

# History 783: An Introduction to Russian and East European History

Fall 2011  
Professor Donald J. Raleigh



**Class Meetings:** This course meets in Hamilton Hall, Room 517, on Wednesday mornings between 9:00 and 11:50 AM.

**Description.** History 783 is designed as a capstone course for the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies' interdisciplinary MA program in Russian and East European Studies. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to some of the most important issues in modern, twentieth-century, Russian and East European history in order to provide a common base of knowledge that can be used in developing individualized courses of study. History 783 is also ideal for graduate students in the History Department and in other programs for whom it can likewise serve as an introduction to the field. In selecting the readings, I opted for works that not only address critical issues in the history of this part of the world, but are also of value from a methodological or interpretive perspective. Among other topics, the readings address nationalism, the experience of war and revolution, Communism's appeal, gender, the rise and fall of the Communist order, and key developments in the region in the post-Communist era. We will also consider what is particularly "Russian" or "East European" about the issues under discussion, and raise fresh questions that might inform your own research agenda as you continue with your studies.

During the semester, students will read a book a week in common and subject the works to rigorous discussion. Each student will be responsible for leading a class

discussion. In addition, students will write five four-page critical reviews as per the instructions found on the syllabus and posted on Sakai.

**Office Hours.** My office is located in Hamilton Hall 410. I will hold office hours this semester on Wednesday between 1:30 and 2:30 PM, on Thursday between 5 and 6:00 PM, and by appointment. My office telephone number is 962-8077. You also can reach me via e-mail at [djr@email.unc.edu](mailto:djr@email.unc.edu).

**Grading.** Grading will be based on the formula indicated below.

Discussion	40%
Leading a discussion	10%
Five 4-page papers	50%

**My Expectations.** I expect students to attend all class sessions, to complete all reading and writing assignments on time, to take active part in weekly discussions, to show respect for others' opinions, and to refrain from dominating the discussion. Each student will also lead a discussion. This entails posting a summary of major book reviews, background on the author, and questions for discussion on the appropriate thread on Sakai by noon on the Monday before class, and leading the discussion on Wednesday. In doing the latter, I encourage you to use your imagination and to be playful. I welcome you to consult with me the week before you assume responsibility for leading a discussion.

**Critical Reviews.** I will assign students to one of two teams, A and B, which will be responsible for reviewing different books, as indicated below under weekly assignments. All students will post their reviews on Sakai before class and submit a hard copy to me.

**Instructions for Critical Reviews.** *Please use these points as guidelines, but avoid being formulaic. Not all of the points will apply to each of the books we will discuss this term.*

1. Craft a review of no more than four pages in length (standard margins and standard 12-point font). Draft your review, edit it, put it aside, edit it again while reading it out loud, and run spell check. Review my hints for powerful writing.
2. Begin with a full citation identifying the book. For example:  
Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 393 pp.
3. Offer a brief statement about the book's author, when appropriate. I do not have in mind a list of academic positions, but relevant information that might help us appreciate the author's understanding of an historical problem. For instance, did the author participate in the events described? Is there anything in an author's background that might account for a specific bias? Is the book a revised doctoral dissertation? How qualified is the author to carry

- out a task of this sort? (Often introductions, prefaces, book jackets, and publishers' websites can be helpful sources of information. So can historians' home pages.)
4. Identify the author's methodology, major sources, and how he or she uses them. What kind of history is this? (Is the author a political, military, intellectual, gender, or cultural historian?) What type of book are you analyzing? (Is it a biography, an academic monograph, a memoir, a broad survey, a trade book, etc.?)
  5. Discuss the subject and scope of the book (What does the book cover, that is, what is and is not in it?).
  6. Isolate the book's thesis or major argument. How does the author develop his/her argument?
  7. Note the book's intended audience. Is it fellow academics? The general public? Students? People with green stripes?
  8. Comment on the value of the book. Did the author accomplish what he/she sought to achieve? Is it well written? Judge the book on *its* terms, not on yours. Are the conclusions significant? How has the profession received the book?
  9. Offer any criticisms of the book you wish to make.

**Required Reading.** We will read and discuss a book a week and, on occasion, an additional article, chapter or other reading. The following titles, all required, are on 2-hour reserve in the Undergraduate Library and are also available for purchase at Student Stores. In the event you have already read any of these studies, please let me know so that I can assign you an alternative, complementary reading.

- Poe, Marshall T. *The Russian Moment in World History*
- Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s*
- Krylova, Anna. *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front*
- Zubok, Vladislav M. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*
- Raleigh, Donald J. *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*
- Colton, Timothy. *Yeltsin: A Life*
- Wolff, L. *Inventing Eastern Europe*
- Judson, Pieter. *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*
- Miłosz, Czesław. *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*
- Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*
- Rothschild, Joseph and Nancy Wingfield. *Return to Diversity: A*

*Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*  
(2008 edition)

Bren, Paulina. *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring*

Dunn, Elizabeth. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor.*

**Background Reading.** Students bring diverse backgrounds into this course and may find it helpful to read a general text to help situate the books we will subject to discussion and review. For background on Eastern European history, I recommend R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 1997), or the multivolume works of Ivan Berend. For Soviet history, I suggest you consult Ronald G. Suny's *The Soviet Experiment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford and New York, 2011).

### **Weekly Assignments.**

1. August 24. Introduction. Familiarize yourself with my handout available on Sakai "How to Read a Book" before reading Marshall Poe's *The Russian Moment*, which we will discuss today. Write a one-page (single-spaced) summary of the author's *argument* and craft five discussion questions. Please place your summaries and questions on separate sheets of paper that I will collect.
2. August 31. Discussion of Wolff. Team A students submit reviews today (give me a hard copy and post a file on Sakai). If you are unfamiliar with Edward Said's *Orientalism*—and even if you are—please read <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html> and consider sleuthing further by examining the links at the bottom of the essay. An obituary about Said published in the *New York Times* can be found at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/26/arts/edward-w-said-literary-critic-advocate-for-palestinian-independence-dies-67.html>
3. September 7. Discussion of Judson. Team B students submit reviews.
4. September 14. Discussion of Milosz. Team A students submit reviews.
5. September 21. Discussion of Snyder. Team B students submit reviews.
6. September 28. Discussion of Rothschild and Wingfield. No written reviews today.
7. October 5. Discussion of Bren. Team A students submit reviews.
8. October 12. Discussion of Dunn. Team B students submit reviews today. (Today is University Day, but we will meet instead of adding a class at semester's end.)

9. October 19. Fall break.
10. October 26. Discussion of Hirsch. Team A students submit reviews.
11. November 2. Discussion of Fitzpatrick. Team B students submit reviews.
12. November 9. Author seminar with Professor Anna Krylova. Discussion of *Soviet Women in Combat*. No written reviews this week.
13. November 16. Discussion of Zubok. I also would like for you to familiarize yourself with the Cold War History Project at [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic\\_id=1409](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409) Team A students submit reviews this week.
14. November 23. No class this week. Thanksgiving break.
15. November 30. Author seminar with Donald J. Raleigh. Discussion of *Soviet Baby Boomers*. No written reviews this week
16. December 7. Discussion of Colton. Team B students submit reviews.