

History 01:510:271

Russia and the West

Summer 2022

Time Slot: TBD

Instructor: Timur Mukhamatulin

E-mail: timur.mukhamatulin@rutgers.edu

NOTE: This draft of a syllabus is provisional.

Political uncertainty of these days makes the issue of Russian-Western relations a relevant one. Still there is a plethora of discussions among the intellectuals on the topic. There is a set of questions on a table: How do we understand the West? Is Russia opposed to the West or is its integral part? How did the Russian-Western relations change over time? This course focuses on Russia and the West as cultural categories sometimes reshaped by the intellectuals to fulfill their agenda. The starting point of the course is pre-Petrine times when Russia's peculiarity was fueled by the religious difference. Then we will be dealing with Peter the Great's attempts to "modernize" Russia, the nineteenth-century movements of "Westerners" and "Slavophiles". We will be examining the role of Socialism in relations between Russia and the West. Finally, we would track their development during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries when periods of Russian enchantment with the West were replaced by the ones of confrontation. We will use a wide range of primary and secondary sources including pictures, cartoons, and movies. No knowledge of Russian is required.

After taking this course, the students should be able:

- To read the primary sources critically;
- To challenge the "determinist" discourses on Russian-Western relations based either on geography or political superstitions;
- To be familiar with the main events in Russian and European history that are related to an issue;
- To see how the history of these relations is relevant for today's social and political context.
-

Attendance and participation in discussions is a requirement for the class. There would be several assignments during the course that would include historical analysis of primary sources and written responses (not more than 250 words). There would be a final exam as well.

- Attendance and Participation – TBD
- Course Assignments – TBD
- Final Exam – TBD

Class 1

Introductions.

Imaginative Geography. Here we will reflect on a category of the “West”. What does it mean? How did it change over time? What are crucial features of the “West”? Where is the border between the “West” and “non-West”? Does Russia fit into “West”?

Readings: Larry Wolff. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994). Selected pages.

Primary sources on Russian perception of the West.

Class 2.

The Ancient Russia. The first encounters between Russia and the West.

Here we think of the religion’s role in Russia-West division’s creation. We would pay attention of the role the early history of Russian state played in creating a *narrative* on the relations.

To watch: Sergei Eisenstein, Alexander Nevskii. Excerpts.

Class 3.

Peter the Great: Russia enters the club.

Here we talk about the widespread modernization/Europeanization/Westernization Peter the Great was making and the Great Northern War as a way of establishing Russia as a “European”/ “Western” state. What were reasons for it? What were the main reforms? How did it influence the everyday’s life in Russia?

Readings: Paul Bushkovitch. *Peter the Great* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001). Selected pages OR chapters.

Class 4.

1812’s Fatherland’s War and Decembrists.

Here we talk about the Napoleon’s era and his military attack on Russia in 1812. How did it change an idea of the “West”? How did it influence the Russian society? What was the new place of Russia in the Western “imagination”? What

Readings: Iurii Lotman. *The Decembrist in a Daily Life, in The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History: Essays* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Class 5.

Nicholas I: The “Golden Age” of Western Russophobia?

Here we talk the Russian regime after Decembrists’ revolt. Why was it anti-Western? How did it help to fuel an anti-Russian sentiment in the West? What were the main fears and superstitions about Russia in the nineteenth century?

Readings: TBD

Class 6

Crimean War and its aftermath: Turn to the West

Here we return to an idea of “modernization”/Westernization. Why did this idea gain a new impulse? How did an idea of a “Western”/modern state change from the Petrine’s time? How did the modernization happen?

Readings: TBD

Class 7

Socialism: the Russian or the Western?

Here we think of Socialism as an intellectual and political movement that became popular by the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia. What was the link between Socialism and the “West”? Were other, non-Western understandings of Socialism possible? Was the dynamics of Socialist activity similar in Russia and in other European states?

Readings: Karl Marx. *The Communist Manifesto* (URL: <http://activistmanifesto.org/assets/original-communist-manifesto.pdf>). Excerpts.

Class 8

The Soviet Union and the West before WWII: Westernization, Stalin’s style

Here we talk about Stalin’s industrialization campaign as a part of a Bolshevik’s modernization project. What was the Bolshevik’s understanding of the West? Who were the main actors of the relations between the USSR and the West? What was specific about Stalin’s modernization?

Readings: John Scott. *Behind the Urals: an American Worker in Russia’s City of Steel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989). Selected pages.

Class 9

WWII: The ultimate confrontation

Here we talk about climactic moment of Russophobia in modern history since the Nazis explained their invasion of Russia as “the West against the East”. What was the difference between previous and Nazi’s Russophobia? How did an experience of the Red Army soldiers liberating Europe change the perception of “the West”?

Readings: TBD

Class 10

Late Socialism and Perestroika: the Rise of Imaginary West

Here we think of the new understanding of the West described in a consumerist vein. What were the features of a late-Soviet “imaginary West”? Who were the main actors of its creation? What were the main ways to create it?

Readings: Alexey Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Selected pages and pictures.

Class 11

Post-Soviet Russia and the West: From Adoration to Conflict

Here we conclude the course with some thoughts on a recent politics. How did it happen that Russia began to juxtapose itself to the West? What were the main issues in relations after the end of the Soviet Union?

Readings: Vladimir Putin. The Crimea Speech (2014).