Objectives and Outcomes

Despite the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, the ending of the Cold War and the near total collapse of the Russian economy, it is arguable that no country will be more important for the international economy and global security in the next century than Russia. Understanding Russia, then, is fundamental to finding ways to cooperate and coexist with this vast and powerful country. The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the cultural, social, economic and political structures in Russian history from earliest times down to the end of the seventeenth century, when Russia was poised under Peter the Great to undergo dramatic cultural and social change. We are all products of our past, and this is especially true of the Russians. In examining a range of topics—from serfdom to autocracy—and personalities—from Ivan the Terrible to St. Sergei of Radonezh—we can begin to grasp not only how the modern Russian state came into being, but acquire some sense of the character of the Russians themselves. This course will plunge students into the primary sources of Russian history: ancient chronicles, works of "high-" and "low-brow" literature, and religious art and architecture. The main purpose of the course (beyond, of course, mastery of lots of names and dates) is for students to obtain a sense of the structure of Russian history and a general appreciation of the formative power of historical events on culture.

Texts


A new treatment of the early history of Russia that utilizes many of the most recent researches into current historiographical topics in Kievan and Muscovite history.
More than a textbook, it is an interpretation (one which we may at times take issue with!) of the structure and meaning of Russian history.


This classic and still highly-regarded book includes selections from a range of primary sources, from chronicles and literary tales to homilies and polemics. This book will provide the materials for our discussion sections.


The classic treatment of the great interregnum from 1598 to 1613, and written by one of the greatest Russian historians of the modern era.


A remarkable text, produced in the sixteenth century, the *Domostroi* is a manual for structuring the domestic lives of Muscovites. It provides a unique glimpse at attitudes, values and family life in Russia in the pre-modern period, particularly during the time of Ivan the Terrible.

5. Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great.*

The newest work on Peter that adds new insights from new and never before seen sources. Readable but deeply nuanced at the same time.


Contains chapters and separate articles of important primary and secondary sources that will be used to feed and enliven classroom discussions.

In addition to these works (available at the bookstore for purchase), there will be a number of important readings on reserve at McGill and (sometimes) outside my office door. See the attached “Course Schedule”. Please note that, except for those specifically marked “optional”, all the readings listed are required. Please also note that the optional readings are quite good and worth any amount of time you might be able to devote to them. All students enrolled in this course for graduate credit are required to read the optional materials.

**Goals and Outcomes**

On the most basic, stratospheric level, the goals of this course are:

1. To describe the interconnectedness and relevance of all knowledge;
2. To identify the nature and limits of historical claims;
To describe how historians make claims about the past;
4. To define what a primary source is for a historian;
5. To describe how historical knowledge evolves, changes, and is revised;
6. To demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills and to support these skills through the appropriate use of technology tools.
7. To demonstrate problem solving, critical thinking and, cooperative-learning skills.

and, on an affective level,

8. To instill a love of learning and respect for past and unfamiliar cultures.

These important and lofty goals will be achieved through reading historical texts, reading the works of historians who have worked with these texts, discussing with your peers and with the instructor the meaning and significance of these readings, and by writing about what you have discovered in this course.

The more specific goals of this reading, discussing, and writing are to:
1. Describe the evolution of several themes over the centuries of Russian history covered in this course, including: technology and culture, religious belief and tradition, and the rise and nature of the Russian state;
2. Demonstrate mastery of a core list of facts, including the names of important historical figures, key historical texts, and, yes, the dates and chronology of events that helped to shape the West as a distinct cultural world;
3. Demonstrate writing and reasoning skills by engaging the assigned reading and writing;

and, on an affective level,

4. Enrich your lives forever!

Assignments and Policies

This course will have two papers, a short midterm paper (on Kievan and Mongol-era Rus’) and a final paper (on Muscovy). Both are take-home papers (not blue-book exams).

Grading

1. The final grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. Grades will be assigned according to the following numerical equivalencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-,  ..Etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Course Schedule**

Week I. The Historiographical Problems of Early East Slavic History

Week II. Rise of Kiev

Week III. Orthodoxy

Week IV. Lord Novgorod the Great

Week V. Mongols

Week VI. Rise of Moscow

Week VII. Muscovite Society

Week VIII. Muscovite Culture

Week IX. Ivan the Terrible

Week X. Ivan the Terrible

Week XI. The Time of Troubles

Week XII. The Rise of the Romanovs

Week XIII. Russian Religion

Week XIV. The 17th Century

Week XV. The Coming of Peter the Great

Week XVI. Summaries and Comparisons