

## **History 64/First-Year Seminar: Gorbachev, the Collapse of the Soviet Empire, and the Rise of the New Russia**

**Instructor:** Professor Donald J. Raleigh, Hamilton Hall 410, 962-8077,  
[djr@email.unc.edu](mailto:djr@email.unc.edu), <http://history.unc.edu/faculty/raleigh.html>

**Class Meetings:** T/Th, Murphey 302, 2:00-3:15 PM

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 9:00-10:00 AM; Thursday, 3:30-4:30 PM; and by appointment

**Course Description:** In 1987 *Time Magazine* named Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev “Person of the Year.” In 1990 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in ending the Cold War. How and why did a peasant lad from southern Russia come to rule the world’s largest country and empire? Why did his revolution of perestroika, glasnost, democratization, and new thinking—meant to revitalize the Communist system—result in the collapse of the Soviet empire and its breakup into fifteen successor states? This course will examine the extraordinary individual associated with these developments, the country and circumstances that produced him, and the astonishing transformations that took place while he was in power between 1985 and 1991. It will explore post-Soviet Russia’s efforts at negotiating a new set of relations with the rest of the world, considering how the Soviet experience both constrains and enables efforts to establish a democratic political system and a market economy in a world burdened with the threat of terrorism in an age of globalization.

**Learning and Teaching Activities to be used in the Course:** Although I will occasionally lecture or offer mini-lectures to supplement readings or to clarify obscure issues, this is a discussion and writing class. Students will be responsible for coming to class prepared and ready to participate actively in discussions; for designing and leading a class discussion; for carrying out independent research on a topic of special interest to them; for making a twelve-to-fifteen minute Power Point presentation on their research findings; and for crafting a final paper. Students are also encouraged to attend at least one public talk on contemporary Russia either at UNC or Duke during the semester if an appropriate one is scheduled.

**Required Reading:** Apart from the following titles available at the Undergraduate Reserve desk or for purchase at Student Stores, students have several reading assignments in E-books available through the UNC on-line catalog. The required texts are:

- Strayer, Robert, *Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse?: Understanding Historical Change* (**NB: Also available as an E-book**)
- Brown, Archie, *The Gorbachev Factor*
- Alexievich, Svetlana, *Voices from Chernobyl*

The titles available as E-books are:

- Raleigh, Donald J., *Russia’s Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives*

- White, Stephen, *Communism and Its Collapse*

**Requirements:**

Participation in discussion	20%
Short paper on <i>Voices from Chernobyl</i>	15%
Leading a discussion	15%
Long paper	35%
Final oral presentation	10%
Homework assignments	5%

**Grading:** Grading will be on a 100-point scale, distributed as follows: 93-99=A; 90-92=A-; 88-89=B+, 83-87=B; 80-82=B-; 78-79=C+; 73-77=C; 70-72=C-; 68-69=D+; 63-67=D; 60-62=D-; 59 and below, F. The class averages for my courses correspond closely to university averages.

**Student-Led Discussions:** Each student is responsible for planning and leading—in most cases together with another student—a 50-minute class discussion. To do so, you will need to complete the reading ahead of time, reread the material, formulate discussion questions, and determine the format of the discussion (large group, small groups, partners, debate, role playing, interviewing, round-robin, etc.). Use your imagination and be creative. You may employ visuals, handouts, short writing assignments, and/or assign additional reading (within reason), or anything else that might seem appropriate. *I need to approve your discussion plan beforehand so it is essential to plan accordingly.*

**Short Paper Assignment:** A short paper on Alexievich’s book is due on October 8. Instructions will be posted on Blackboard later this semester.

**Long Paper Assignment:** This assignment allows students the opportunity to conduct research and write a twelve- to fifteen-page paper on a topic of special interest to them. Students might, for instance, focus on one of Gorbachev’s major speeches or books; on a memoir of another perestroika-era Russian politician who worked with Gorbachev (e.g., Yeltsin, Ligachev, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, Gaidar, Zhirinovsky, Raisa Gorbachev); on a major political event or development; on a critical glasnost-era film or book; on Gorbachev’s relations with another country or its leader; on developments in one of the fifteen union republics; on a prominent glasnost figure (e.g., Yury Afanasiev, Abel Aganbegyan, Nina Andreeva, Fedor Burlatsky, etc.); or on an important Communist Party plenum or congress. Any topic linked to a major interest of yours will probably be acceptable. Are you intrigued by environmental issues, public health problems, popular culture, religion, gender concerns, sports, science and technology, public health, the reception of Western culture in Russia? If so, a student interested in environmental issues might study glasnost’s role in stimulating public discussion of a formerly taboo topic concerning the environment. A student studying biology might consider how the bumpy transition to a market economy impacted scientists or the political rehabilitation of a disgraced scientist. A student planning to study politics might take the rest of the class inside the Russian Duma and explain what’s going on. A student intrigued by gender issues might explore how men or women are depicted in a popular new film. Or a

student planning to study economics might assess a specific aspect of Gorbachev's attempt to restructure the Soviet economy. I will guide you in developing your research projects by having you participate in a class-long session on library sources, submit a paper topic and later a bibliography, and consult with me. Papers are due between November 24 and December 8.

**Twelve-to-Fifteen-Minute Oral Presentations:** During the last weeks of the semester, students will give oral presentations of twelve to fifteen minutes in duration, using Power Point, on their research project and findings. Among other things, your reports should clearly state the question you seek to answer in your project, why the topic interested you, and why it is important. Discuss your sources, how you used them, and any differences in interpretation that you identified while interrogating them. What are your major conclusions and findings? In sum, the presentation should be an oral rendition of the paper you are writing.

