

# THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIA TO 1700

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

PROF. BROWN

HISTORY 311

MW 11-12:20

FALL SEMESTER

GAIGE 315

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The current Russian Federation (1991- ), the Soviet Union (1917-1991), and Imperial Russia (1700-1917) evolved from thousands of years of migration, settlement, cultural diffusion, governing, and other social interaction among the various peoples inhabiting the territories of these later and more familiar countries. Although not so well known to Western audiences as the civilizations of Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the civilizations preceding the Russia of Peter the Great, Stalin, and Putin are as indispensable to it as the Greeks, the Romans, and the Medieval Europeans are to contemporary Europe.

What are these earlier civilizations that undergird modern Russian civilization? Where did they come from? Who lived in them and what did they accomplish? How will we study them?

*The Origins of Russian History* is an odyssey through thousands of years of prehistory and history, from approximately the time when the great Ancient Middle Eastern river civilizations coalesced until Peter the Great's rule, only three centuries ago. Our overview will explain what the ingredients were of what came to be a common Eastern Slavic civilization one thousand years ago, from which later emerged Russian and other kindred civilizations.

Russians and their predecessors continually have interacted with different ethnicities and governments, stretching over a time period much greater than the past 500 years for the European colonization and settlement of the Americas. Our subject matter is truly fascinating, all the more so since, for purposes of elucidation, we frequently will be making comparison to different areas and time periods of Eurasia, from China to Western Europe, from the Middle East to the Arctic Circle, from Antiquity through the seventeenth century.

What are the sources of Russian civilization? Some of the major themes we address are the prehistoric and non-Slavic peoples on the territories of the former Soviet Union; the native and Byzantine (Eastern Roman) roots of Russian civilization; the Mongols; the rise of the centralized state and the distinctiveness of Russian development; the stimulus of the West; and problems and cyclical patterns of Russian development. We will utilize art and architecture, economics, law, literature, religion, women's studies, and other disciplines to assist our investigations

How will we go about studying this fascinating area? Through a lecture/discussion format, we will analyze the fundamental issues of Russian civilization until 1700 when Peter the Great, customarily heralded as the first "Westernizer" in Russian history, is firmly in power. We will observe common themes throughout, and wrap our learning around them. No one is expected to be an expert. We cannot treat everything in our examination of 1,000+ years of material, and so we will highlight what is most important.

As we sit back, we will proceed through this fascinating subject, so enjoy! There are three, major parts to our course, and we will study them according to the following schedule:

Weeks 1-4 Prehistoric and Kievan Rus', 3,500 B.C.E.-1240

Weeks 5-6 Appanage Russia, 1240-1462  
Weeks 7-14 The Muscovite Period, 1462-1700.

## **REQUIRED UNDERGRADUATE READING**

*For purchase at the Campus Store:*

Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, (Oxford UP, 2005)  
Daniel H. Kaiser and Gary Marker, *Reinterpreting Russian History (RRH—Harvard UP, 1994)*  
Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible. First Tsar of Russia* (Yale UP, 2005)  
Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde. The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Indiana UP, 1985)

xerox handouts

\*Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs* (Cornell UP, 1989). (Eve Levin's paperback book is currently out of stock at the publisher's warehouse, and as of the start of the semester there is uncertainty about whether her book will be republished.) If by the end of the second week, her book will remain unavailable, I will order in its stead, the paperback by Carol B. Stevens, *Russia's Wars of Emergence 1460-1730* (class would be responsible for reading only up to 1700, Peter the Great), which is in stock.

*On Adam Library reserve:*

Paul Dolukhanov, *The Early Slavs* (Longman, 1996) P. Brown will purchase for the library  
H.G. Koenigsberger, *Medieval Europe 400-1500* (Longman, 1994) P. Brown will purchase for the library  
Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (U of Washington P, 1996) P. Brown will purchase for the library

## **REQUIRED GRADUATE READING**

The required undergraduate reading listed above and V. Kliuchevsky, *A History of Russia*, 3 vols. (on library reserve)

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The textbook for our course is Riasanovsky, 7th ed.; copies of it and the other books are available for purchase in our campus book store.

Our classroom activities will consist of a mixture of lectures and discussion. Therefore, it is essential that you come having read the assignment for that particular session. I will distribute for the next class an outline of important topics and terms that you should think about as you read through the material. That way you will become better informed of important issues, will be able to get more out of the lectures and discussions, and will be better able to contribute to classroom discussion.

