you are the type of person who has a hard time curbing your desire to check email and social media during class, please leave your device in your bag. I much prefer self-policing to hard-line regulation, but I reserve the right to redirect your attention away from Facebook. It is always a good idea to come to class armed with paper and pen(cil).
- *Section attendance:*
- *Office hours:* You are required to meet with me and with Megan at least once prior to Week 6.
- *Passing the course:* Failure to complete any of the course requirements will automatically result in a failing grade.
- *Submitting your work:* Late work will drop 1/3 of a grade (from A to A-) automatically and again each subsequent day. Though I take no pleasure enforcing it, this rule is hard and fast. Extensions will be granted in appropriate circumstances.
- *Accommodation:* Students wishing to arrange special facilities or consideration are welcome to present the appropriate documentation from the Accessible Education Office within three weeks of the beginning of class.
- *Academic Integrity:* Any instance of cheating or plagiarism will be handled in accordance with Harvard policy. Collaboration is welcome in all course elements with the exception of the writing portfolio.

### **FINDING THE READINGS:**

You are required to purchase a new (available at the COOP) or used copy of the following texts. All other readings are available on the course site (Canvas). The reading for each week may be found listed below and accessed here on Canvas by selecting the assignment from the Syllabus page, the Assignments page, or the Calendar:

- Goldfrank/Hughes/Evtuhov/Stites, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces* (2004)
- Kivelson & Neuberger (eds.), *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* (2008)

- Gary Marker (ed.), *Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memories of Anna Labzina* (2001)
- Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad* (Vintage Classics, 2012)
- Ivan Goncharov, *Oblomov* (Penguin Classics, 2005)
- Carolyn Pouncy, *The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible* (1995)

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1: Beginnings

Monday, Jan 26: Origins, Myths, and Legacies

Wednesday, Jan 28: The Landscape of Russian History

Friday, Jan 30: no section

- Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, "The Environment and its Consequences," 1-26

### Week 2: The Birth of an Empire

Monday, Feb 2: Conquest and Terror under Ivan IV

Wednesday, Feb 4: Into the Land of Darkness

Friday, Feb 6: Daily Life in Muscovy

- *A History of Russia*, chapters 5-8:
- *Picturing Russia*, chapters 5-8: 28-46
- A. M. Kurbskii, *Prince A. M. Kurbskii's History of Ivan IV*: 25-71
- Carolyn Pouncy (trans.), *The Domostroi: rules for Russian households in the time of Ivan the Terrible*: 95-163

### Week 3: Hierarchies, Networks, and Autocratic Authority

Monday, Feb 9: Orthodox Politics and Piety

Wednesday, Feb 11: Bloodlines and Pecking Orders

Friday, Feb 13: Slaves and Serfs

- *Picturing Russia*, chapter 9: 47-50
- *A History of Russia*, chapters 9-10:
- Eve Levin, "From Corpse to Cult in Early Modern Russia," in Valerie Kivelson and Robert Greene (eds.), *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars*: 81-103
- Richard Hellie (trans., ed.), "The Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649": 161-182

### Week 4: The Petrine Revolution?

Monday, Feb 16: Presidents' Day (university holiday)

Wednesday, Feb 18: The Great Northern War

Friday, Feb 20: Sturgeon, Vodka, and Cultural Revolution

- *Picturing Russia*, chapters 10-12: 51-66
- *A History of Russia*, chapters 11-12:
- Darra Goldstein, "Gastronomic Reforms under Peter the Great: Toward a Cultural History of Russian Food," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48, no.4 (2000): 481-510
- "Proclamation on the Introduction of the New Calendar"

- Basil Dmytryshyn, "Modernization of Russia under Peter I and Catherine II": 16-70

### **Week 5: The Golden Century**

Monday, Feb 23: Science, Espionage, and Sea Cows

Wednesday, Feb 25: Noble Culture and the Imperial Court

Friday, Feb 27: Mapping the life of Anna Labzina

- *Picturing Russia*, chapter 13: 67-70
- *A History of Russia*, chapter 13-15
- Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memories of Anna Labzina, 1758-1821: 1-116

