

Humanities Seminars Program

MAKING SENSE OF SOVIET HISTORY

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Humanities Seminars/Dorothy Rubel Room

Professor Doug Weiner

August 2016

626-8427 dweiner@email.arizona.edu

This course is designed to help us to understand the nature of the “Bolshevik Revolution” and the system created in its aftermath. Many scholars and commentators have already offered a bewildering array of explanations, and my own will hardly be the last word. However, I will try to integrate the best of past thinking with currently available evidence and scholarship to provide a picture of Soviet history that makes the most sense at this juncture.

Among the big questions we will explore are:

- the causes and context of the Bolshevik seizure of power
- the relationship of Marxism to Bolshevik ideology and practice (e.g., What did the Bolsheviks mean by the “dictatorship of the proletariat?”)
- how and why the Bolshevik/Soviet political system evolved in the way in which it did?
- how could a murderous tyrant such as Stalin have been so successful in gaining and retaining power?
- how and why the Soviet economy evolved in the way in which it did, and how can we understand it in depth?
- to what extent did Khrushchev’s thaw really change the USSR?
- how can we account for the rise of Gorbachev and for the fall of the Soviet system?

TEXTS:

- Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1999)
- Service, Robert *A History of Modern Russia*. (Harvard Univ. Press, 2009)

- Articles will be posted by Kerstin Miller on a special Box@UA site for this course. After they are posted, Kerstin will share the link to this site with you.
- Primary documents and articles are also on Seventeen Moments in Soviet History, 1917-1991: <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/>

August 3

1917-1921: The Bolsheviks' first years

Service: xxi-122

Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (excerpt)

Peter Holquist, "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism?

Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-1921," *Kritika* 4 no 3 (Summer 2003): 627-52

Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Civil War as a Formative Experience," A. Gleason et al., eds. *Bolshevik Culture*, (Bloomington, 1985), 57-76

August 10

NEP, Collectivization, the First Five-Year Plan and the Great Terror (1921 – 1940)

Service: 123-253

S.. Fitzpatrick, "Collectivization," in her *Stalin's Peasants* (Oxford, 1994) 48-79

S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 1-227

August 17

WW II, last years of Stalin, and de-Stalinization

Service: 254-375

Francine Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 30-43

John Barber and Mark Harrison, "Patriotic War," *Camb. Hist. of Russia*, vol. 3 (2006) 217-42

Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, "Stalin and his Circle," *Camb. Hist. of Russia*, vol. 3 (2006) 243-67

Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, NY: Basic Books, 2012, Chap. 11, "Stalinist Anti-Semitism," 339-377.

August 24

From "stabilization" to reform to collapse (1965-1991)

Service: 376-555

Z. Brzezinski, Interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*

Paul Gregory, *Lenin's Brain and Other Tales from the Secret Soviet Archives* (Stanford: Hoover Inst.

Press,2008), "Invading Afghanistan," 119-134, 153.