EMORY UNIVERSITY
Dept. of History

HISTORY 320W-001: THE SOVIET UNION

Spring 2018
Professor Matthew Payne

MWF: 10:00-10:50 AM
Bowden Hall TBD

119 Bowden Hall
email: mpayn01@emory.edu
Office Hrs: Weds. 1:00-2:30
COURSE PURPOSE

This course will explore the birth, life, and death of the Soviet Union. Topics such as the Revolution, NEP, Stalinism, The Great Patriotic War, the Cold War, Khrushchev's Thaw, Brezhnev's "Stagnation," Perestroika, and the collapse of the Soviet Union will be examined through a variety of sources and methodologies. As a broad overview, the course cannot, and will not dwell on particular eras and personalities, but it will put those eras and personalities in context. The course is a 4-credit, writing intensive course and meets the College HSC and post-freshman writing GERs.

Particulars: Course requirements include weekly learn-link responses, the writing of a twelve-page research paper, and the completion of a final exam. Students may chose from two options in taking this exam (an oral exam or written essay exam). Paper topics will be chosen by students by the submission of a proposal and consultations with me at the mid-point of the semester.
Requirements and Grading

- **Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class lectures and discussions. Everyone will do all the required readings and assignments each week and students will be expected to discuss the weekly themes and topics cogently. Attendance will be taken and unexcused absences will affect a student’s participation grade. The participation grade is **15%** of the final grade.

- **Discussion Responses:** One-to-two page post to Canvas that answer one of several specific questions (listed on syllabus) dealing with assigned readings will be required weekly. Proper grammar and style are required as well as historical analysis—not simply summation. Students may substitute one of the available films for a discussion question up to three times per semester (these will be on reserve at the media library). All responses should be posted by 9:00 pm on the evening prior to discussion (normally Thursday night unless otherwise noted in the syllabus). Failure to post on time will lead to a failing grade on the assignment. The discussion responses make up **20%** of the final grade.

- **Final Exam:** A fifteen-minute oral examination on the readings, lectures, and class discussions at a pre-arranged time during finals week (5/3-4, 5/7-9). Key words and concepts will be written on cards which the student will draw; she will be expected to identify and discuss them readily and coherently. This is the classical Russian examination style and is very efficient at determining knowledge in a given subject (i.e., to do well in this test you must have done the work required for this course). The final oral exam will comprise **25%** of the final grade.

- **Final Research Paper:** A twelve-to-sixteen page term paper on a topic of the student's choice within the chronological and topical limits of this class is due Monday, 4/30. Each week I will require students to complete a weekly research assignment—very simple research-oriented tasks that aid the student in discovering an exciting topic—which will be due on Friday evenings via Canvas. I will give weekly feedback on how the research is progressing. Mid-way into the semester, each student will submit a short paper proposal consisting of a thesis statement and bibliography. I will in turn consult personally with each student on the feasibility of their topic. Draft papers will be read and returned with feedback. Completed papers will be turned in at the end of the last class period. The research paper will comprise **40%** of the final grade.
Course Policies

- **Attendance**: Class attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will be detrimental to the class participation grade. The lectures, in particular, represent a synthesis of material from a broad array of historical approaches and treat many issues in a very different manner than the texts.

- **Classroom Participation**: Discussion is also important, and your willingness to contribute to discussion class will be reflected in your participation grade. Successful discussion will depend on reading the texts as they provide reinforcement and counterpoints to many of the lectures, while providing much more detailed information on subjects that will not be treated in depth in the lectures.

- **Extensions**: Students must complete course work on time or arrange, before the assignment is due, an extension with the instructor. Late assignments will be marked down.

- **Grading**: The principles of grading in this class are succinct and clear.
  - In those assignments that are brief (discussion responses, research assignments, pop quizzes [should that become necessary due to a lack of reading the texts!]), grades will be a check (√) or a check minus (√-). The final mark on this particular portion of your grade will simply be a cumulating of all checks versus all possible checks (so, if you get a check on 12 of 13 discussion responses, you would receive a 92% on your discussion grade).
  - On more substantial assignments such as exams or the final paper, there are various criteria which are examined.
    - In general, however, if you have mastered the material, than you can expect a B.
    - If you have mastered the material and can present an independent analysis of it (history is an interpretive discipline, not the regurgitation of names and dates!), than you will receive an A.
    - C is the mark for those who have not mastered the material.
    - D is reserved for those who clearly do not understand the material at all.
    - F is an option, but only to those students who willfully refuse to do the work or make an attempt to understand the subject.

- **General Email policy**: Prof. Payne reviews email daily during the work week but not necessarily more than once daily. Please be patient, especially with email communications. I’m not Google!

- **Other Resources**:
  - **Emory Writing Center**: The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. It is a great place to bring any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. Writing Center tutors take
a discussion- and workshop-based approach that enables writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes. Tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they will not proofread for you. Instead, they will discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work. The Writing Center is located in Callaway N-212. Visit writingcenter.emory.edu for more information and to make appointments.

- **Honor Code:** As in all Emory classes, the strictures of the honor code apply. Infractions of the honor code, especially cheating and plagiarism will be handled with the greatest possible severity. All work in the class should be your own and plagiarism from the web (including cutting and pasting of other’s text, but also failure to cite others’ arguments), use of others’ papers, etc., will lead to an honor council referral. For an explanation of what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the History Department’s [How To Write A Good History Paper](http://example.com) page or the Woodruff Library’s [Plagiarism](http://example.com) page.

- **Extra-credit:** From time to time there opportunities for learning “outside the classroom.” Emory has such a diversity of intellectually stimulating opportunities that it is sometimes difficult for students to focus on those that will greatly enhance their mastery of a particular subject. It is the policy of this class to identify and support non-classroom learning experiences and to this end, extra-credit will be granted to students attending public lectures, films, brown-bag discussions, workshops, etc., relating to the class topic. Usually with the submission of a short review of the event, those students attending previously identified extra-credit events will add one-point to their participation grade (given the fact there will be many such opportunities, this adds up). A number of events will soon be announced, especially with through the auspices of the Russian and Eastern European Studies Center very germane to this class. I will inform students of such opportunities in a timely manner and assure students of a robust quantity to attend.
Textbooks:

Readings:

All readings will be available at the Woodruff Library on reserve. The readings marked “(on reserve)” are available on e-reserve and can be accessed by going to the electronic version of this syllabus at our Blackboard site and posted to electronic reserve.
Week 1: Introduction


Weds. (1/17): Lecture—*The Russian Inheritance* (Pt. 1)
Fri. (1/19): Lecture—*The Russian Inheritance* (Pt. 2)
Week 2: Year Zero—1917

FILM: *October, 1917* (Eisenstein, 1927) or *Dr. Zhivago* (Lean, 1965)

Mon. (1/22): Lecture—*1917, The Revolutionary Year*

Weds. (1/24):
- Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, “Documents”
- Order No. 1, pp. 32-35.
- Tsereteli and Lenin’s Exchange of Words During the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers’ Deputies, June 3-4, 1917, pp. 41-43.

Fri. (1/26):
- Aleksandr Blok, *The Twelve*.

**Discussion Questions:**
1. What was “dual power?” Why did the Petrograd Soviet’s Order No. 1 fundamentally undercut the Provisional government’s authority? How did class division structure the political conflict of *demokratiya* versus the *burzhui*? Astute observers considered that this standoff would result in either a right-wing or left-wing *coup d’état*. Do you agree?

2. How did Lenin’s arrival in Petrograd radicalize the Russian Revolution? How did the slogans “All Power to the Soviets!” and “Bread, Peace and Land!” prove his tactical brilliance? Why did he and other socialists, such as the Mensheviks, break over support of the government?

3. How did the spirit of class war animate Blok’s *The Twelve*? Why does he end the poem with the figure of Christ leading the Red Guards? Remember, this image mortally offended not only anti-Soviet Russians but Bolsheviks as well. Why does he set a failed love story within a winter storm at the heart of this poem?

**Research Assignment:**
Please identify three articles in the *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (located on the second floor research shelves) that discuss topics of interest to you in the Soviet period. Submit a short summary of whether you believe this is a workable topic for you. The form of your submission should be the citation and then one or two sentences on the topics feasibility. In other words, “Stalin: The subject is fascinating to me but seeing the vast amount of scholarly literature on the topic, I think I need to narrow down the topic. His relationship with his wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva seems very interesting.”
**Week 3: War Communism**

**FILM:** *Chapaev* (Georgi Vasiliev & Sergei Vasiliev, 1934) or *Admiral* (Kravchuk, 2008)

**Mon. (1/29): Lecture—*The Civil War and War Communism***


**Weds. (1/31):**

Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, “Documents”
- The Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, pp. 67-73.
- Iulii Martov’s Letter to A. N. Stein, June 16, 1918, pp. 77-82.
- Lenin’s Letter to V. V. Kuraev, E. B. Bosh, and A. E. Minkin, August 11, 1918, pp. 82-83.

**Fri. (2/2):**


**Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Lenin’s decision to rule as a single-party dictatorship precipitate the Civil War? How did the Red Terror flow from that decision? How did the Bolsheviks’ methods of rule (the Cheka, the “food dictatorship”, the Red Army) undercut their promises enunciated in the government’s first decrees?

2. How did those who fought for and established Communist rule, the Red Army soldiers, understand Soviet power? How does Babel’s Matthew Pavlichenko, for example, understand the Red cause—on an ideological plane? Clearly, class hatred was built into the ideology of Communism, but how in practice was the class hatred felt and acted upon?

3. Babel’s narrator is loosely based on his own experiences with Budyonnyi’s Red Cavalry in the Russo-Polish War. What is he, a Jewish intellectual, doing with a Cossack army? What is it that he longs to accomplish but cannot bring himself to do? Think of “My First Goose,” “The Death of Dolgushov,” “After the Battle” and “The Rabbi’s Son”: how do these stories set up the central personal conflict of the tales and how does this relate to the politics of the Civil War? Why is “Argamak” the key story?

**Research Assignment:**

Using Euclid, identify three historical monographs that represent a good, scholarly resource for studying your topic of interest. A monograph is a scholarly, peer-reviewed book (usually put out by a major university press) that focuses on one subject rather than trying to create an overview of a subject, such as a textbook. Thus, Ron Suny’s *The Soviet Experiment* would not be appropriate (it’s a textbook) but his *The Revenge of the Past* would be an excellent choice. Similarly, a formal discussion of Mandelstam’s poetry would be inappropriate but a study of his poetry in the context of his life and times would be on the mark. Memoirs, letters, etc., as primary sources, would also not apply. Please physically examine the monograph by going to Woodruff stacks and write up your observations of each based on a quick skim. For example, “Montefiore’s, *The Young Stalin*: A very detailed but somewhat popular biography—this book really only covers 1917 and I’ll have to supplement it with Tucker’s much more extensive *Stalin as Revolutionary* to study Stalin’s emergence as supreme leader.” Book reviews on J-STOR could help your selection process.
Week 4: The New Economic Policy

FILM: *Kino Eye* (Vertov, 1924)


Wed. (2/7):
Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, “Documents”
Lev Kopelev, from *To Be Preserved Forever*, pp. 141-147.

Fri. (2/9):

Discussion Questions:
1. Consider the stories in Mikhail Zoshchenko’s *Nervous People*. What is the urban, post civil-war experience for the run-of-the-mill Soviet citizen? Obviously, as a satirist, Zoshchenko has a humorous take on Soviet reality. Is this appropriate? Is it effective? Reference your answers to particular stories; for instance, “The Lady Aristocrat” and “The Tsar’s Boots” obviously references class, “Nervous People” and “A Summer Breather” the perils of collectivism, and “The Bathhouse” the new economy.
2. The Soviet Union is often considered simply as a Soviet Empire. If this is true, as Martin points out, it was an odd empire. What were the policies of *korenizatsiia* (nativization) so assiduously pursued by Lenin and Stalin in the 1920s? Why was “great Russian chauvinism” such a danger? Were these policies nationalist in intent? In effect?
3. Reading the letters of Lenin, Bukharin and Dzerzhinsky, as well as the memoirs of Kopelev do you find any consensus in the party about where the revolution should go? Was the NEP, politically, simply a tactical retreat or an admission of defeat? Could Bolsheviks preserve class peace with the peasantry, revive markets and still attack the “bourgeoisie.”?

Research Assignment:
Using the database function of Euclid, use three data bases to search for scholarly articles appropriate for your topic. The three should be the American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES), JSTOR, and Historical Abstracts. Cull three good articles from each and examine them.
For each data base give me a sentence or two on its advantages and disadvantages for your research agenda. Identify a useful database on your own. (HINT: Google would be a bad choice. On the other hand Google Scholar would be quite appropriate.)
Week 5: The Stalin Revolution

FILM: Zemlya/Earth (Dovzhenko, 1930)

Mon. (2/12): Lecture—Stalin’s Revolution From Above

Wed. (2/14):

Fri. (2/16):
   John Scott, Behind the Urals, ch. 2 (“A Day in Magnitogorsk”), pp. 9-51.

Discussion Questions:
1. With reference to Lynne Viola’s Unknown Gulag, what was the Soviet kulak? Why were they “liquidated as a class”? How did “dekulakization” structure collectivization as a violent assault on the peasantry? Many scholars argue that the origins of the Stalinist terror state can be found in its attack on the kulaks, do you agree?
2. With reference to Scott’s Behind the Urals, what were the conditions at Magnitogorsk in the winter of 1933? How was the housing, food, and clothing situation? What difficulties faced by the builders of Magnitogorsk during the First Five-Year Plan? How did they overcome these problems?
3. What was the tone Stalin communicated to his top leadership about the “Great Break,” i.e., his revolution from above? Was this tone communicated to the lower lever activists such as Kopelev? Do you believe that Kopelev was “Dizzy from Success” and, if so, who deserves ultimate responsibility for the 1932-1933 terror famine?

Research Assignment:
Identify three memoirs, diaries or other contemporaneous primary sources that would aid in your research project. List them and give a line each on how well they serve your research needs. Remember, in addition to the rare political memoirs (Khrushchev’s, Mikoyan’s) and the plethora of artists’ memoirs, there are numerous diary collections such as Terror and Intimacy and Fitzpatrick and Sleazkin’s Women in Revolution. The Yale Annals of Communism Series has excellent collections of documents with annotated commentary while the Cold War International History Project has translated many previously secret documents.
Week 6: The Terror State—Stalin’s Purges and Gulag

FILM: Burnt by The Sun (Mikhailov, Sony, 1994)

Mon. (2/19): Lecture—Cementing Totalitarianism; The Great Purges and the Gulag

Wed. (2/21):
Eugenii Ginzburg, Journey into the Whirlwind, chs. 1-29, pp. 1-174;

Fri. (2/23):
Stalin to the Secretaries of Obkoms, Kraikoms, and Central Committees of the National Communist Parties, August 3, 1937, pp. 243-244.
Iu. L’vova, “Is Pashchitskii Present?” pp. 244-245.

Discussion Questions:
1. Read carefully Bukharin’s last letter to Stalin. This note, written by one of his most effective critics, has been seen as indicative of why the “Old Bolsheviks” fell so easily and fit so well the roles Stalin had scripted for them. Why did Bukharin “love” Stalin and wish to confess to him? How did Bukharin understand the logic of the purges? Why was he “indispensable” to this logic? How does he accept his own coming execution on trumped up charges with equanimity?
2. With special reference to the arrest of Osip Mandelstam (an anti-Soviet dissident) and Eugenia Ginzburg, a committed communist, how was the experience of arrest and indictment felt by Soviet citizens? Clearly, Mandelstam had expected the knock on the door for a long time, while Ginzburg was confused and anxious about her long, drawn-out “purge” experience. What did the dissident and member of the elite have in common? How were their experiences different?
3. Ginzburg is, if nothing else, an extremely good observer of the various routines and irrationalities of the political police. While her experience cannot be said to be typical, she certainly gives us a sense of the range of experiences of the victims of the NKVD. Describe the typical journey from suspicion to GULag using Ginzburg as a source. Did it surprise you that some of the Communist elite maintained their faith in Stalin while others, such as Ginzburg, understood the nature of the system they had supported?

Research Assignment:
Prepare a working bibliography of primary sources, monographs and scholarly articles (as well as other resources) you have identified as critical for your research project. Please use Turabian’s Manual of Style format for this bibliography, NOT social science citation.
**Week 7: The Great Patriotic War**

**FILM:** *Come and See/Idi i Smotri* (Klimov, 1985)

Mon. (2/26): Lecture— **The Great Patriotic War**


Wed. (2/28):

Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, “Documents.”


Fri. (3/2):


**Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Stalin’s 1931 speech prove prescient for the coming World War? What was his purpose in allying with Hitler? How did he use the war as a pretext for further repression?
2. The battle of Stalingrad proved to be the turning point of the war. Describe Grossman’s observations on the battle, especially its enormous destruction and the realities of battle for the rank-and-file Soviet soldier. Why did the Red Army defeat the much more effective and mechanized *Wehrmacht*, at least according to Grossman?
3. Grossman was a Jew and his reporting of the Holocaust is some of the earliest in the war. What were his reactions to this slaughter? How did he become engulfed with grief? How was he disappointed by the regime following his searing reporting from Treblinka?

**Research Assignment:**

No assignments this week—work on your proposals.
Week 8: Late Stalinism and the Cold War

FILM: *Ivan the Terrible, Parts I & II* (Eisenstein, 1944, 1958)

Mon. (3/4): **No Class—FALL BREAK**


Wed. (3/6): Lecture—**Post-War Stalinism and the Cold War**


Fri. (3/8):

Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, pp. 1-83.

**PROPOSALS DUE**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. With reference to Zubkova, how did the victory over the Fascists lead to a strengthening of Stalinist repression? Why were artists and Jews targeted? What was Grossman’s reaction to these developments, especially the cultural xenophobia of the so-called Zhdanovshchina?

2. Using Leffler, explain how the war-time alliance broke down and hardened into the Cold War? How did personality, ideology and a world in post-war chaos combine to drive the Cold War?

**Research Assignment:**

Hand in your paper proposals. Each proposal should include a topic, a working thesis and a discussion of the methodology you plan to use and its appropriateness. For instance, a proposal on “Socialist Realism” might have a working thesis such as “the party’s inability to control even its own activists in literature, led it to develop a rigidly controlled system of cultural production which rewarded compliance.” Here you would most likely concentrate on cultural historical approaches but might choose to do a social history of the profession of dancer. Or you might propose “The Great Patriotic War from the Trenches” with a working thesis that “despite the ineptitude and cataclysmic failures of the Soviet military in the aftermath of the purges, the average Red Army soldier fought with such tenacity and courage that they threw back to Wehrmacht.” Here you might, again, write in a military historical approach or create a social history of the Red Army such as Merridale’s *Ivan’s War*. Include a detailed bibliography.
Week 9: The Thaw

FILM: *Mne dvadtsat’ let/I am Twenty* (Khutsiev, 1965)

Mon. (3/19): Lecture—Khrushchev’s Thaw


Wed. (3/21):

Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, “Documents.”


Yurchak, *Everything was Forever . . .*, chs. 1-2, pp. 1-76.

Fri. (3/23):

Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, pp. 152-234.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Khrushchev denounce the abuses of the Stalin period? Why was his formulation of a “cult of personality” effective in shielding the ruling party from guilt? What was the effect of such “de-Stalinization” on the Soviet population?

2. What was “late socialism”? Why, according to Yurchak, even in the midst of major reforms, did the Soviet Union appear to be an unchanging, unchangeable society? Why was it a society in which it seemed impossible to challenge the regime’s hegemony? What was Stalin’s “hegemony of form” that so froze political and cultural innovation at the very level of language?

3. How did Khrushchev’s gambles in foreign policy drive the world to the brink of nuclear apocalypse and why did his sincere desire to de-escalate nuclear confrontation fail—leading to both his fall and the United States’ aggressive military posture in southeast Asia?

Research Assignment:

Schedule meeting with Dr. Payne to discuss proposal.
Week 10: The Era of Stagnation and Detente

FILM: Solaris (Tarkovsky, 1972)

Mon. (3/26): Lecture—Brezhnev and the Era of Stagnation

Wed. (3/28):
Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, pp.1-57.

Fri. (3/30):
Leffler, For the Fate of Mankind, pp. 235-337.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why is the Brezhnev era (1964-1982) known as the “era of stagnation?” How did the suppression of cultural relaxation lead to a new pessimism and focus on materialism? Here you will want to focus on Millar and Bushnell.
2. Kotkin, unlike most scholars, sees the decline of the Soviet Union as a contingent event and not pre-ordained by some sort of “end of history.” Why does he believe the Soviet Union’s successes in the 1970s lulled it into a dangerous inaction in considering reforms? How did the world economy benefit the Soviet Union in the Brezhnev era and how did these benefits help cause long-term stagnation?
3. Why did détente fail to end the Cold War? Brezhnev and Carter both wanted to de-escalate an increasingly dangerous nuclear standoff and yet by 1980 relations between the USSR and the USA were at their lowest ebb since Stalin. Why? Was this due to an increasingly conservative and inflexible Soviet leadership or contingencies of events and both countries’ tendency to see minor Third World conflicts as ideological crusades? Does Leffler’s account support the idea that Brezhnev’s Soviet Union was an “evil empire” as famously argued by Ronald Reagan?

Research Assignment:
Please hand in a fairly detailed outline of your planned research paper. Remember to include an introduction and conclusion—as well as citations of all quotes and important arguments and data.
Week 11: The Quiet Revolution

FILM: *Ironiia sud'by, ili, s lëgkim paroi/The Irony of Fate or "Enjoy your bath*  
(Riazanov, 1975).