### **Week 6: Empire of Peasants**

Monday, March 2: Life in the Izba

Wednesday, March 4: Russia in the Age of Catherine II

Friday, March 6: The Annexation of Crimea

- *Picturing Russia*, chapter 14: 71-75
- Alexander Radishchev, Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow: 40-43, 91-107, 164-187
- Douglas Smith, Love and Conquest: 115-218
- Gavrila Derzhavin, "Ode to the Wise Princess Felitsa"

### **Week 7: Russia on the European Stage**

Monday, March 9: Cossacks on the Streets of Paris

Wednesday, March 11: Decembrists & the Birth of the Russian Idea

Friday, March 13: Pushkin Interlude

- *A History of Russia*, chapters 16 & 17
- Marquis de Custine, Letters from Russia: 33-59 & 80-100
- Alexander Pushkin [selections]: *The Bronze Horseman*

### **[Spring Break]**

### **Week 8: Nicholas I and the Defense of Order**

Monday, March 23: The Repressive Regime

Wednesday, March 25: Conquest of the Caucasus, part 1

Friday, March 27: Conquest of the Caucasus, part 2

- *A History of Russia*, chapter 20
- Nikolai Gogol, "The Overcoat"
- Leo Tolstoy, Hadji Murad

### **Week 9: The Life and Times of Ivan Goncharov, a weeklong workshop**

Monday, March 30: Censorship, Exile, and Utter Boredom

Wednesday, April 1: Oblomov

Friday, April 3: The Frigate Pallada

- Goncharov, *Oblomov*
- Goncharov, *The Frigate Pallada* (excerpts)

### **Week 10: A New Society**

Monday, April 6: The Tsar-Liberator and his Great Reforms

Wednesday, April 8: The Rise of the Russian City

Friday, April 10: Eating, Drinking, and Making Merry

- *A History of Russia*, chapters 21-22
- "Varvara Kashevarova-Rudneva, M.D., An Autobiography" in Clyman & Vowles (eds.), *Russia Through Women's Eyes*: 158-185
- James von Geldern, Louise McReynolds (eds.), *Entertaining Tsarist Russia*: tales, songs, plays, movies, jokes, ads, and images from Russian urban life: 115-173
- 'Alexander II, Emancipation Manifesto'

### **Week 11: Nation, Religion, and the Multiethnic Empire**

Monday, April 13: The Trouble with Little Russians

Wednesday, April 15: Central Asia and the Muslim Question

Friday, April 17: The Census of 1897

- *Picturing Russia*, chapters 15, 16, 20, 22: 76-85, 100-103, 109-112
- *A History of Russia*, chapters 18-19
- 'V. G. Belinsky, Letter to Nikolai Gogol, 1847'
- James Cracraft (ed.), *Major Problems*: 420-437
- Jeff Sahadeo, "Epidemic and Empire: Ethnicity, Class, and "Civilization" in the 1892 Tashkent Cholera Riot," *Slavic Review* 64, no.1 (2005): 117-139
- 'Mixed Marriage in the Russian Empire'

### **Week 12: Reactionaries and Revolutionaries**

Monday, April 20: Populists, Terrorists, Marxists

Wednesday, April: 22: 1905

Friday, April 24: Mapping Emigration

- *Picturing Russia*, chapters 25-28
- *A History of Russia*, chapters 24-28
- 'Konstantin Pobedonostsev, The Ideologist of Russian Reaction'
- 'V. I. Lenin, What is to be Done? (1902)'
- 'Workers' Petition, 1905'
- 'Manifesto of October 17, 1905'

### **Week 13: End of Empire**

Monday, April 27: Russia in the First World War

Wednesday, April 29: 1917

- *A History of Russia*, chapters 29 & 30
- Selected memoir (list will be available on course website)