

Cultural Construction of the Soviet Empire

HIST 354, Spring 2018

Tues/Thurs 1:40-3:00, Psych 108

[<http://blogs.reed.edu/hist354-spring2018/>]

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Office Hours: Mon/Weds 3:00-4:30

Course Description

This course explores the methods used by the Soviet government to put culture to work as a soft-power mechanism for legitimizing and strengthening its power across the 15 republics of the Soviet Union. From Ukraine and Belarus in the West to the Central Asian territories in the East, the Soviet state sought to employ the rhetoric of national liberation and advancement to mark its difference from Imperial Russia, gain the loyalty of the many subject peoples it inherited from the previous regime, and bring them into a social and cultural formation that matched officials' distinctly European vision of "modernity." In the first half of the semester, we will investigate the development of Soviet nationalities policy, including the often-contentious decisions about how to define a "nation" and what forms of "national" expression to allow. Along the way, we will consider issues of territorialization, modernization, and performance of selfhood. In the second half, we will focus on specific aspects of culture, including literature and theater, music, architecture, and cuisine, and explore efforts to bring these cultural products into conformity with the Stalinist formula, "national in form, socialist in content." Through close engagement with primary and secondary sources, we will discover the Soviet state's reasons for seeking to transform the cultures of its national minorities and its chosen methods for doing so. Further, we will uncover some of the ways in which members of those minorities resisted or repurposed Soviet nationalities policy to serve their own ends.

Course Requirements

Attendance: You are required to attend all meetings of this conference, and do so on time. Our primary method of knowledge creation is discussion, so we must all commit to learning together as a classroom community. I will take attendance at the start of each conference. You get three absences for free, no questions asked, after which further absences will negatively affect your grade. If you have already accumulated three absences and must miss class again due to an extraordinary circumstance, please contact me in a timely manner to discuss your situation.

Participation: Not only do you have to show up, you have to talk! And that means you have to do the reading, listening, and viewing. Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. Bring those materials with you, along with your notes. Even more important, bring your thoughts, ideas, and questions, and be prepared to share them with your colleagues. If you feel anxious about speaking in front of a group, please contact me during the first week so we can work out an individual plan for your success. All comments must be respectful, constructive, and to the point. Ad hominem attacks and rambling digressions have no place in my classroom.

Blog Posts: Beginning in Week 2, you will work together to create a blog, which will help shape our intellectual journey. You will sign up for TWO days on which you will write a **lead blog post** and initiate our classroom discussion. Your post should be roughly one page in length and respond thoughtfully and substantively to the assigned materials. In addition, your post should

include at least one discussion question. Alongside your lead posts, you must write **TWELVE comments** responding to your colleagues' lead posts over the course of the semester. (You are welcome to write more, but 12 is the minimum.) All posts are due by 10pm the night before class (so I have time to read them and think about them before we meet). This is your blog, and it will have a big impact on the direction we take in our classroom discussions! Please be adventurous, have fun, and keep it respectful!

Midterm Project: For your midterm project, you will take on the role of a Soviet cultural official making a report to the Central Committee on a particular aspect of Soviet culture. You may choose an object (such as a traditional craft or item of clothing), a genre (such as literature or music), an institution (such as a school or union), or a policy. Your task is to discuss the origins of this cultural product or policy, explain how it works, and make an argument for how it strengthens Soviet power. You will create a **page on our class blog**, where you are welcome to incorporate images, audio, and video alongside text, and you will give a **15-minute presentation** in class to your colleagues, who will ask you follow-up questions in their role as members of the Central Committee. This is a fairly flexible assignment, so you are welcome to be creative!