In addition to your following the weekly reading schedules, it is a good idea to read through the pertinent sections of Riasanovsky for each unit in our course, for an overview of the forthcoming unit before we actually begin that section.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN CLASS

*Inquiry, questioning, discussion, presentation, writing...*

A considerable portion of each class will revolve around the active pursuit of knowledge through discussion and the related techniques it incorporates. We will explore and utilize *critical thinking*. Class discussion will revolve around our readings and lecture material. At times we will employ discussion sections to further excite our interests.

You are required to take an active role in this endeavor, and among other things this means having read the material before coming to class and being familiar—if not conversant—with the material. Be *pro active* and demonstrate your knowledge before other members of the class and me. Simply showing up for class and adopting passive behavior will hurt your grade.

I will distribute—to better aid you in reading and discussion—guide sheets with questions and other remarks that will direct you through our readings. I am well aware that some class members talk more than others and that those who talk least can sometimes contribute the most valuable remarks. There are a range of factors influencing why one person might speak more than another, and I take them into account. What is essential is that you make a serious and visible effort every session to participate in class discussion.

Visual (slides) and auidial (music tapes) will be an integral part of our course. They will both complement and supplement our readings, and are intended to provide extra dimension.

Also, as time permits, try and stay informed of what is going on in Russia today. I encourage you to keep abreast of current events in Russia through reading newspapers and news magazines, watching T.V. documentaries or other special programs, and cruising the web. As suggestions, watch CNN and read *The Economist* (U.K.), *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Foreign Affairs*—the last four journals, magazines, and newspapers are all in Adams Library.

## SCHEDULE OF UNDERGRADUATE ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES

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|--|-----|
| 1 one-hour exam, Week V, Wednesday,<br>October 1 | 10% |
| 3 Paper assignments--Total length, 15 pages;     | 45% |
| Discussion                                       | 15% |
| Final Exam                                       | 30% |

I. 2 article précis (summaries), each 3 pages long, 6 pages total. Each précis will be based upon one scholarly journal article of your choosing on Eastern Slavic and Russian history. Guidelines will be distributed during Week II. Due in Week IV, Wednesday, September 24. 15%.

II. Interpretative essay on *Ivan the Terrible*. 5 pages total. Due in Week X, Wednesday, October 22. 15%.

III. Document analysis (handout) on an eyewitness account of everyday life in seventeenth-

century Russia. Due in Week XII, Wednesday, November 19. 15%.

## SCHEDULE OF GRADUATE ASSIGNMENTS AND DUES DATES

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Book Report | 10% |
| Term Paper  | 40% |
| Discussion  | 10% |
| Final Exam  | 40% |
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### Graduate paper assignments

I. Book report. Due in Week IV, Wednesday, September 24. 10%.

A.

II. A 20-page term paper (not including endnotes and bibliography) to be planned in consultation with me. Due in Week XIV, Wednesday, November 26. 40%.

*or...*

B.

analysis of 2 or 3 sources. The analyses will total 20 pages to be planned with me.

Due in Week XIV, Wednesday, December ... 40%

Graduate papers must be particularly well-researched and written and be of graduate school quality. I will distribute and explain the guidelines.

## Schedule of Class Topics and Reading Assignments

### Week of :

#### PREHISTORIC AND KIEVAN RUS', 3,500 B.C.E.-1240

- I. Sept 1 The Significance of Russia in World History  
*Introduction: Why Study Earlier Russian and Eastern European History? What is Western Eurasia? The Prehistory (archeological evidence) of the former USSR's territory.*
- II. Sept 8 The Ingredients of Eastern Slavic and Russian Civilizations  
*The land, peoples (Indo-European, Finno-Ugric, Altaic, and other speakers). The early steppe peoples.*  
Eurasian Influences. Early Regimes. Beliefs  
*The Influence of Early Medieval Central Asian and Mediterranean Empires upon the Eastern Slavs. The Varangians (Vikings). Early Kievan Rus', 862-1054. Religious beliefs: traditional practices, the world of Eastern Christianity (piety, ritual, the Byzantine tradition, monasticism, monasticism).*

Riasanovsky, 3-34; *RRH*, 3-11, 63-67; Dolukhanov, “The Slavs, Balts, and Finns,” *The Early Slavs*, 137-45; “Brother Issac and the Demons” (handout); Koenigsberger, *Medieval Europe*, 31-36, 117-20, 180-84 (Byzantium).

