

SOVIET RUSSIA
HIS 393
Dafina Nedelcheva
Winter Session
Online course: Asynchronous

In October of 1917 in the midst of World War I, a revolutionary Marxist party seized control of Russia and against all odds it maintained power through civil war, rapid industrialization, colossal loss of life to famine and terror, Nazi invasion and the Cold War, until its remarkably bloodless collapse in the late twentieth century. What made this power grip so robust? What was Communism and how did it triumph in Russia? Who was Lenin and how did people live under Stalin? How life changed during the political and social shifts under Khrushchev and Brezhnev? What led to the transformation under Gorbachev? Why did a regime that withstood a civil war, invasion and the Cold War so easily collapsed in 1991? How has the country continued to transform under Yeltsin and Putin? This course will provide students with the knowledge and tools to answer these questions, tracing the political, social and economic history of the Soviet Union from the disintegration of the Russian Empire through the revolutionary era of Lenin and Stalinism to the height of Soviet power after the Second World War until its dissolution in 1991. No prerequisites and no prior familiarity with Russian history or language is required. The course is held entirely online, delivered asynchronously.

Course requirements: weekly writing assignments and a final paper. Students will be analyzing primary and secondary sources, including academic articles and videos in weekly Blackboard discussions - 1-2 paragraphs answering questions on assigned readings and video material and commenting on classmates' entries. Final paper (6-8 pages in length) in response to an essay question on either one of the following: 1) Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 2) Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, or 3) the HBO Miniseries 'Chernobyl'.

Primary textbook: [Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia* \(8th edition\)](#)