At the beginning of the eighteenth century Russia began to come into its own as a major European power. Members of the Russian intellectual classes increasingly compared themselves and their autocratic order to states and societies in the West. This comparison generated both a new sense of national consciousness and intense criticism of the existing order in Russia. In this course we will examine different perspectives on Russian history and literature in order to try to understand the Russian Empire as it changed from the medieval period to the modern.

Students are asked to write weekly short papers of approximately 2 pages responding to the readings (7 in all). In addition you will write two 4-5 page papers analyzing documents (due September 30 and October 21). Each student will lead one class with questions prepared in advance for everyone to consider. At the end of the course there will be a final examination.

Participation in the course will be evaluated as follows: 1) class participation and response papers (25%); 2) two 4-5 page papers (25% each); 3) final examination (25%). Attendance each class is mandatory.

Books for the Course

Leo Tolstoy, Hadji Murad (Orchises Press, 1996)

* indicates readings available on course website

Week 1. TR 9/4 -- Introduction to the Course

Week 2. T 9/9 -- Introduction to the Russian Empire [44]
Cracraft, ed., pp. 4-31: Pipes, "The Environment and Its Consequences"; Trubetskoy, "The Legacy of Genghis Khan"
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 1, 14-16, 21, 25-26, 28, 33
Response paper: From your brief acquaintance with Russia’s geography and history so far, what can you tell about the role of
For discussion: the role of geography in Russian history; the geopolitical environment in the 18th and 19th centuries; the role of the military in the expansion of Russia; and the question of empire in Russia

R 9/11 -- The Muscovite Heritage [56]
Cracraft, ed., pp. 36-46, 57-67: Kollmann, "Muscovite Patrimonialism"; Hellie, "Enserfment"; "The Ulozhenie of 1649"
Gilbert, Atlas, p. 32
For discussion: Be sure to examine closely the Ulozhenie of 1649. What did it mean to be a serf in 18th century Russia? Also think about what Kollmann means by "Muscovite Patrimonialism." What do Khodarkovsky’s and Slezkine’s articles tell us about what it meant to be “Russian” and “non-Russian”?

Week 3. T 9/16 - Peter the Great and the Petrine Reforms
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 34-38
Gibian, pp. 8-21: Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman” (1833)
Response Paper: Analyze one aspect of Anisimov’s main argument in “Peter I.” What evidence from the Petrine Reform Legislation can you use to support or refute his argument? (Key aspects you might choose to focus on include: the military, bureaucracy & state organization, property relations, social relations, the trial of Tsarevich Alexei, resistance, cultural revolution, church reform.)

R 9/18 - The Age of Elizabeth and Catherine II
Cracraft, ed., pp. 127-46, 150-53, 166-79, 197-212: Anisimov, “Empire of the Nobility”; Peter III's Manifesto (1762); de Madariaga, "Catherine as Woman and Ruler"; Catherine's Instruction (1767); Charter to the Nobility (1785)
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 41-43

Week 4. T 9/23 -- Critics and Rebels in the 18th century
Cracraft, ed., pp. 153-65, 179-197, 212-20: Shcherbatov Laments Corruption (1787); Raeff, “Pugachev Rebellion”; Radishchev, Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (1790)
Response paper: What do these different forms of criticism have in common? How do they differ?
Response paper: What do you think of Alexander I’s “constitutionalism” and Nicholas I’s apparent “anti-constitutionalism”? Alexander I (ruled 1801-1825) has been termed “the enigmatic tsar.” Nicholas I (ruled 1825-1855) might be called “the wooden tsar.” How do you explain the similarities and differences between the two tsars and their approach? How do you explain the dramatic differences in their approaches from those of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great? Or do you not think they were so very different? What is the nascent criticism in the intelligentsia? How do their criticisms differ from those of the 18th century?

Week 5.  T 9/30 – first paper due

R 10/2 -- Bureaucracy in Literature

Gibian, Russian Reader, pp. 199-232: Gogol, "The Overcoat" (1842)

For discussion: What is Gogol saying in this story about bureaucracy, law & order, and life in St. Petersburg?

Week 6.  T 10/7 -- The Institution of Serfdom


Gibian, Atlas, pp. 57-58

Response paper: Kolchin’s Unfree Labor is an example of comparative history at its best. What kinds of sources does he use to compare American and Russian slavery? What findings does he present that might not be as apparent if one were studying only the one or the other? What do you think is his principal thesis, and how do you evaluate it? Do you find it convincing?

R 10/9 -- Serfdom in Literature

Gibian, pp. 241-73, 293-333: Sergei Aksakov, "Kurolesov" (1856); Goncharov, “Oblomov’s Dream” (1849)

For discussion: Aksakov and Goncharov both show the corrosive effects of serfdom not only on the peasants themselves but also on the nobility. Consider two or three ways in which serfdom corrupted both state and society.
Week 7.  T 10/14 -- Alexander II and the Great Reforms


Cracraft, pp. 314-44: Wcislo, "Dilemmas of Emancipation"; Wortman, "Rule of Law"; Herzen on 'Hidden Russia' (1851);
Official Manifesto Emancipating the Serfs (1861)

Response Paper: What were some of the dilemmas of reform in Russia? Why do you think the reforms took the form they did? What patterns can you see in the ways they were implemented?

