

Seth Bernstein
Matherly 002
T: 8:30 – 10:30; Th: 9:35 – 10:30
<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/513619>

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Office Hours: Keene-Flint 209
W: 10am-1pm
(and by appointment)

EUH 3575: Imperial Russian History

Course Description:

From the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia transformed from a medieval principality into one of the world's largest empires. It was a place of contradictions: The Tsars defended Russia as a bastion of conservatism but simultaneously pushed the country into rapid periods of modernization. Its writers created a world-famous literary tradition amid clashes between elites about whether to Westernize or Russify the country. The Russian people defined the empire, but many of its elites—and the majority of the late empire's people—were from non-Russian ethnic groups. Vladimir Putin has leaned on this concept of a greater Russian empire in the invasion of Ukraine, and part of this class will also think about how the Russian Empire has been interpreted through film. This class explores the problem of a multi-ethnic, modernizing empire to understand its successes, failures, and legacies.

Course Goals:

1. Familiarize students with the formation of the modern Russian state and (past) territories.
2. Practice analysis of primary sources in a broader social and political context.
3. Encourage students to imagine lived conditions in the past.

Course Assignments:

Participation (15%): Engagement in discussions that demonstrate a student's having read and understood assigned materials. I will not take attendance but always have a sense of who is attending and who is not. Additionally, participation is not possible without attendance, but attendance does not guarantee full participation points.

Quizzes (10%, including 5% map quiz): When the mood strikes me, I will give everyone a short quiz. As many as six in the semester. Almost always on Tuesdays. One map quiz. No makeups for oversleeping the class.

Weekly Responses (15%): Each week students should write a question and respond to a question. By **Wednesday 5pm**, write a question on Canvas about one or more of the readings or one that was raised the class lecture during the week. The question should be one that does not have a straightforward answer. Respond to at least one of the questions of a classmate by **Thursday 9am**. The grade will in part be based on completion. In other words, if you write a question and answer one for each week, you will receive a passing grade. A superior grade will

result from deeper engagement with the materials and questions in the course, demonstrating having read the work or thought about the problems the course raises with non-superficial questions and answer. A good question will provide a starting point for discussion rather than asking for a fact. For example, asking what war Nadezhda Durova fought in (Napoleonic) is not a good question, but it might be a good question to ask how she related to her adoption of a male identity.

Hero of Our Time: Review, Proposal, Critique, Adaptation, Reaction

Historical fiction can present essential truths about the past in an exciting way without getting caught up in literal accuracy. Good history has to be based on verifiable facts, which can be limiting. Historical fiction also needs to be accurate, but it is not constrained by what is in documents but by what was probable and possible.

In past years, I have assigned a historical fiction assignment. The goal of the assignment is to make a story that is plausible and interesting. It must **incorporate historically specific elements** that involve knowing something about history, such as dates of events or interactions/reactions to real people or happenings. It must **incorporate interpretive elements** based on research with academic scholarship. In other words, it must exemplify arguments from historical literature.

Unfortunately, this is exactly the kind of assignment that large language models like ChatGPT can do in a plausible but mediocre way. Rather than giving this assignment and tempt students to rely heavily on AI, the class will work with the AI to think about its limitations and possibilities, while still writing the adaptation.

It is a multi-part assignment:

Review (10%): Pick an article about Imperial Russian history from a list of potential sources. Read the article carefully. Review the article: What is the author's main point and how does it relate to themes in the class overall? What sources does the author use? Are there stories with blank spots where historical fiction could expand and provide answers? Cite specific pages and use quotations where relevant. Approximately 700 words.

Proposal (5% and failure to submit will mean -10% on final): Submit a short proposal for a topic of your historical fiction, ideally related to the article that was reviewed. It should have the following elements: An outline of the story you want to tell, including the main character or family is, where they lived, when they lived, and what the main issue in the story will be; a bibliography with no fewer than five academic articles or books related to the proposed topic.

Critique (10%): Ask ChatGPT (or another LLM) to write your 1,500-word historical fiction assignment for you. Use different strategies (we will talk about possibilities but these videos have interesting ideas: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/generative-ai-prompt-engineering-for-everyone/>). Provide the application with information and commands you think are necessary. Fine-tune the story at least twice. The whole assignment is cheating, so there is no cheating. Save the entire transcript of your development of the historical fiction story to submit.

