

Russophobia and Red Scares

History Seminar 506:401:03
Rutgers University, Fall 2018
Tuesdays 9:50 AM to 12:50 PM
Scott Hall, Room 215

Professor David S. Foglesong
Office: Van Dyck Hall 215
Office hours: Tu Th 1 to 2 PM
fogleson@history.rutgers.edu

Course Description

Journalists and politicians in the United States and Europe have made numerous sensational charges in recent years that Russia has interfered in democratic elections, waged information warfare against democracies, filled foreign countries with spies, assassinated political opponents at home and abroad, colluded with politicians in Western nations, and waged war against neighboring countries as part of an aggressive drive to resurrect the old Soviet empire. Skeptics have asserted that the accusations have been exaggerated or unfounded and called the demonization of Russia and its sympathizers in the West a “new McCarthyism” or a “new Red Scare.”

In this research seminar students will develop historical perspectives on Russophobia and Red Scares in Europe and America. During the first three weeks of the semester students will read articles and book chapters about (1) extreme fears of Russian expansionism and aggression from the 19th century to the 21st century; (2) the first great Red Scare in the United States after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917; and (3) the widespread alarm about Communist subversion and espionage in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Among the questions we will consider are: How did Russophobia take different forms in Great Britain, the United States, and other nations? How did anxieties about gender, feminism, and sexuality figure in Red Scares? How did nativist worries about immigrants and ethnic groups inflame fears of Bolshevism? How much foundation was there for accusations about Communist subversion and espionage? How has contemporary alarm about alleged Russian aggression and conspiracies resembled and differed from earlier fears of Russian actions and influence? Have the great fears been spontaneous popular outbursts or have they been orchestrated by media and political elites? What have been the effects of Russophobia and Red Scares on movements for social change in Western countries?

During the remainder of the semester, students will design and carry out research projects that will utilize primary sources to shed new light on Russophobia or a Red Scare. The research projects may focus on a specific individual, a particular place, a specific moment, an ethnic or racial group, a media organization, or an intelligence agency (among other possibilities).

Course requirements include: active participation in class discussions; three short essays in response to the common assigned reading; and one long research paper (18 to 25 pages).