- III. Sept 15 Internal Structures. International Parallels and Differences  
*Later Kievan Rus': politics (rulers, institutions, policies), law (common and church law, Russkaia Pravda, church-state relations), society (groups, towns, agriculture), and decline, 1054-1237. Parallels to the Medieval Middle East, Byzantium, and Europe.*  
Riasanovsky, 35-57, 82-87; *RRH*, 21-25, 26-29, 30-44, 49-54, 60-62, 67-73; Koenigsberger, *Medieval Europe*, 68-74, 98-102. (population, family structure, settlements, agrarian economy, feudalism)
- IV. Sept 22 Challenge and Response to Central Asia  
*The Turkic steppe peoples—nomadism, influences upon Kievan culture, beliefs, social structure, military organization. The Mongols—origins, Central Asian conquests, invasion of Rus', social and military organization.*  
Riasanovsky, 59-71; *RRH*, 79-87, 99-102, 103-04; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, vii-ix + 1-74.  
***1<sup>st</sup> paper due, Wednesday, Sept 24. Midterm review.***

APPANAGE RUSSIA, 1240-1462.

- V. Sept 29 The Unraveling of Rus'. The Mongol Controversy  
*Russia, 1240-1304: the agony of princely power. The question of Mongol influence in Russian, East Asian, and Middle Eastern history. The fate of Ukraine.*  
Halperin, 75-130; *RRH*, 124-26, 137-40; Riasanovsky review.  
***Roundtable discussion of Russia and the Golden Horde. The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History. Midterm, Wednesday, Oct 1.***
- VI. October 6 Moscow. Why?  
*The rise of Muscovy, 1304-1425—Northeast Russia, early Muscovite rulers, foreign and church politics. The Northwestern city-states of Novgorod and Pskov: the Venices of Russia? The Muscovite Civil War, 1425-1462—the issue of princely succession, Vasilii II, devastation, consequences. Territorial fragmentation and dynastic conflicts, the 1200s-1400s in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. A pattern?*  
Riasanovsky, 72-81, 88-95, 101-29; *RRH*, 54-59, 87-90, 108-09, 122-24,

127-31; “Women and Property in Medieval Novgorod: Dependence and Independence” (handout); “The Seclusion of Elite Muscovite Women” (handout).

## THE MUSCOVITE PERIOD, 1462-1700

- VII. October 13 Muscovy Unites  
**Monday, October 13 is Columbus Day. Holiday!**  
**(Why not get started reading de Madariaga, Ivan the Terrible?)**  
*On the Eve of a Unified State: from the mid-fifteenth to the early sixteenth century. Reign of Ivan III (“the Great”), 1462-1505: unification of northern Russia, internal events, law. The evolution of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian trajectories (Byzantine, South Slavic, Western European). First heresies. The non-possessor controversy: the church and appanage monasticism, church land-holding, church-state relations.*  
Riasanovsky, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 95-101; *RRH*, 109-22, 130-37;  
Koenigsberger, “Byzantium,” 251-56 (skim), 336-40.
- VIII. October 20 Russia in the Early Modern Period  
*State formation in Russia and Eurasia in the late Medieval and early modern period: preconditions, patterns, and exceptions. Muscovy in the first half of the sixteenth century: the service state and the elite, the economy, Vasili III and the rule of magnate cliques. Muscovite architecture. Renaissance Europe and Russia: a comparison.*  
Riasanovsky review.
- IX. October 27 Ivan the Terrible  
*The Era of Ivan the Terrible, 1547-98. Early reign. Reforms and the “Chosen Council.” The personality of Ivan IV. The Livonian War and the Oprichnina. Arrival of the Northern Europeans. Economic collapse. Conquest of Siberia. Ivan’s legacy and historiography. The question of despotism. Reign of Fedor Ivanovich: enserfment, the Patriarchate’s establishment, extinction of the Rurikovich Dynasty.*  
Riasanovsky, 131-43; “The Personality of Ivan the Terrible: What Happened? How Did He Get Away With It?” (handout); *RRH*, 150-54.  
**2d paper due, Wednesday, Oct. 29.**
- X. November 3 Collapse and Legacy  
*The Time of Troubles, 1598-1613: dynastic and social upheaval, collapse of central authority, foreign intervention, early modern Eurasian context and the legacy for Russia. Historiography.*

Riasanovsky, 144-60; *RRH* 180-83.