Next: In approximately 1000 words, critique the version it produced. What does the LLM get right and what does it get wrong? Does it make mistakes (provide evidence)? Is it vague? How would you improve what it produced? What historical arguments or events, or perhaps literary elements, would you embed in the story that it provided to make something meaningful?

Adaptation (10%): Use the StoryMaps platform to create a revised and visually interesting version of the historical fiction account. The story itself should be 1,500-2,000 words. Use of LLM is possible, but by this point you should understand the limitations and possibilities of these tools and may opt to write it entirely on your own. **I do not recommend just turning in an LLM-produced version of the account.** The story should cite evidence (ie, specific articles), include three or more identifiable episodes in a person or family's life, and include multimedia (paintings, photographs, sound, maps) with appropriate citations. Grading will be on quality of research (25%), plausibility of the story (25%), connections to our course (15%), writing (15%), technical aspects like use of multimedia (15%), and quality of formatting like citations (5%).

Reaction (5%): In roughly 500 words, reflect on the experience of using (or not using) the LLM for this assignment. Where was it helpful and where did it create additional work? For what tasks might you use it in the future and where do you think it could never be helpful in humanities writing?

Final Exam (20%): The exam will be **in person** and have four parts: multiple choice chronological/matching/ordering; map; short answers based on readings; essay (choice of two topics).

Extra Credit: Trivial Pursuit Questions (up to 2%): Students should submit review questions suitable for a game of trivial pursuit in the following categories: Politics; Science and Technology; Society; Culture; Economics. Students can submit one question per category, one question per week, up to ten acceptable questions. Unacceptable questions (inappropriate or incorrect) will not count but can be resubmitted the following week.

Texts:

Readings will be posted on Canvas or are available online. If you prefer a hard copy of the readings, please look at the syllabus and order books accordingly.

There are no required readings that will not be available in some form on Canvas or as a public domain book. If you are interested in hard copies of works we will read, I would recommend the following versions:

Cracraft, James. *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*. Lexington, MA: Heath, 1994.

Gogol, Nikolai. *Taras Bulba*. Translated by Robert D. Kaplan. New York: Modern Library, 2004.

Lermontov, Mikhail. *A Hero of Our Time*. Translated by Vladimir Nabokov, and Dmitri Nabokov. Woodstock, NY: Abrams Press, 2009.

Academic Integrity: The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards, and we encourage students to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040), so they are aware of our standards. Any violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action. The two greatest threats to the academic integrity of the University of Florida are cheating and plagiarism. Students should be aware of their faculty’s policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium.

Lateness Policy: An important part of students’ work is meeting deadlines. Late assignments will be docked three percentage points per day overdue. Under extraordinary circumstances extensions will be granted but every effort should be made to avoid the need to take an extension.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Online Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Grading Policy:

You can find University of Florida’s grading policies here:
<http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-gradingpolicies/>

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62

Course Schedule:

Week 0 (Aug. 22):

Introduction

Week 1 (Aug. 27 and 29):

Russia to 1600

Sources:

Carolyn Johnston Pouncy, ed. *Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. (37-53, 57-65, 104-11, 176-90, 209-33)

Sergei Eisenstein, dir. *Ivan the Terrible*. Moscow: Mosfilm, 1944.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guCZbJN8zUo>. (watch first ~15 minutes for the coronation and wedding scene)

Week 2 (Sep. 3 and 5):

The Time of Troubles and the Schism

Sources:

Jacques Margeret. *The Russian Empire and the Grand Duchy of Muscovy: A 17th Century Account*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983. Xi-xxiii, 58-91, 149-194 (notes)

The *Ulozhenie* (council code) of 1649 and *The Life of Archpriest Avvakum, Written by Himself* (both excerpted from Cracraft, *Major Problems* 58-79)

Week 3 (Sep. 10 and 12):

Pre-Petrine Russia as an Empire

Sources:

Gogol. *Taras Bulba*. (<https://gutenberg.org/ebooks/1197> or hard copy)

Eisenstein. *Ivan the Terrible* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guCZbJN8zUo>) (watch to ~45 minutes, taking of Kazan)

Week 4 (Sep. 17 and 19):

Petrine Russia

Sources:

James Cracraft, "Kliuchevskii on Peter the Great," Peter's various laws, and M.M. Sherbatov Laments Corruption at Court, 1730-1762 (Cracraft, *Major Problems* 99-126, 153-65)

Korb, *Scenes from the Court of Peter the Great*. (75-93, 104-114)

Aleksandr Sokurov. *Russian Ark*. Montreal: Seville Pictures, 2002.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PECz8C7m_Yo. (watch to about ~50 minutes)

Week 5 (Sep. 24 and 26)
Catherine's Russia

Sources:

Catherine II, "Prince Khlor."

