History of the Soviet Union:
New trends and subfields in the 1990s – 2010s

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Introduction. The course provides an overview of the newly established or emerging subfields in Soviet historical studies. After an introductory meeting, which familiarizes students with the development of historiography on the USSR and conceptual changes in understanding of its “ideal pattern”, Stalinism, the course draws students’ attention to the most dynamic currents in the field.

The first part focuses on “classical triad”, political, economic and social history, and on charges that became the most significant during the last three decades within them. The second part is reserved for the “cultural turn” and its influence. Certainly, the new cultural history has moved to the center of the historical discipline, presenting a reservoir of new possibilities as well as new challenges. It has stimulated great controversy among researchers about its methods and results. Here the course covers the following subfields: the history of everyday life, gender history, the history of sexuality, urban studies, symbolic geography, oral history, memory studies, visual history, and the history of emotions. The third part is aimed to test the limits of today’s cultural history, and to find a little bit different approaches towards historical writing. In this course, students will learn about three of them: nationalism and empire studies, transnational history, and environmental history. The last meeting is reserved for a general discussion.

Aims and objectives: This course is an advanced option available to MA and PhD students. Those who specialize in Soviet and East European history and want to explore the phenomenon of the USSR in much greater depth are especially welcomed. They will be able to combine theoretical knowledge obtained during the course with their own empirical data while proceeding with their research projects. The course may also be interesting for those who study historiography in general for the purpose to extend their knowledge on political, social and cultural history while exploring the particular historiographical situation in Soviet studies.

Teaching and learning methods:
1). Attendance and Participation. Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to participate in discussions actively. This will require them to have completed all reading assignments (section Essential reading).

2). Writing reviews. Students are asked to write 10 review papers. The length of a review is no more than three pages. In these papers it is expected that students will comment on the week’s Additional readings. Each student should choose only one book, or an article, or chapter(s) (if specified) from a single block of Additional readings. Among chosen literature for reviewing there should be at least 6 books.

There are some tips on how to write a good review:

a) start with full bibliographic description;

b) provide a general introduction: What is the book about? What sources are used and how is the book structured?

c) explain the main argument and how it was made;

d) state your own assessments: What are the book’s strengths and weaknesses?

e) remember to type your name at the end of the review.

For further information, please, consult the Slavic Review website http://www.slavicreview.illinois.edu/info/reviews.html

3). Discussion Questions. At the end of the semester students will be asked to prepare discussion questions for the last meeting which is reserved for a round table (see below). There is no fixed or expected number, but at least two questions should be submitted. Please, circulate these questions via email not less than three days before the class. All students are expected to participate in a round table actively.

**Grades will be determined as follows:**

Attendance and class participation: 40%
10 review papers: 5% each (maximum 50%)
Discussion questions and participation in a round table: 10%
COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1. Introduction. Soviet studies through one biography: Sheila Fitzpatrick

Changing image of the Soviet Union in historiography: from totalitarianism through social history to “new cultural history”. An individual in history: can one scholar change the whole field? Does Fitzpatrick’s school in Soviet history exist?

Essential reading


Please, watch the interview with Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick conducted by Dr. James Harris (22 June 2011) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy8wdOLHHXU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy8wdOLHHXU)

Additional reading


PART 1. Classical subfields and their recent change

Week 2. Political history
What does totalitarian approach mean and how does it coincide with the political history of the USSR? Should we write history with “the state left out”? Stalinism as totalitarianism.

Case study: Soviet terror.

Essential reading


Additional reading


Week 3. Economic issues

Variations of Soviet economy: the second economy (Gregory Grossman), the economy of shortages (Janos Kornai), the economy of favors (Alena Ledeneva). Industrialization and collectivization at the macro and micro levels. Consumerism in Soviet society (consumerism studies). Networks of distribution and exchange, their influence on social statuses and everyday practices.

Essential reading


**Additional reading**


**Week 4. Social history**

Class, status and social groups under Socialism. Construction of social identities in the USSR. Social stratification. Working class and labor history. Marginalization of some social groups. Othering and mental barriers between classes and social groups.

**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


PART 2. “Cultural turn” and its influence on emerging subfields

Week 5. Cultural history of the Soviet Union: How did it start?


Essential reading

Part 1. *Speaking Bolshevik*


Part 2. *The Stalinist Self*


Additional reading


**Week 6. The History of Everyday Life**


**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


**Week 7. Gender History and the History of Sexuality**


Case study: Soviet society in the 1920s.
Essential reading


Additional reading


Case study: Moscow.

Essential reading


Additional reading


Gorsuch, Anne E. *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011


**Week 9. Oral history. Memory studies.**

How to use oral history and memory studies in examining the Soviet past?

**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


**Week 10. Visual History.**


*Case study: Visual representations of political power.*

**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


Week 11. **The History of Emotions**


Case study: Happiness.

**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


**PART 3. Beyond cultural history?**

Week 12. **Nationalism and empire studies**


**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**


**Week 13. Transnational history**

Transnational history of/and the Soviet Union: comparative history, cultural transfers or cross-national studies?

**Essential reading**


**Additional reading**

Week 14. Environmental history

Natural world in Soviet history: Conservation movements, conceptions of nature, the influence of industrial and agricultural development on the natural world and society. Frontier environmental history. Russian animal studies.

Essential reading


Additional reading


Week 15. General discussion

The round table: *New trends and subfields in Soviet history: enduring research agenda or glimpsing fashions?*

Questions for the round table are to be prepared by students.