

21H.467J / 17.57J

Soviet Politics and Society, 1917 to the Present

At its greatest extent the former Soviet Union encompassed a geographical area that covered one-sixth of the Earth's land mass. It spanned 11 time zones and contained over 100 distinct nationalities, 22 of which numbered over one million in population. In the 74 years from the October Revolution in 1917 to the fall of Communism in 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, its leaders and its people, had to face a number of difficult challenges: the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy, the establishment of a new state, four years of civil war, a famine, transition to a mixed economy, political strife after Lenin's death, industrialization, collectivization, a second famine, political show trials, World War II, post-war reconstruction and repression, the "Thaw" after Stalin's death, Khrushchev's experimentation, and Brezhnev's decline. Each of these challenges engendered new solutions and modifications in what can be loosely called the evolving "Soviet system."

Students will be asked to write three papers over the course of the semester (due **Feb. 28, March 21, April 20**), totaling twenty pages in length. Grading in the course will be determined as follows: 20% for attendance, participation and performance on small quizzes; 60% for the three papers (20% each); and 20% for the final examination.

Texts Recommended for Purchase

Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin's Russia (Westview Press, 1998)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, The Russian Revolution (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Anna Politkovskaya, A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya (University of Chicago Press, 2003)

Richard Sakwa, The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991 (Routledge, 1999)

William Taubman, Khrushchev: The Man and His Era (Norton, 2003)

* indicates materials available in a sourcepak on course website.

Feb. 7- Introduction to the Course

Feb. 9- The Setting: Tsarism

Sheila Fitzpatrick, The Russian Revolution, pp. 15-23

*"Father Gapon's Petition"

*Richard Pipes, Formation of the Soviet Union, pp. 1-8

Taubman, Khrushchev, ch. 2, pp. 18-29

Photographs at www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/

*Maps; also at: Britannica Online under "Russian Empire"

Feb. 14- The Revolutionary Tradition

Fitzpatrick, Russian Revolution, pp. 23-31

*Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, pp. 13-33

Sakwa, pp. 2-12 (docs 1.1-1.7) *We will discuss the Manifesto and these documents very carefully in class.*

Feb. 16- The Revolution of 1905 and World War I

Fitzpatrick, pp. 31-39

Sakwa, pp. 12-17, 23-31 (docs 1.8-1.11, 1.17-1.22)

Taubman, Khrushchev, ch. 3, pp. 30-44

In class quiz on maps and materials so far

Feb. 21- No Class-President's Day

Feb. 23 – The Revolutions of 1917

Fitzpatrick, Russian Revolution, pp. 40-67

Sakwa, pp. 32-45, 47-51, 54-63 (docs 2.1-2.9, 2.11-2.13, 2.15-2.23) *These are especially important documents; read them very carefully.*

*Boris Kolonitskii, "Antibourgeois Propaganda and Anti-Burzhui Consciousness in 1917," in Suny, Structures, pp. 22-32

Feb. 28- First paper due in class

March 2– The Civil War

Fitzpatrick, pp. 68-92

*Orlando Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War, pp. 1-6, 246-49, 271-73

Sakwa: pp. 74-77, 81-91, 102-4 (docs. 3.1-3.3, 3.8-3.13, 3.19-3.20)

*Trotsky, "The Train," in My Life, pp. 411-22

March 7- The Crisis of War Communism & the Shift to NEP

Fitzpatrick, pp. 93-106

*Avrich, "Crisis of War Communism," Kronstadt 1921, 7-34

Sakwa, pp. 107-14, 118-22, 127-135 (docs. 3.22-3.24, 3.27-28, 4.1-4.5)

March 9 - The Politics and Economics of NEP

Fitzpatrick, pp. 106-119

Sakwa, pp. 140-49, 153-56, 161-62, 164-69 (docs. 4.9-4.13, 4.16, 4.20, 4.22-4.25)

Taubman, Khrushchev, ch. 4, pp. 45-71

March 14- The Great Break: Collectivization & Industrialization

Fitzpatrick, 120-41

Sakwa, 170-175, 179-84, 186-88, 190-91 (docs 4.26-4.29, 5.3-5.5, 5.7, 5.9)

*Stalin's Letters to Molotov, pp. 168-69, 175
Taubman, Khrushchev, ch. 5, pp. 72-113

March 16- The New Economy (65 pp.)

Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, Bitter Waters, 185-188, 4-13, 22-25, 39-55, 69-85, 105-122

March 21- Second paper due in class

March 23- Purge and Terror

Fitzpatrick, pp. 163-170

Sakwa, pp. 196-97, 199-205, 211-19, 231-33 (docs. 5.14, 5.17-5.20, 5.23-5.26, 5.32)

*Wood, Performing Justice, pp. 193-98, 205-20

March 28 & 30--Spring Break--No Classes

April 4- World War II

*Maps from Gilbert, Atlas of Russian History

*John Barber, The Soviet Home Front, pp. 19-44, 59-67

Sakwa, pp. 235-236, 238-39, 240-245, 247-48, 252-55, 257-61, 269, 275-277, 287-288
(docs 6.1, 6.3-6.4, 6.6-6.7, 6.9, 6.13-6.17, 6.19-6.21, 6.28, 6.31-6.32, 6.39)

April 6 – Stalin's Last Years, the Origins of the Cold War, and Khrushchev's Rise

Sakwa, pp. 277-284, 300-4, 309-10 (docs. 6.33-6.36, 7.8-7.10, 7.13)

*The Novikov Telegram, pp. 3, 8, 12-16

Taubman, Khrushchev, pp. 208-57

April 11 -- The Khrushchev Years: Thaw and Social Change

Taubman, Khrushchev, pp. 270-324, 361-71

Sakwa, pp. 316-22, 324-26, 329-333 (docs 8.4, 8.6-8.7, 8.10-8.12)

April 13 – Khrushchev and the World

Taubman, Khrushchev, chs. 15, 19, pp. 396-441, 529-77

April 18 - No class - Patriot's Day

April 20- Third Paper due in Class

April 25- Soviet Agriculture, Science & Engineering

Guest lecture: Jennifer Smith, G5

*Roy and Zhores Medvedev, Khrushchev, pp. 94-101

Taubman, Khrushchev, pp. 130-32, 257-63, 371-81, 507-28

April 27 - Khrushchev's Fall and the Brezhnev Era: Politics and Economics

Taubman, Khrushchev, pp. 578-90, 602-19, 3-17

Sakwa, pp. 363-66, 379-80 (docs. 9.10-9.11, 9.18)

*Timothy Colton, "Brezhnev's Ambiguous Legacy," in The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union, pp. 6-31

May 2-- The Brezhnev Era: Social Change

*Colton, "What Ails the Soviet System?" Dilemma, pp. 32-67

*Boris Yeltsin, Against the Grain, pp. 43-56, 61-82

Sakwa, pp. 421-22 (doc. 9.35)

May 4- Gorbachev's Political Revolution

*Michael McFaul, "Gorbachev's Design for Reforming..., The End of the Soviet Union", Russia's Unfinished Revolution; Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin, pp. 33-86

Sakwa, pp. 425, 440-46, 459-61 (docs. 10.3, 10.10, 10.16-17)

May 9- Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1991

*McFaul, pp.86-117 (The End of the Soviet Union)

*Caroline Humphrey, "'Icebergs,' barter, and the mafia in provincial Russia," pp. 8-13

Sakwa, pp. 474-75, 483-487, 494-496 (docs. 10.26, 10.29-10.32, 10.37)

May 11- Life in the New Russia, 1991-2000

* David Remnick, "The October Revolution," pp. 37-41, 45-57, 60, 61-63, 68-69, 71-73, 77-83

*Stephen Holmes, "What Russia Teaches Us Now: How Weak States Threaten Freedom," in Ronald Suny, Structure of Soviet History, 564-73

*Peter Maass, "The Triumph of the Quiet Tycoon," New York Times Magazine, Aug. 1, 2004

May 16- The War in Chechnya, 1994-1996, 1999-present

Anna Politkovskaya, A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Hell (2003), pp. 1-107, 161-224

May 18- Putin and the Drive to Centralize Russia, 2000-2006

Articles to be handed out in class

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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