

RUSSIA: FROM LENIN TO PUTIN

Coordinators: Michael Marsh and Joseph Zuckerman

This course examines the history of Russia from the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin's assumption of supreme power nearly 100 years ago until the present. We focus on Russia's leaders and the policies and actions which transformed a largely agrarian and backward society to a major world power, challenging America and Western European concepts of democracy and free market capitalism at every turn. We consider how the acceptance of authoritarian government led to the widespread acceptance of the authoritarian rule of Vladimir Putin.

Readings:

A History of Modern Russia, from Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin by Robert Service (purchase text on line for significant savings at Amazon.com or abebooks.com)

Michael Marsh, a retired Dentist and former Docent at the New York Historical Society, has coordinated nine study groups on American and British history and Imperial Russia.

Joseph Zuckerman is a retired attorney, who has been a member of the IRP for ten years. He has coordinated courses on slavery in the Americas, Islam, history of Imperial Russia and Civil Liberties.

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Week One: Chapters 7 and 8 The New Economic Policy 1921-1928; Leninism and Its Discontents
Based on the material in Chapter 7, was Lenin a great Marxist realist or a Marxist in name only?

Week Two: Chapters 9 and 10 The First Five Year Plan 1928-1932; Fortresses under Storm: Culture, Religion, Nation. How did Stalin's First Five Year Plan (1928-1932) drastically rearrange and yet reinforce the nature of the soviet order? Was this Five Year Plan an unqualified success?

Week Three: Chapters 11 and 12 Terror upon Terror 1934-1938; Coping with Big Brother.

What factors or events inside and outside of the Soviet Union should have dissuaded Stalin and his henchmen from embarking upon the Great Purges of 1937-1938?

Week Four: Chapters 13 and 14 The Second World War; Suffering and Struggle 1941-1945.

What were Stalin's motivations to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939?

What factors allowed the Russian Army to reverse their disastrous losses of 1941-1942 and send the German Army into retreat and Russian victories at Stalingrad and Leningrad?

Given Russia's success do you think that the invasion at Normandy was motivated more to destroy Nazi Germany or to prevent Stalin from taking control of Western Europe?

Week Five: Chapters 15 and 16 Hammers of Peace 1945-1953; The Despot and his mask.

What was the difference in Stalin's reactions to the postwar events in Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia?

Were there any actions or negotiation positions, short of war, that might have motivated the Russians to remove their forces from occupied Eastern and Central Europe post WW2?

Week Six: Chapters 17 and 18 'Destalinization' 1953-1963; Hopes Unsettled 1964-1970.

What was the significance of Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin?

What factors led the Russians to send missiles to Cuba with nuclear warheads able to destroy American cities?

Why was Khrushchev overthrown and what changes in governance were instituted at the Kremlin?

Week Seven: Chapters 19, 20 and 21 Stabilization 1964-1970; 'developed Socialism' 1970-1982;; Privilege and Alienation.

Week Eight: Chapters 22 and 23 Towards Reform 1982-1985; Glasnost and Perestroika 1986-1988.

Week Nine: Chapters 24 and 25 Imploding Imperium 1989; Hail and Farewell 1990-1991.

Week Ten: Chapters 26 and 27 Power and the Market; 1992-1993; And Russia? 1994-2002.

Week Eleven: Contemporary Russia's domestic policies: Putin and Medvedev; Endemic corruption; the drastic reduction in the price of oil and its effect on the economy; the power of the state economically and politically.

THE POLICE STATE or the presence of a State of Fear?
Materials to be emailed.

Week Twelve: Putin's foreign policy in the near abroad (Crimea, Georgia, the Eastern Ukraine). Materials to be emailed.

Week Thirteen: Putin's intervention in the Middle East.
Materials to be emailed.