Final Paper: For your final, you will write a **3000-word**, independently researched paper on a topic of your choice related to the theme of this class. We will go over requirements for the papers in conference. We will also visit the Library to acquaint ourselves with available resources and research methods and devote a day of class to rough draft peer critiques. This assignment has three components:

- 1) A **proposal** (thesis statement, abstract, annotated bibliography), due Week 11
- 2) A **rough draft**, due Week 13
- 3) A **final draft**, due at the end of the semester

You **must** meet with me twice while working on this project. In our first meeting, we'll discuss your topic, potential sources, and writing strategies. In our second meeting, we'll discuss your proposal. We will work on your rough drafts together during our peer critique day in class. Don't skip these meetings! They enable me ensure you're on the path to success, and prevent you from having to do extra, corrective work. If you would like to meet more often, you are always welcome at office hours, or you can make a separate appointment with me.

If you would like help with your writing, I encourage you to consult the Writing Center (<http://www.reed.edu/writing/>)

Here's my policy on **plagiarism**, comrades: Don't do it! Plagiarism is a very serious offence, which can destroy your academic career and professional prospects. Plagiarism is **directly opposed to the Honor Principle**, and if you plagiarize, **you will automatically fail my class**. Please visit the Registrar's page on Academic Integrity: https://www.reed.edu/registrar/academic_integrity/campus_resources.html , and ask me ahead of time if you have any questions!

Course Policies

Office Hours: I welcome you to stop in to discuss our class! I'll be in my office Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00-4:30, unless otherwise noted. If you know you want to come see me, you can make an appointment in advance; otherwise, just drop in. If you have a conflict with my regular office hours, please email or speak to me to make an appointment for a different time.

Email: Please feel free to email me any time with questions about the class or to schedule an appointment for office hours. I will respond within 24 hours. You must SIGN your email with your name. I won't write back if I can't figure out who you are. **You are also responsible for checking your Reed email at least once per day.** Email is my only way to communicate with you outside of class and office hours, and I need to be able to reach you.

Technology: You may bring computers or tablets to class, for taking notes and viewing pdfs. If you mess around online instead of paying attention, you are failing yourself, which is not my responsibility to correct. However, if you use your device to distract your colleagues, I will make you to put it away for the rest of class. You may not wear headphones during class.

Cell Phones: Turn them off or set them to vibrate. Please don't take a call unless it's an emergency. If you must do so, leave the room quickly and quietly. **You may not use your cell phone for course work.**

Disability Accommodations: Reed College is committed to providing accommodations to students with physical, learning, and psychological disabilities. While Reed offers services to assist students with disabilities, students are responsible for contacting the disabilities office with their request(s) and providing the necessary documentation in a timely manner. It's your responsibility to inform me of your approved accommodations, and it's my responsibility to provide them for you. Please help me help you by letting me know about any documented disabilities as early as possible in the semester. For more information about how to obtain documentation, please contact Disability Support Services: 503-517-7921, disability-services@reed.edu, and http://www.reed.edu/disability_services/

Notice of Nondiscrimination:

Reed College does not discriminate on the basis of protected classes including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, military/veteran status, genetic information, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, status as a parent, family relationship, or on the basis of any other category protected by law. Reed is committed to creating an environment in which every student feels safe and empowered to learn, and I, too, am strongly committed to this goal. That doesn't mean we won't argue with each other in this class, sometimes intensely. We will do so often! But we will do so respectfully. To ensure that respect, I reserve the right to intervene as I deem necessary, while doing my utmost to simultaneously safeguard your right to free speech. If something happens in class that upsets you or makes you feel unsafe, *please* come talk to me about it, or if you prefer, leave an anonymous note in my mailbox on the 3rd floor of Eliot. You can find Reed's dissent policy here: https://www.reed.edu/academic/gbook/comm_pol/dissent.html

Course Materials

The following books are required for HIST 354 and are available for purchase or rental at Reed College Bookstore. You are welcome to get your books elsewhere, but make sure you have the **correct edition**. Shorter readings and visual, video, and audio materials are available to you via e-reserves (accessible on Moodle) or the blog. Always bring material under discussion to class:

Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Harvard University Press, 2005)

Mayhill Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine* (University of Toronto Press, 2017)

- Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2003)
- Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin* (Overlook Press, 2007)
- Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010)
- Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2001)
- Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland: An Illustrated History, 1928-1996* (University of California Press, 1998)

Course Schedule

Week 1

Jan 23: No class!

