Russian history from a global perspective
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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 (15-20 pages, 27000-36000 characters), 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.


Required reading:


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5. 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.

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

6. 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:

Revolutions and counter-revolutions, continuum of violence, the 1917 as a global event.

*Obligatory:*

*Supplementary:*

A debate over the concept of modernity.

Obligatory:

Supplementary:

Cultural, social and political comparisons between the USSR and Germany in 1930s.


10. Modern personality cults: the “Soviet” case in context.

Obligatory:

Supplementary:

11. Making sense of 1917 after 100

Obligatory:


Supplementary:
