

The Stalinist Experience

HIS 240, Spring 2021

Tues/Thurs 9:00-10:45, Room TBA

<https://stalinistexperiences21.theleahgoldman.com/>

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Office Hours (***on Zoom**): Mon 10-12, Tues 11-12, or by appointment

Office: Old Main 204C/ Office Hours link on course website

Course Description

This course takes a deep dive into one of the most consequential periods in Soviet history: the Stalin Era. Stalinism occupies a unique space in popular imagination, marked by political terror and dictatorial excess. But as scholars have shown, this is not the whole story. Stalinism was, in historian Stephen Kotkin's phrase, "a civilization," and like any civilization, it generated a range of hopes, fears, aspirations, and wonder among those who lived through it. In this course, we will explore Soviet citizens' experiences during the nearly 30 years Stalin held power by analyzing their creative productions and personal accounts. We will consider issues of propaganda and true belief, identity formation and self-fashioning, adoption of new values and courageous resistance. Along the way, we will also interrogate the radical economic, social, and demographic shifts that made this era so remarkable. Through close analysis and discussion, we will deepen our understanding of how the Stalinist experience shaped Soviet citizens' imaginations and sense of individual and national selfhood and consider its legacy in Russia today.

Course Requirements

Modality: We are using the **hybrid model** this semester. On TUESDAYS we will meet **face to face** in our classroom. On THURSDAYS we will meet **online via Zoom**. This will probably not be comfortable at first, but we will work together to get it right. If we have to shift to remote learning at some point, this will help us make a smoother transition. I'm new at this, too! Please feel free to share your thoughts on how it's going and how we can improve.

Attendance: Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I do not want anyone to feel pressured to come to class if they are unwell! We are going to use the honor system this semester. I will take attendance, but I won't count it against you if you are absent. This is a discussion-based class, and it will work best if everyone attends as often as they can. If you miss a day, you can make up for it by writing an additional post on the blog. If you are too ill to do that or otherwise in crisis, **please email me** and we will find a solution. Our number one priority is taking care of ourselves and each other. In that spirit, I have two special requirements:

- When we meet face to face, **you must wear a mask**
- When we meet online, **you must keep your camera on** unless you have a specific reason why you cannot do so. If you have such a reason, please let me know ASAP.

Let's think like a community, so we can have as safe and fulfilling an experience as possible.

Participation: Whether we are meeting face to face or online, everyone must contribute to the discussion. You familiarize yourself with all materials **before** class on the day they are assigned and be prepared to discuss them. Bring these 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 a 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 3, the class will work together to create a blog, which will help shape our intellectual journey. There are two types of posts you can make. A **conversation starter** is a new post. It should be at least one paragraph long, include a properly cited quotation from one of the sources, and pose a discussion question (one that requires analysis, not a yes/no question). A **response** is a nested post that you write in the “Comment” box under an existing post. It should be at least three sentences long and respond to the post in a substantive way. You may give an answer, pose a related question, counter the original post, comment via meme, etc. Here are the specifics:

- **You must post a Conversation Starter every week.** I will assign half of you to post for Tuesdays and half for Thursdays. These posts are due at 10pm the night before class. If you post after class, it will not count.
- **You must post six (6) Responses during the semester.** You should respond to someone else’s CS, not your own. You may do these any time in the semester, but I recommend spacing them out evenly. Responses may be posted before class or up to 24 hours after.
- You may do **extra posts** of either type for extra credit!

Discussion Leadership: Each student will take **two turns** leading our discussion, in pairs. You and your partner should read the blog posts in advance. You may use your colleagues’ posts to generate discussion, and you should also come up with about five questions of your own to help keep the conversation going. Partners must *work together* on this assignment!

Midterm Project: In the first half of the semester, we are focusing on Stalinist culture. To round out this unit, for your midterm project you will write a **1500-word** review of a Stalin Era film, novel, artwork, building, or piece of music. Your task will be to analyze it in its historical context and make an **argument** about how it upholds or subverts Stalinist values. I will give you a list of sources to choose from. You may also choose your own source, with my approval. Construct your argument carefully, so you don’t get sent to Gulag!

Final Paper: For your final project, you will write a **2500-word** research paper. You will make historical argument using a combination of sources we have analyzed in class and sources you have found through independent research. You will choose your own topic, with my help. We will go over requirements and writing strategies in class. We will also visit the Library to acquaint ourselves with available resources and research methods, and we will devote a day of class to peer critiquing each other’s rough drafts. This assignment has four steps:

- 1) **Research Question**—Week 8 (*written feedback*)
- 2) **Proposal** (thesis statement, abstract, annotated bibliography)—Week 10 (*meet with me*)
- 3) **Rough Draft + Peer Critique**—Week 13
- 4) **Final Draft**—Finals Week

We will go over each of these steps in more detail when we get closer to them. I will meet with each of you in Week 10 to discuss the development of your research and troubleshoot any difficulties. This is your only required meeting with me, but if you would like to meet more often

or discuss your rough draft one-on-one, I am happy to do so. Please note: you must meet with a librarian individually as part of this assignment.

Research Presentation: In the last week of class, we will hold a **Festival of Stalinism** during which you will each give a **15 minute presentation** of your research to your colleagues. Your task is to clearly articulate your research question and your thesis statement and present evidence that supports your central claim. You will speak for 10 minutes, aided by a slideshow, followed by a five-minute Q&A. We will discuss presentation strategies together in class.

Academic Integrity: My policy on **plagiarism** is simple: **Don't do it!** Plagiarism is a very serious offence, which can destroy your academic career and professional prospects. If you plagiarize, rest assured that I will catch you, and **you will automatically fail my class.** In addition, W&J upholds academic honesty in the College community by pursuing cases of academic misconduct. Please read the College's Academic Dishonesty Policy here: <https://wiki.washjeff.edu/display/CC2021/Academic+Honesty+Policy>. You are responsible for abiding by this policy. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or about the Academic Dishonesty Policy, please talk to me before your work is due!

Resources for Student Success: This is a challenging course, and I highly recommend that you make use of the many helpful resources available to you on campus:

- **PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) Tutors**, located on the ground floor of Alex Hall, can help you with all stages of the writing process. You don't need to make an appointment. Just drop by Sunday -Thursday, 7-9pm. You can check their schedule and other information here: <https://www.washjeff.edu/academics/our-support/peer-assisted-learning-program/>
- **Information and Technology Services** can help you with hardware, software, and more. Visit the Help Desk in Technology Center Room 121 and learn more here: <https://www.washjeff.edu/intranet/information-technology-services/contact-its/>
- **Clark Library** can help you with books, information, research help, and more. We will also spend one day of class familiarizing ourselves with library resources.
- **Office of International Student Initiatives** provides a variety of support services for international students: <https://www.washjeff.edu/international-student-services>
- **Office of Diversity & Leadership Initiatives** offers programs that work to strengthen cultural awareness, diversity education, and leadership development: <https://www.washjeff.edu/diversity>

Grading

Participation	10%
Blog Posts	15%
Discussion Leadership	10%
Primary Source Analysis	20%
Research Presentation	10%
Final Paper	35% (5% Research Question + Proposal, 10% Rough draft + Peer critique, 20% Final draft)

Course Policies

Office Hours: I welcome you to drop in to Zoom office hours to discuss our class! I will be on the Office Hours Zoom Link Mondays 10-12 and Tuesdays 11-12 unless otherwise noted. If you know you want to talk to me, you can make an appointment. Otherwise, just drop in. If you have a schedule conflict, 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. In the professional world, you will be expected to communicate via formal emails, so this is good practice for the future. **You are responsible for checking your W&J email at least once per day.** Email is my only way to communicate with you outside of class, and I need to be able to reach you.

Technology: On face to face days, you may bring computers or tablets to class for taking notes and viewing pdfs. If you fool around online instead of paying attention, you are only failing yourself. It's up to you to take responsibility for your own learning process. However, if you use your device to distract your colleagues, I will make you to put it away for the rest of class.

On Zoom days, **you must keep your camera on** unless you have a specific reason why you cannot do so (see above). Nonverbal cues are a big part of how people communicate, so we need to be able to see each other.

I will be recording our meetings to promote equity of access. These videos will be shared on Sakai, where they are password protected. They are *only for use of students enrolled in this class*. You may not post them online or share them with anyone else. Violating this policy will be treated as a breach of W&J's Academic Honesty Policy (see above).

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

Student Support and Accommodations: To serve our mission to promote academic excellence, W&J is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities include individuals with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health disorders that meet the definition of a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. W&J's goal is to make its programs and facilities available to all students so that students with disabilities can be integrated as completely as possible into the W&J community. Ensuring equal access for all students is a collaborative effort between the Director for Academic Success, students, and faculty. All participants have a role in making education accessible. It is your responsibility to self-identify to the Director for Academic Success as early as possible when accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids are services are needed and to seek information, counsel, and assistance as necessary. Once I have been informed of your approved accommodations, it is my responsibility to provide them in a timely manner. 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 the Director for Academic Success Richard Barber by email at dss@washjeff.edu or rbarber@washjeff.edu, by phone at 724-223-6008, or on the ground floor of Clark Library. You can find more information here: <https://mywj.washjeff.edu/office/disability-support-services>

Notice of Nondiscrimination: W&J does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, age, marital status, national origin, the presence of any physical or sensory disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, state, and local laws, and has a firm commitment to promote the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws. W&J 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 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 on my office door.

Course Materials

There is only one book required for HIS 240. It is available for purchase or rental through the W&J Bookstore. You are welcome to purchase or borrow your books elsewhere, but you are responsible for ensuring you have the **correct edition**. You can also find reserve copies through the Library. Shorter readings and all other materials are available to you on the course website. Always bring the text under discussion to class.

Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey Into the Whirlwind*. (San Diego: Harvest, 1995)
ISBN 978-0-547-54101-3

Course Schedule

UNIT I: Stalinism as a Culture

Week 1: Introduction to Stalinism

Jan 26: Why study the Stalin Era?

Jan 28: Lewis Siegelbaum, "Building Stalinism, 1929-1941" in Gregory L. Freeze, ed. *Russia: A History*, pp. 341-373

Joseph Stalin, "On the Draft Constitution (November 25, 1936)" [17M]

Week 2: Stalinist Literature

Feb 2: Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, chapter 1 and Appendix A, pp. 27-45, 255-260

Andrei Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas"

Feb 4: Nikolai Ostrovsky, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, pp. 387-430

Week 3: Stalinist Film

Feb 9: Nikolai Ostrovsky, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, pp. 430-477

Feb 11: Lilya Kaganovsky, "Stalinist Cinema, 1928-1953," *The Russian Cinema Reader v.1*, ed. Rimgaila Salys, pp. 208-232

Chapaev (dir. Georgii Vasiliev and Sergei Vasiliev)

Week 4: Stalinist Film, continued

Feb 16: *Circus* (dir. Grigorii Aleksandrov)

Feb 18: **NO CLASS!** HIS 240 Mental Health Day

Week 5: Stalinist Music

Feb 23: Boris Schwarz, “The Resolution of 1932,” *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia*, pp. 109-140

Anonymous *Pravda* Editorial, “Muddle Instead of Music”

Dmitrii Shostakovich, “Symphony No. 5,” Fourth Movement

Feb 25: Benjamin Beresford, *Rhapsody in Red: Jazz and a Soviet Public Sphere Under Stalin*, chapters 1 and 3

Soviet Jazz Playlist

Week 6: Stalinist Art and Architecture

Mar 2: Erika Wolf, “The Visual Economy of Forced Labor: Alexander Rodchenko and the White Sea-Baltic Canal,” *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, pp. 168-174

Victoria Bonnell, “The Iconography of the Worker in Soviet Political Art,”

Making Workers Soviet, pp. 341-375

Stalinist Propaganda Posters Slideshow

Mar 4: Richard Anderson, “Architecture and Stalin’s Revolution, 1932-1941,” *Russia: Modern Architectures in History*, pp. 147-181

Mike O’Mahony, “The Moscow Metro,” *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, pp. 185-188

Stalinist Architecture Slideshow

Week 7: Stalinist Portraiture

Mar 9: Jan Plamper, “Stalin’s Image in Time,” *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*, pp. 29-87

Cult of Stalin Slideshow

Mar 11: **NO CLASS!** Campus-wide day off

Midterm Review of Stalinist Culture DUE at 10pm on Sunday, March 14

UNIT II: Stalinism as an Experience

Week 8: Experiencing Nationality

Mar 16: Terry Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,” *A State of Nations*, pp. 67-90

Three Songs of Lenin (dir. Dziga Vertov)

Mar 18: Marianne Kamp, “The Hujum,” *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernism, and Unveiling Under Communism*, pp. 150-185

Marianne Kamp, “Jahon Obidova,” *Russia’s People of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present*, pp. 309-318

Research Question DUE at 10pm on Saturday, March 20

Week 9: First Steps in Research

Mar 23: NO CLASS! Campus-wide day off

Mar 25: Library Day

Week 10: Experiencing the First Five Year Plan

Mar 30: Lynn Viola, “‘We Let the Women Do the Talking’: *Bab’i Bunty* and the Anatomy of Peasant Revolt,” *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, pp. 181-204

Maria Belskaia, “Arina’s Children,” *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women*, pp. 219-234

Final Paper Proposal DUE at 10pm on Wednesday, March 31

Individual Meetings This Week

Apr 1: Lewis Siegelbaum, “Magnetic Mountain” [17M Subject essay]

John Scott, *Behind the Urals*, Parts I and II, pp. 3-51

Week 11: Experiencing Stalinist Excellence

Apr 6: Lewis Siegelbaum, “Stakhanovites in the Cultural Mythology of the 1930s,” in *The Stalinist Dictatorship*, ed. Christopher Ward, pp. 231-259

Pasha Angelina, “The Most Important Thing,” *In the Shadow of the Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women*, pp. 305-322

Apr 8: NO CLASS! HIS 240 Mental Health Day

Week 12: Experiencing The Terror

Apr 13: Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi,” *Stalinism: New Directions*, pp. 77-116

Start reading: Eugenia Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, chapters 1-8 *We will discuss this on Thursday

Apr 15: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s,” *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989*, pp. 85-120

Eugenia Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, chapters 9-14

Rough Drafts DUE at 10pm on Sunday, April 18

Week 13: Experiencing the Terror, continued

Apr 20: Rough Draft Peer Critique Day

Apr 22: Eugenia Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, chapters 15-23

Week 14: Experiencing the War and Its Aftermath

Apr 27: *The Cranes Are Flying* (dir. Mikhail Kalatozov)

Apr 29: Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *The Thaw Generation*, pp. 29-68

Week 15: Festival of Stalinism!

May 4: Research Presentations

May 6: Research Presentations

Final Papers due at 10pm, Tuesday, May 12
Good luck!!!