

History 398: Stalinism in Historical Perspective

Description: In accordance with History Department guidelines, this section of History 398 is designed to facilitate the pursuit of independent research on a topic of interest to the student. Students will present the results of their work in both oral and written form. The focus of our collective efforts will be to discuss and research the nature and causes of Stalinism. In chronological terms, the course will examine the years during which Joseph Stalin stood at the pinnacle of power in the USSR, roughly from 1928 until his death in 1953. For many, Stalinism evokes haunting images of personal dictatorship, of people disappearing in the middle of the night, of arrests, of brutal interrogations, and of labor camps. Yet Stalinism was more than terror and repression. It was also revolutionary socioeconomic change that created the so-called command-administrative system, which provided the basis for the Soviet Union's emergence as the other super power. This so-called Stalin Revolution entailed sweeping social mobilization and the entrenchment of a cultural style that dominated intellectual and cultural life. Both destructive and constructive, radical and conservative, Stalinism left an indelible mark not only on the evolution of Soviet and post-Soviet history, but also on European and world history.

During the semester, students will read and discuss several works in common in order to provide appropriate background for their research. Students will review sources, select a research topic in consultation with the instructor, discuss research strategies, present two oral reports on their research efforts, submit a draft and final paper of approximately 20-25 pages in length, and edit and evaluate the research papers of several of their classmates.

Early in the semester students will divide into two groups, identify a topic, and compile a bibliography. While carrying out bibliographical research students will make a 10-minute presentation on an important bibliographic aid or document collection. Later in the semester students will make a 10-minute report on their research in progress. At semester's end, students will give 20-minute presentations summarizing their research findings. They will also read and evaluate the draft papers of two of their classmates.

Class attendance is mandatory and **papers must be turned in on time**. Students are also expected to take active part in class discussion.

Course Objectives: History 398 offers an introduction to historical research and research methods. My goal is to help you develop skills that will serve you well both at the university and at the workplace. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Understand the role of Stalin and Stalinism in the evolution of Russian and world history
- Improve their critical readings skills
- Learn how to compile a bibliography and take research notes
- Formulate a viable research topic that uses primary sources

- Conduct independent research
- Appreciate the benefits and drawbacks of various types of sources
- Present the findings of their research orally
- Formulate an argument and support it with historical evidence
- Write a 20-25 page paper
- Edit and evaluate the work of others
- Revise and polish their research papers