**How to Succeed in This Course:**

- Attend all class sessions and participate in discussions
- Complete all readings and assignments on time
- Ask questions
- Clarify expectations with instructor
- Have the right attitude. If this is not the course you want, or it's not taught the way you like, drop it

**Honor Code:** "It shall be the responsibility of every student at the university of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to: 1. Obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code; 2. Refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing; 3. Conduct themselves so as not to impair significantly the welfare or the educational opportunities of others in the University community; and 4. Refrain from conduct that impairs or may impair the capacity of University and associated personnel to perform their duties, manage resources, protect the safety and welfare of members of the University community, and maintain the integrity of the University." As per university guidelines, students must sign the Honor Code on all papers and exams in order to have the grade received officially recorded. Please consult with me if you have any questions about the Honor Code or examine <http://honor.unc.edu/>

**Academic Support Services:** The College of Arts and Sciences has developed several support programs to assist students. Learning Disabilities Services provides individual support to students with diagnosed learning disabilities (962-7227). The Learning Skills Center offers free instruction in a variety of academic learning strategies (962-3782, 962-6389). *The Writing Center provides free tutorial services (962-7710). You are invited to take your draft take-home exams there.*

**In Case of Foul Weather:** In the event weather conditions make it necessary to cancel class, complete the assigned readings as per the class schedule. I will open a new discussion link on Blackboard and contact you by e-mail. Unless you hear otherwise, craft five discussion questions that you think best reflect the contents of the day's

reading, linking the questions as much as possible to the class's stated objectives. Also jot down five terms, names, or concepts that you think are the most important to identify in the day's reading. Post both on Blackboard.

**Discussion Topics and Assignments:** Below you will find a listing of what will be discussed at each class meeting and the readings assigned for that day. To succeed in this class it is important to complete the reading on time. In the event you are unable to attend a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. I occasionally give short homework assignments based on issues that arise during a class session. Your absence does not excuse you from such homework. Student-led discussions are designated by SLD. Please note that two students will be responsible for leading the discussion (designated SLD [2]).

Aug 25 Introduction (Introduction; film, Mikhail Gorbachev)

Aug 27 Discussion of Raleigh Essay "Beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg" (available on Blackboard under Assignments) and preview of film Mikhail Gorbachev)

Sep 1 The Stalinist System and Its Legacy (Strayer, 1-45; White, 1-20)

Sep 3 Stalin's Successors (Strayer, 46-83; Kotkin, 1-30; and, optional, White, 21-51)

Sep 8 SLD [2]: The Making of a Reformist General

Secretary (Brown, 1-23, and 24-52; Handout posted on Blackboard, "How to Read a Book"). **Bring your copy of Brown to class today**

Sep 10 SLD [2]: Conversation with Gorbachev I (Gorbachev and Mlynar, 1-53, available on Blackboard under Assignments)

Sep 15 SLD [2]: Gorbachev Comes to Power (Brown, 53-88; Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, introduction)

Sep 17 Introduction to library resources; **NB: we will meet in Davis Library, Lab 247** (Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, interviews with Darchenko and Ivanov)

Sep 22 Introduction to library resources; **NB: we will meet in Davis Library, Lab 247** (Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation*, interviews with Belovolova [Yanichkina] and Kamaiurova) **Homework:** Write a two-page, double-spaced essay on how the four interviewees understand the origins of perestroika and Gorbachev's role in bringing it about. How do you account for the differences among the four members of the Sputnik generation?

Sep 24 SLD [2]: The Power of Ideas (Brown, 89-129)

Sep 29 SLD [2]: The Gorbachev Reforms. An Overview (Strayer, 86-130); Compiling a Bibliography and Taking Notes

Oct 1 SLD [2]: Gorbachev and Economic Reform (Brown, 130-54). Film, "The Limit"

Oct 6 Discussion of Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl* (entire book)

Oct 8 **Paper on Alexievich due today.** Film, "Inside Gorbachev's USSR II: Confused Lies, Bitter Truths"

Oct 13 SLD [2]: Gorbachev and Political Transformation (Brown, 155-211)

Oct 15 SLD [2]: Gorbachev and Foreign Policy (Brown, 212-51)

Oct 20 SLD [2]: Unintended Consequences (Strayer, 132-71); Film, "Coming Apart."

**Students will turn in proposed topics for research paper and preliminary bibliography**

Oct 22 Fall Recess

Oct 27 SLD [2]: The National Question, Coup, and Collapse of the USSR (Brown, 252-305; Strayer, 174-205)

Oct 29 Lecture: Evaluating Gorbachev (Brown, 306-18; Strayer, 174-205)

Nov 3 Lecture: Yeltsin's Russia (essay by McFaul found on Blackboard) **Students will turn in complete bibliographies today**

Nov 5 Lecture: Putin's Russia (Article on Putin found on Blackboard)

Nov 10 Editing of introductions to student papers (**Students will bring to class four copies of the introductions to their papers**)

Nov 12 DJR away at conference; students to work on papers

Nov 17 Student Presentations

Nov 19 Student Presentations

Nov 24 Student Presentations (Papers due between November 24 and December 8)

Nov 26 Thanksgiving

Dec 1 Student Presentations

Dec 3 Student Presentations

Dec 8 Wrapping Things Up; Course Evaluations; Final papers due if not already submitted