

Russian history from a global perspective

The aim of the course is to look at central issues of Russian and Soviet history with the help of the toolkit of global history approaches in an attempt to illuminate the comparative, transnational, and global entanglements of Russian and Soviet history. Without subscribing to one or another version of global history the authors of this course take the main thrust of the global history, i.e. transcendence of the restrictive national history narrative. This optics can lead to re-examination of metanarratives of Russian and Soviet history (backwardness and modernization, special path and divergence from European modernity) and new problematization of different aspects of Russian and Soviet history (semi-peripheral economics, Russian peculiar political pathways, Russia-West relations and symbolic geography, empire and politics of difference in the Russian Empire, state and society in Russian history, violence etc.). The course also aims at discussion of methodological problems of global history's positionality: is a question that illuminates peculiarity to be prioritized, or do we aim at looking for similarities more; how can we interpret moments of entanglements and synchronicity? The course also gives a possibility to interpellate the methodological orientation of global history: shall a historian focus on circulation of ideas and knowledge and transfers of political forms? Shall an attempt be made to chart the global cultural and social history without reducing it to diffusion or emulation? Finally, the course tackles the question of temporalities of Russian and Soviet history, the question of modernity, backwardness and combined underdevelopment, the space of the region of Eastern Europe and Eurasia and of the Russian Empire-Soviet Union as layered with different temporalities.

Prerequisites: a course in historiography and methods of historical research

Requirements:

Class attendance, students are required to read the required texts and be prepared to summarize the main arguments and conclusions as well as explicate the methodology and sources of the author.

Exam: written assignment, review of a monograph that should include the analysis of the historiographic context, the historiographic tradition (for instance, intellectual history, social history, post-colonial studies) in which the text is written, the main arguments and sources of the book. The choice of a monograph is to be discussed with the instructor. Ideally, the monograph should be from the list of historiographic works worked upon for the MA dissertation. The neat overlap will hardly be possible for all project. Family resemblance logic may be used instead.

1. Introduction. Meta-narratives of Russian history. Russian and European history: Sonderweg or belated modernization? Linear or ruptured history: the question of 1917. The elusive object of Russian history: the challenge of empire and the normalization of Russian history with the help of the category of empire.

2. Current debates and disputed genealogies of global history. Is global history an academic fashion or a research innovation? Must Global history be comprehensive and universalist in terms of chronology and geographic coverage? Is global history only about connections and comparisons? Situating Global history in the modern historiography: comparative history, transnational history, World-System analysis, post-colonial critique, multiple modernities. Epistemologies of Global history: universalism or nativism? Normative issues of Global history: Eurocentrism debated.

Required reading:

Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016): 37-114, 162-204.

Additionally: Alexander Semyonov, “‘GLOBAL HISTORY IS MORE THAN THE HISTORY OF GLOBALIZATION’: INTERVIEW WITH SEBASTIAN CONRAD.” *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (January 2017): 23–44.

3. Ruptures and continuities across 1917 in changing meta-narratives of Russian history. How could the socialist revolution happen in 1917 in the backward Russian Empire? Debates on modernity before and after 1917. Historiographic schools of the Soviet history in the context of Cold war and post-Cold War period. Modernity school and reinterpretation of Russian history and early Soviet history. Rewriting of the Russian history after 1991.

Required reading:

Ronald Suny, “Socialism, Post-socialism and Appropriately Modern: Thinking About the History of the USSR,” in: Idem, *Red Flag Unfurled: History, Historians, and the Russian Revolution* (London and New York: Verso, 2017). The Russian translation is available: ‘Sotsializm, post-sotsializm i normativnaia modernost’: Razmyshlenniia ob istorii SSSR,” in *Ab Imperio*, 2 (2002), pp. 19-54,

3. Russia and the West in the epoch of the Enlightenment. Europe’s significant others in constitution of European boundaries. The gradient of civilization and orientalism. Modern temporality and space. Political and identitarian uses of symbolic boundaries.

Required reading:

Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of The Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1-49.

Combined with: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3-23.

It is also advisable to familiarize with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978).

4. Russia’s appropriation of the West. The Russian state in the European international system. The Petrine monarchy and the reinvention of empire in Russian history. *Translatio imperii* in the time of Peter the Great: Rome or Byzantium? Explaining the persistence of Russian autocracy and Russia’s divergence from the West. The European scenarios of Russian history.

Required reading:

Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*. Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3-78, vol. 2., 3-15.

5. Comparative history of Russia and Europe. The concept of law before the advent of liberal rule of law. The emergence of the modern state and ideologies of *Polizeistaat*. Police state in the temporal continuum of early and late modernity.

Required reading:

Raëff, Marc. “The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach.” *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 5 (1975): 1221–43.

Glebov, Sergei. “‘REGULIERTER POLIZEISTAAT’ AND ‘IASAK’: HEINRICH VON FICK’S SIBERIAN MEMORANDUM.” *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (January 2006): 221–37.

6. Russian economic history and the structure of Russian backwardness in historiography. Russian serfdom in comparative perspective. The question of reciprocal comparisons.

Required reading:

Alessandro STANZIANI, "INTRODUCTION TO THE FORUM 'Freedom, Labor, and Empires: Reciprocal Comparisons and Entanglements,'" *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (April 2014): 17–26.
Alessandro STANZIANI, "RUSSIAN SERFDOM: A REAPPRAISAL," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (April 2014): 71–99.

Additionally: Alfred Rieber, "The Sedimentary Society," in Edith Clowes, Samuel Kassow, James West, eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 343-366.

7. Russian construction of the West and responses to the challenge of the Petrine legacy. Peculiarities of Russian social and political thought. The question of hegemony and subalternity in Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet history. Entering into a dialogue with post-colonial studies.

Required reading:

GERASIMOV, Ilya, Sergey GLEBOV, and Marina MOGILNER. "THE POSTIMPERIAL MEETS THE POSTCOLONIAL: RUSSIAN HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE POSTCOLONIAL MOMENT." *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (April 2013): 97–135.

Additionally: Gary Hamburg, "Russian Political Thought," Dominic Lieven, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 116-144.

8. Russia and the West in the period of modernization and mass politics. The history of Russian populism. The history of liberalism and illiberal modernity. The shifting and contested meanings of modernity in fin-de-siècle Russia.

Required reading:

Laura Engelstein, "Morality and the Wooden Spoon: Russian Doctors View Syphilis, Social Class, and Sexual Behavior, 1890-1905." *Representations*, no. 14 (1986): 169–208.
doi:10.2307/2928439.

9. Empire and modernity. Production of knowledge in an imperial situation. Epistemic or paradigmatic shifts in the production of knowledge.

Required reading:

Marina Mogilner, "Russian Physical Anthropology of the Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Centuries: Imperial Race, Colonial Other, Degenerate Types, and the Russian Racial Body," Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov, eds., *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2009),

Additionally: Marina Mogilner, *HOMO IMPERII: A HISTORY OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN RUSSIA*, Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology. (LINCOLN, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS, 2013).

10. Social change and mass politics in late imperial Russia. Class, nationality and plebian modernity. Hegemonic discourse and social practices. Historical agency and subalterns.

Required reading:

Ilya Gerasimov, *Plebeian Modernity: Practices of Self-Organization and Paradoxes of Illegality in Late Imperial Russian Cities, 1905–1917* (University of Rochester Press, forthcoming 2018), introduction, chapter 1.