R 10/16 -- The Aftermath of the Reforms

Cracraft, pp. 344-58: MacKenzie-Wallace on mir and zemstvo (1877)

*Gregory Freeze, From Supplication to Revolution, pp. 101-113, 140-151, 170-85

Gibian, pp. 608-15: Saltykov-Shchedrin, "The Story of How One Peasant" (1869)

For discussion: How was peasant life changed and not changed following the Great Reforms? What seem to have been their chief complaints? What were the complaints of other estates?

Week 8.  T 10/21 -- second paper due

R 10/23 -- Reaction and Counter-Revolution

Cracraft, pp. 360-97: Pipes, "Towards the Police State"; Pearson, "The Failure of Reform"; Vera Figner (1881); Manifesto of Alexander III (1881); Pobedonostsev, Reflections (1896)

*"The Catechism of a Revolutionary" and "Demands of Narodnaia Volia" in Dmytryshyn, ed. Imperial Russia, pp. 350-59

Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 54-55

For discussion: What can you say about the nature of conservative sentiment in late Tsarist Russia? Why do you think it was so pervasive? Did the revolutionaries do themselves a favor when they assassinated the tsar?

Week 9.  T 10/28 -- War and Peace in the Caucasus

Leo Tolstoy, "Hadji Murad" (1904) (125 pp.)

Response paper: Comment on the portrayal of Chechen and Russian societies, their values, their ways of interacting as portrayed by Tolstoy in this novella.

R 10/30 -- Exploration and Empire-Building

Cracraft, pp. 398-411; 420-37: Kappeler, "Multi-Ethnic Empire"; Thaden, "Russification"; Gorchakov Circular (1864);
Urusov on Russian Antisemitism (1907)

Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 59-67, 69-70
For discussion: How did the Russian Empire run? What was the position of the different nationalities? Why do you think anti-semitism was so virulent?

Week 10. T 11/4 -- Industrialization and Radicalization
Cracraft, 441-53, 468-89, 528-48: Kahan, “The Government’s Role”; Gurko on Witte (1920s); Pavlov on life in a textile mill (1901); Kanatchikov, Peasant-worker-activist (1929-1934)
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 56, 68, 71-74
Response paper: Comment on either the government’s engagement in the industrialization process or the politicization of labor discussed in Kanatchikov. How did the conditions discussed in Pavlov help to facilitate worker radicalization?

R 11/6 -- The Russo-Japanese War
*Bruce Lincoln, “A Small Victorious War,” in In War’s Dark Shadow: The Russians Before the Great War, pp. 227-71
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 66-67
http://www.intl.hiroshima-cu.ac.jp/~yulia/visual.htm
For discussion: Why did the tsar’s ministers think this might be a “small victorious war”? Why were they wrong?

Week 11. T 11/11 -- No class; Veterans’ Day

R 11/13 -- The Revolution of 1905
*Orlando Figes, A People’s Tragedy, ch. 5, pp. 157-92
Cracraft, pp. 550-51, 593-96, 600-11: The October Manifesto (1905); Father Gapon (1905); Lenin (1905); Breshkovskaia (1920)
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 75-77
For discussion: Why did the spark of revolution catch fire in 1905 when it had not in previous decades? How did the tsar and his ministers respond? What was Witte’s role? Do you think Russia would be dramatically changed after this revolution?

Week 12. T 11/18 -- The Constitutional Monarchy and World War I
*Mark Steinberg, “Nicholas and Alexandra, an Intellectual Portrait” in Steinberg and Vladimir M. Khrustalev, Fall of the Romanovs, pp. 1-37
Cracraft, pp. 613-19: Schapiro on Stolypin
*Dominic Lieven, “Russia, Europe and World War I,” in Edward Acton, Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, pp. 37-47
*“Durnovo’s Memorandum,” in Dmytryshyn, ed., Imperial Russia, pp. 491-509
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 78-83
For discussion: How well do you think the constitutional monarchy worked? What were some of its strengths and weaknesses? What were some of the causes and consequences of WWI for Russia? Why was Durnovo so afraid of the war?
R 11/20 – no class (I will be away at a conference)

*Abdication of Nicholas II and Grand Duke Michael in Dmytryshyn, Imperial Russia, pp. 524-25
*“Order No. 1,” and related documents in Ronald Suny, Structure of Soviet History, pp. 32-36
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 84, 86

For discussion: How did the February 1917 revolution compare to the 1905 revolution? What were the principal issues? What do you think about Trotsky’s comment that the old regime “fell like rotten fruit”?

R 11/27 – No class; Thanksgiving

Week 14. T 12/2 — From February to October
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 87-89
*Lenin, “April Theses”; Tsereteli and Lenin Exchange Words (June 1917) in Suny, Structure, pp. 38-43

For discussion: Everything changed between February and October 1917. In what ways and why?

R 12/4 — The October Revolution
*Lenin, Letter to the Central Committee, in Suny, Structure of Soviet History, 45-47
Gilbert, Atlas, pp. 90-91

For discussion: The October Revolution brought about the definitive end of tsarist Russia. Why? Do you think autocratic Russia could have continued in tsarist form?

Week 15. T 12/9 – Review