- XI. November 10 Seventeenth-Century Landscape  
*Introduction to the Seventeenth Century: rulers, internal politics, cliques. Size and territorial expansion, resources, and population of Muscovy. Early modern Russian civilization and world history.*  
Riasanovsky, 161-80; *RRH*, 172-76.
- XII. November 17 Law. Society. International Context.  
*Muscovite law and society: the 1649 Conciliar Law Code (Sobornoe Ulozhenie), social stratification and castes, functions of criminal law. The peasantry, slavery, towns, urban uprisings. commerce. The path of Russian social development in international perspective*  
*RRH* 173-76, 180-83; “The Russian Smoky Hut and Its Probable Health Consequences” (handout)  
***3d paper due Wednesday, November 19.***
- XIII. November 24 Government. Religion. Culture. A New Epoch?  
*Institutions: central government, assemblies of the land, local bodies. The absolutism debate. Religious unrest: Nikonian reforms, Old Believers, state response. Culture: westernization, art, architecture, literature. The westernization controversy.*  
Riasanovsky, 181-95; *RRH*, 176-80, 187-92, 213-22; “What It Was Like To Be a Government Worker in the 17th Century” and “The Problem of Old Russian Culture” (handouts)
- XIV. December 1 Warfare. Foreign Relations. Non-Russian Groups.  
*Military concerns: Poland, Sweden, the southern frontier and the fortified lines. The Smolensk, Thirteen Years’, Russo-Turkish Wars. Diplomatic practice, alliances, successes. Ukraine and Belarus. Muscovy, Imperial Russia, and the Soviet Union.*  
*RRH* 193-212; “Violence and Neurological Consequences for Seventeenth-Century Russians” (handout); Magocsi, “The Cossack State,” *A History of Ukraine*, 195-228.
- XV. December 8 Warfare. Foreign Relations. Non-Russian Groups (cont.). Summation.  
***Roundtable discussion of either Sex and Society or Wars of Emergence.***

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments must be done on time. Failure to take a test when scheduled means an automatic failing grade for that examination. Failure to submit a paper on time will result in the grade for the paper being reduced by 5 points for every working day (M-F) that it is late.

In situations where legitimate reason (medical emergency or death in the family) exists for a student's inability to take a test, that person must produce written proof to justify taking a make-up test or submitting the paper/map assignment without penalty. Work- and car-related excuses will not be accepted.

It is your responsibility to avoid submitting sloppy papers with careless grammar and spelling errors. All papers will be printed distinctly. Use a regular Courier or Times New Roman font. Follow the citational form prescribed in the Department of History style sheet.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

*Learning how to discuss analytically (and letting this become an ingrained habit) is one of the most significant goals of your college, academic experience.* Discussion is an opportunity to talk about history, and is a most effective method for you to digest information and concepts and to explore the subject for new insights. Since a significant portion of the course will involve discussion of the material it is essential that you come to class already having read the assignment for that day. Come to class having already thoroughly read the textbook material, other sources, and your notes from previous class discussions. As you read, think of yourself as an active participant and how you might explain issues in class. Review that assignment after class.

This is a student-driven class. Everyone is expected to participate in class discussion, every single class discussion. When necessary, I will call upon class members. Before you come to class, think of questions and discussion points you want to raise. Be sure and follow through.

When you read through our primary and secondary sources and the handouts I will distribute from time to time, think of and be able to comment upon the following:

(1) *What are the text readings and documents talking about?* (2) *What is the significance of them?* (3) *What light do they shed on the historical period they are discussing?* (4) *How might we understand this period better because of the text readings and documents?*

Bear in mind that the mentalité, terminologies, idioms, and construction of our primary sources is, at times, quite foreign and demanding of our own frame of reference. Yet it is precisely through wading through all this that we can obtain insightful comprehension into the thought-worlds of earlier Eastern Slavs and Russians and other peoples living under them.

***Be respectful of the professor and others in class!*** Sound carries more easily than you think. Talking to neighbors during class makes it hard for others to concentrate and learn. No cell phones, no beepers, no pagers!

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

Members of class are required to attend every session and remain until the end of each session. I will take roll every session. Failure to attend will jeopardize your performance because there is a very strong correlation between continual class attendance on the one hand and involvement in class activities, comprehension of the material, and satisfactory performance on the other. Students who cut class, even if only occasionally, invariably perform less well than their peers who attend every meeting. For example, do not come into class late on account of work or doctor's appointments. Late arrivals and early departures, depending upon their severity, will result in either ½ or 1 absence. You are responsible for any material covered in class or

information presented (such as a test the following session) during your absence; make a point of having a “buddy” whom you can contact in such a situation.

I will allow up to three (3) absences (for whatever reason). The fourth absence, however, will reduce the final grade by 5 points and a fifth absence by 10 points. For example if you had four absences, a grade that had been a 91 would become an 85. Medical and family emergencies do occur, and so guard your absences accordingly for when you truly might need to be absent.

**GRADE SCALE**

A, 100-92; A-, 91-90; B+, 89-88; B, 87-82; B-, 81-80; C+, 79-78; C, 77-72; C-, 71-70; D+, 69-68; D, 67-62; D-, 61-60; F, 59