Gary Marker and Rachel May, eds. *Days of a Russian Noblewoman*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001. (52-85)

Peter III Frees the Nobility, Catherine's Great Instruction, and Charter to the Nobility (Cracraft, *Major Problems*, 151-53, 200-12)

Week 6 (Oct. 1 and 3)
Russia in the World (of Napoleon)

Sources:

Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden: Journals of a Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1989. (Introduction, 1-18, 147-62)

Vitalii Melnikov, dir. *Poor, Poor Pavel*. St. Petersburg: Lenfilm, 2003.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7rXEoAjlI8>.

Optional: Eldar Riazanov. *The Hussar Ballad*. Moscow: Mosfilm, 1962.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=929O4WzLRDg>.

Week 7 (Oct. 8 and 10)
A Parting of Ways: Intelligentsia and the Autocracy

Sources:

Aleksandr Radishev. *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (excerpted in Thomas Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*. Volume 2: Imperial Russia, 1700-1917. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. 261-79)

Petr Chaadaev, "Apology of a Madman" (also in Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*, 303-14)

Documents on the Decembrists in Basil Dmytryshyn ed. *Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700-1917*. (156-183)

***Hero of Our Time Article Review Due October 11, 11:59pm

Week 8 (Oct. 15 and 17)
Literature and Empire

Source:

Lermontov, *The Hero of Our Time*, (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/913> or hard copy)

***Hero of Our Time Proposal Due October 18, 11:59pm

Week 9 (Oct. 22 and 24)
Crisis, Reform, LLMs

Sources:

Boris B. Gorshkov ed. *A Life under Russian Serfdom: The Memoirs of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii, 1800-1868*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005. 27-40, 95-114.
Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*, 32-109 (course site)

Week 10 (Oct. 29 and 31)
Russia: Colonial Empire?

Sources:

Chavchavadze, “Autobiography” and “Is That a Man?!”
“Katkov’s Views on the Polish Situation, 1863.” (Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*, 226-235.)
Artwork by Vasilii Vereshchagin
(<https://www.freeart.com/gallery/v/vereshchagin/vereshchagin.html>)
Various documents on the empire from Cracraft, 410-437.

***Hero of Our Time Critique due November 1, 5PM

Week 11 (Nov. 5 and 7)
The Revolutionary Movement

Sources:

Nikolai Chernyshevskii, *What Is To Be Done?* (“An Extraordinary Man” from Part III: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_vital_question;_or,_What_is_to_be_done%3F/Part_Third)
Sergei Nechaev’s “Catechism of a Revolutionary” and Program of the People’s Will. (Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*, 241-255)
Vera Figner on Assassination of Alexander II (Cracraft, 383-88)

Week 12 (Nov. 12 and 14)
Modernizing Society, Reactionary Politics

Sources:

“Anecdotes” “Moscow Court Reporting,” “The Terrible Bandit Churkin,” and *The Keys to Happiness* (excerpted). In *Entertaining Tsarist Russia: Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life, 1779-1917*. Edited by James von Geldern and Louise McReynolds. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998. 203-17, 221-30, 333-38.

Konstantin Pobedonotsev, “The Falsehood of Democracy” and Sergei Witte “An Economic Policy for the Empire.” (Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*, 390-408, 416-429)

Chekhov, “The Lady with the Dog”

Week 13 (Nov. 19 and 21)

Crisis of the Autocracy: The Workers Movement and 1905

Sources:

Semen Kanatchikov. *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov*. Edited by Reginald E. Zelnik. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986. 1-49.

“Father Gapon’s Petition to Nicholas II, January 22, 1905” and “Concessions of Nicholas II in the Revolution of 1905.” In Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*. 308-16.

Aleksei Uchitel, dir. *Mathilde*. St. Petersburg: TPO Rok, 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4lZBrl_s-U

***Hero of Our Time Adaptation due, November 22, 5PM

Week 14 (Dec. 3)

World War I and Conclusions

Source:

“Rasputin’s Nighttime Orgies (the Tsarist Miracle-Worker)” and “The Heroic Feat of the Don Cossack Kuzma Firsovich Kriuchkov.” In *Entertaining Tsarist Russia*. 379-82, 385-90.

***Reflection due December 4, 5pm

*****Final Exam December 9 (Monday), 3pm-5pm**