

PT 304 USSR: a postcolonial assessment

Fall 2022, Tue/Thu 9:00-10:30

Seminar Leader: Ewa Atanassow

Email: e.atanassow@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: after class, or by appointment

Why do post-colonial studies typically leave the Soviet Union out of their remit? Was the USSR the first multi-national democratic state or rather a full-fledged modern empire? And how does this matter today? In a search for answers, in this course we'll survey the theory and history of the USSR, by paying close attention to its treatment of individual rights and of composite peoples, with a special focus on the Jewish question and the case of Ukraine.

Our approach will be two-pronged: analytical and historical. We'll begin by probing the social and political theory of revolutionary Marxism, which supplied the ideological foundation of the USSR, and note its contested reception by the main architects of the Soviet regime. We will then examine its application to various dimensions – economic, institutional, cultural and political – of Soviet life. On our way, we'll encounter an array of personages: thinkers and artists, political leaders and dissidents, victims and survivors. Grappling with their life and work, we'll interrogate their self-understanding and how they envisioned the social and political experiment that was the USSR.

Along with considering alternative outlooks on the Soviet experiment, and gaining familiarity with key moments and figures in the history of the USSR, in this course we will learn how to develop a scholarly project by drawing on diverse disciplinary approaches and acquiring an array of research skills.

Required Texts

Course Reader

Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows* (Vintage Classics, 2011), ISBN 009951916X

Library and Book Purchase Policies

Students are expected to have at their disposal a hard copy of all required texts. Copies of the required books and additional readings are available on reserve at the library.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Careful preparation, regular attendance and active participation are essential to the success of this course. Absences beyond two will affect the seminar grade. Please note: arriving late or leaving in the middle of a session will count as half an absence.

Writing

Reflection paper and presentation: over the course of the semester, students will take turns to reflect on the proceedings of each week, and present these reflections at the beginning of the following week. The reflection paper should offer a concise (up to 1000-word) account of the week's reading and discussions that recapitulates its main themes and probes deeper one key issue before articulating questions for further discussion. The reflection papers should be posted on google classroom by midnight on Mondays.

Project Proposal and Final Essay: at the end of the semester students will write a substantial final essay of up to 3500 words on one aspect of the course material. To identify the final essay topic students are expected to conduct individual research throughout the term and submit (by Sunday, December 4) a 500-word proposal for the final essay topic, including bibliography, to be discussed with the instructor. The deadline for the final essay is December 16, 2021.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on seminar participation (30%); reflection paper and presentation (25%); a project proposal (15%) and final essay (30%).

Late Submission and Academic Integrity

Late papers will be downgraded in light of the policy outlined in the Student Handbook. Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Deadlines at a glance

The schedule for reflection papers will be set up by Friday, September 2

Proposal for final essay due Sunday, December 4

Final Essay deadline: Friday, December 16

Schedule

semester week	Tuesday session 9-10:30	Thursday session 9-10:30	Screenings (optional)
1. Aug 29-Sep 2	Introductory	Fitzpatrick Moore	

2. Sep 5-9	Karl Marx, On the Jewish Question	Marx, OJQ	
3. Sep 12-16	Marx/Engels Communist Manifesto	NO CLASS	Danton
4. Sep 19-23	Maxim Gorki, Untimely Thoughts	Lenin/Trotsky	Battleship Potemkin
5. Sep 26 -30	Tsvetaeva	<i>Komissar</i>	Komissar
6. Oct 3-7	New Economic Policy Bukharin	Communist International	12 chairs
7. Oct 10-14	Lenin on the national question	Stalin on the national question	Dovzhenko <i>Earth</i>
8. Oct 17-21	Passportizatsia Maiakovski	Korenizatsia	Mr. Jones
Oct 24-28	FALL BREAK		
9. Oct 31- Nov 4	Terror: famine	Terror: camps Shalamov	Widow of the Revolution (doc)
10. Nov 7-11	Terror: purges Larina	Akhmatova, Requiem /Mandelstam event/	Eisenstein <i>Ivan the terrible</i>
11. Nov 14-18	The Great Patriotic War	Grossman, <i>Everything Flows</i>	<i>The Death of Stalin</i>
12. Nov 21-25	<i>Everything Flows</i>	<i>Everything Flows</i>	Abuladze, <i>Repentance</i>
13. Nov 28-Dec 2	Project session	Konstanty Gebert special event	Conversations with Gorbachev (doc)
14. Dec 5-9	Wrap up	NO CLASS	
15. Dec 12-16	Final Essay due: Friday, 16 December, 23:59		