Mon. (4/2): Lecture—**Preconditions for Change**

Wed. (4/4):
- Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, Documents
- Mikhail Gorbachev, from *Memoirs*, pp. 423-433.

Fri. (4/6):
- Yurchak, *Everything was Forever . . .*, chs. 4-6, pp. 126-327.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Yurchak argues that profound cultural changes were occurring in late Soviet society as (some) young people chose to “drop out,” became infatuated with the West and discovered Western music. What role did non-conformity and passive resistance to the state’s cultural uniformity play in the generation of the *shestidesiatletki*? Do you see Gorbachev as being, even tangentially, part of this movement?

**Research Assignment:**

Begin work on draft.
Week 12: Perestroika

FILM: Repentance/Pokayaniye (Abuladze, 1984)

Mon. (4/9): Lecture—**Perestroika and Glasnost**

Wed. (4/11):
Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*, Documents:
- Election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, pp. 433-438.


Fri. (4/13):

**Discussion Questions:**
1. According to Kotkin, what was the nature of Gorbachev’s reforms? Why were they ultimately destabilizing to the Soviet Union? How did Gorbachev, like the sorcerer’s apprentice, unleash forces which he could not control?

**Research Assignment:**
Work on paper draft.
Week 13: The Collapse

FILM: Taxi Blues (Lunin, 1991)

Mon. (4/16): Lecture—The Collapse
TEXT: Kotkin, Armageddon Averted, pp. 113-192.

Wed. (4/18):
Suny, The Structure of Soviet History, Documents
The August Coup, pp. 456-467.

Fri. (4/20):
Leffler, For the Fate of Mankind, pp. 338-469.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why did the Soviet Union collapse? While certainly the August Coup was the crucial event, Kotkin argues that the collapse of the Empire played an even more crucial role. Why did the nationalities’ issue have such a decisive impact? Did the Soviet Union need the Cold War as a “reason for being” or had the Cold War made the Soviet collapse inevitably?
2. Why was Gorbachev able to end the Cold War where his predecessors had failed according to Leffler? Modern day Russians have a very negative view of Gorbachev believing he was very naïve and gave away Soviet hegemony to an aggressive United States. Most contemporary Westerners believe Gorbachev was “defeated” by Western firmness as exemplified by Ronald Reagan. Does Leffler’s account support either of these characterizations? What was Gorbachev’s goal and how was it compromised by events in the Soviet Union?

Research Assignment:
Hand in your final paper draft by 9:00 am, Monday, April 16th on Canvas.


Wed. (4/25):

Suny, *The Structure of Soviet History*.


Lilia Shevtsova, “Russia’s Post-Communist Politics: Revolution or Continuity?”, pp. 478-491.


Fri. (4/27):

Yurchak, *Everything was Forever . . .*, conclusion, p. 282-299

**Discussion Question:**

1. How did the hopes for “freedom and a normal life” turn impoverishment and chaos? Why does Kotkin liken the Soviet Union after the fall to the farm at the end of *Animal Farm*? Why did democracy and capitalism prove so uncongenial to the post-Soviet states? Did the hero of 1991, Boris Yeltsin, sound any more successful in his resignation speech than Gorbachev had in his?

2. Yurchak argues that post-Soviet Russia (and to a lesser extent the other post-Soviet peoples) were shaped by generations of the Soviet ideological straightjacket. How did disrobing of this mental uniform not liberate post-Soviet society but leave it profoundly confused? How do you think this helped lead to the rise of Putin?

**Research Assignment:**

Work on final paper
Mon. (4/30): The Soviet Legacy

**Discussion Questions**

1. How, according to Kotkin, has the experience of the Soviet Union structure its most important successor state, Russia? Should the Soviet experience be considered a sort of parenthesis to Russian history—a discontinuity in its long, millennial evolution—or an organic and constitutive part of the present Russian reality? For Malia, the Soviet Union was a tragic detour caused by ideology and terror and he would agree with Francis Fukuyama that it’s fall represented the “end of history” (i.e., all other systems but Western capitalism and democracy have been proven dead ends). Clearly, Kotkin has his doubts about anybody’s history, especially Russia’s, ending. What do you think?

**Research Assignment:**

**APRIL 30TH: FINAL PAPER DUE (via Canvas)**
DECEMBER 11TH-DECEMBER 17TH: ORAL EXAMS (SIGN UP)