Jan 25: Introduction

What is an empire? What is a nation? Which one was the Soviet Union?
 What is culture? Why would it matter to an imperial power?

Week 2: The Imperial Legacy and Soviet Nationalities Policy

Jan 30:

Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," *A State of Nations*, pp. 23-66

Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," *A State of Nations*, pp. 67-90

Feb 1:

Francine Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-In-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937 and 1939 Censuses," *Slavic Review* 56:2 (Summer 1997), pp. 251-278

Vladimir Lenin, "Lenin on the National Question (Speech at the All-Russian Navy Congress)" (web)

Joseph Stalin, "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East" (web)

Week 3: Reconceptualizing the Western Borderlands

Feb 6:

Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*, Introduction, chapters 1-2

Feb 8:

Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*, chapters 3-5

Week 4: Non-Geographic Nationalities: Jews and Gypsies

Feb 13:

Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's Forgotten Zion: Birobidzhan and the Making of a Soviet Jewish Homeland*, pp.1-71, 82-85

Feb 15:

Brigid O’Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union*, chapter 5 and Epilogue

Week 5: Central Asia and Gender

Feb 20:

Doug Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, chapters 1-2
Doug Northrop, “Envisioning Empire: Veils and Visual Revolution in Soviet Central Asia,” *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, pp. 162-167

Feb 22:

Doug Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, chapters 4-5

Week 6: Central Asia and Modernization

Feb 27:

Adeeb Khalid, “Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,” *A State of Nations*, pp. 145-162

Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism*, chapters 4 and 6

“Jahon Obidova,” *Russia’s People of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present*, pp. 309-315

Mar 1:

Matt Payne, “The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan,” *A State of Nations*, pp. 223-252

Adrienne Edgar, “Portrait of Lenin: Carpets and National Culture in Soviet Turkmenistan,” *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, pp. 181-184 and Image 36.1

Film: *Turksib* (available as streaming video on Moodle)

Midterm Presentations

Week 7:

Mar 6: **Midterm Presentations**

Mar 8: **Midterm Presentations**

SPRING BREAK!

Week 8:

Mar 20: **Library Day**

Mar 22: **Human Consequences**

Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin*, Introduction, Prologue, chapters 1-9

Week 9:

Mar 27:

Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin*, chapters 14-18

Mar 29: Theater

Mayhill Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine*, chapters 1-3

Week 10:

***Proposals due 5pm, Sunday, April 2!**

Apr 3:

Mayhill Fowler, *Beau Monde on Empire's Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine*, chapters 4-5

Il'ya Ilf and Evgenii Petrov, *The Little Golden Calf*, chapters 1-2

Apr 5: Music

Marina Frolova-Walker, "'National in Form, Socialist in Content': Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51:2 (Summer 1998), 331-371

Soviet National Music Playlist (YouTube link on blog)

Week 11:

Apr 10:

Kiril Tomoff, "Uzbek Music's Separate Path: Interpreting 'Anticosmopolitanism' in Stalinist Central Asia, 1949-1952," *The Russian Review*, 63:2 (Apr 2004), 212-24

Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*, chapter 7

Apr 12: Architecture

*Be sure to study the Gallery of Photographs in the center of this book!

Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966*, chapters 2, 3, 6

Week 12:

Apr 17:

*Be sure to study the Gallery of Photographs in the center of this book!

Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966*, chapters 7, 8

***Rough Drafts due 5pm, Wednesday Apr 18!**

Apr 19: Rough Draft Peer Critique Day

Week 13: Cuisine

Apr 24:

Eric Scott, "Edible Ethnicity: How Georgian Cuisine Conquered the Soviet Table," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13: 4 (Fall 2012), 831-858

Anya von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking*, prologue and chapter 1

Apr 26:

Anya von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking*, chapters 2 and 3

*Special guest: Bonnie Frumkin Morales, Chef at Kachka, Portland's premiere Russian restaurant

*****Final Paper due 10pm, Tuesday, May 8!*****

Good luck!!!