

Stalin and Stalinism



The Russian poet Evgenii Yevtushenko wrote “No, Stalin did not die. He thinks that death can be fixed. We removed him from the mausoleum. But how do we remove Stalin from Stalin's heirs?” Yevtushenko’s question continues to haunt Russia 57 years after Stalin’s death as Russians try to come to terms with Stalin, Stalinism and their place in Russian history. But what was Stalinism? Can it be reduced to the man, Stalin, or was it a phenomenon that went beyond the person? Is it possible to speak of Stalinism without Stalin?

The philosopher Slavoj Žižek recently wrote: “We should also admit that we still lack a satisfactory theory of Stalinism.” This class attempts to rectify this admission by exploring Stalin the person alongside the ideological, social, cultural, and historical phenomenon called Stalinism. This class will attempt to answer questions like: What role did Stalin as a personality contribute to Stalinism as a political system? What were the historical social conditions in Russia, and Soviet Russia in particular that led to Stalinism taking root? How did people experience Stalinism in their everyday and political lives? How did it shape their identities? What role does violence play in Stalinism as a political system? How does it compare to Nazism? And finally, how is Stalinism as remembered and in what ways does it continue to haunt Russia today? By providing answers to these questions, perhaps we can take a few steps closer to discovery a satisfactory theory of Stalinism.

Required Texts

Robert Service, *Stalin: a Biography*, Belknap, 2004
Author Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, Scriber, 1968

Class Schedule

Week One

Introduction: Stalin in History, Stalin as History

Lecture: Biography and Stalin

- Service, Chapters 1-4
 - Ronald Grigor Suny, “Beyond Psychohistory: The Young Stalin in Georgia,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1991, 48-58
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Week Two

Lecture: Stalin as a Marxist

- Service, Chapters 5-10

Discussion: The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin

- Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 1924
 - ---, *Marxism and the National Question*, 1913
 - Erik Van Ree, “Stalin as Marxist: The Western Roots of Stalin’s Russification of Marxism,” in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin*, 159-180.
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Week Three

Lecture: From Commissar to General Secretary

- Service, Chapters 17-22
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Week Four

Discussion: Why Stalin?

- James Harris, “Stalin as General Secretary: the Appointments Process and the nature of Stalin’s Power,” in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin*, 63-82.
- Stephen Cohen, “Bolshevism and Stalinism,” in Robert Tucker, ed., *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, Norton, 1977, 3-29.
- Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?*, Pathfinder Press, 1972, 86-114.

Lecture: Stalin’s Revolution

- Service, Chapters 23-27
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Week Five

Discussion: What was the Stalin Revolution

- Moshe Lewin, “Society, State, and Ideology During the First Five-Year Plan,” in Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, 209-240.
- R. W. Davies, “Stalin as Economic Policy Maker: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1936,” in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin*, 121-139
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-1939,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1979, 377-402
- Katerina Clark, “Revolutionary Culture Meets the Jazz Age,” in Clark, *St. Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution*, Harvard University Press, 1998, 162-182

Lecture: Stalin as Dictator

- Service, Chapters 28-33

Week Six

Discussion: Stalin in Power

- Moshe Lewin, “The Social Background of Stalinism,” in Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, New Press, 1994, 258-285
- J. Arch Getty, “Stalin as Prime Minister: Power and the Politburo,” in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin*, 83-107.
- Oleg V. Khlevniuk, “Stalin as Dictator: The Personalisation of Power,” in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin*, 108-120.

Lecture: Daily Life under Stalin

Week Seven

Discussion: Everyday Stalinism

- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford University Press, 1999, Selections.

Lecture: The Great Terror

Week Eight

Discussion: Stalinist Terror, Violence and Authoritarian Populism

- James Harris, “The purging of local cliques in the Urals region, 1936–7,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, Routledge, 2000, 262-285
- Igal Halfin, “The Bolsheviks’ Gallows Laughter,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11:3, 2006, 247-268
- J. Arch Getty, “Excesses Are Not Permitted”: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2002, 113-138

- Paul Hageloh, “Socially harmful elements” and the Great Terror”, in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, Routledge, 2000, 286-308
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, “How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Jul., 1993), pp. 299-320

Discussion: Understanding the Terror

- Author Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*.
- Bukharin’s letter to Stalin,” 10 December 1937
- “Ezhov’s letter of resignation to Stalin” 23 November 1938
- “Ezhov’s statement before the USSR Supreme Court,” 3 February 1940

Week Nine

Lecture: The USSR as a Communal Apartment

Discussion: Nationality under Stalinism

- Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 1994, 414-452
- Eric D. Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2002, 1-29
- Terry Martin, “Modernization or neo-traditionalism? Ascribed nationality and Soviet primordialism,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, Routledge, 2000, 348-367.
- Terry Martin, “Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,” in Ronald Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation Making the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford University Press, 2001, 67-91.

Week Ten

Lecture: How did people resist Stalinism?

Discussion: Resisting Stalinism

- Lynne Viola, “Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s: Soliloquy of a Devil’s Advocate” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1:1, 2000, 45–69.
- Douglas Northrop, “Subaltern Dialogues: Subversion and Resistance in Soviet Uzbek Family Law,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 2001, 115-139.
- Dan Healey, “Homosexuality as Resistance in Stalin’s Russia” in Lynne Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, Cornell University Press, 2002, 139-169.

- James Harris, “Resisting the Plan in the Urals, 1928-1956, Or Why Regional Officials Needed “Wreckers” and “Saboteurs,” in Lynne Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, Cornell University Press, 2002, 201-228.

Week Eleven

Lecture: Stalinist Identities

Discussion: Stalinist Self and Identity

- Anna Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1(1), Winter 2000, 119–46
- Sarah Davies, ““Us against them”: social identity in Soviet Russia, 1934–41” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, Routledge, 2000, 47-70
- Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist soul: the diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931–9,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, Routledge, 2000, 77-116.
- Golfo Alexopoulos, “Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 57, No. 4 1998, 774-790

Week Twelve

Lecture: Stalin at War

- Service, Chapters 34-41

Discussion: Two Authoritarianisms: Stalinism and Nazism

- Michael Geyer, “Introduction: After Totalitarianism – Stalinism and Nazism Compared” in Geyer and Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 1-40
- Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, “The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany,” in Geyer and Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 302-344.
- Moshe Lewin, “Stalin in the Mirror of the Other,” in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 107-134.

Week Thirteen

Lecture: DeStalinization

Discussion: Stalin and the Cult of Personality

- Sarah Davies, “Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult in the 1930s,” in Balázs Apor, ed., *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships, Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, Palgrave, 2004, 29-46.
- Catriona Kelly, “Grandpa Lenin and Uncle Stalin: Soviet Leader Cults for Little Children,” in Balázs Apor, ed., *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships, Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, Palgrave, 2004, 102-122.
- Jan Plamper, “Georgian Koba or Soviet ‘Father of Peoples’? The Stalin Cult and Ethnicity,” in Balázs Apor, ed., *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships, Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, Palgrave, 2004, 123-140.
- Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, “On Heterochrony: Birthday Gifts to Stalin, 1949,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.), 12, 2006, 355-375.

Week Fourteen

Lecture: Stalinism Today

Week Fifteen

Discussion: Stalinism as Memory

- Christian Volk, “Stalinism, Memory and Commemoration: Russia’s Dealing with the Past,” *The New School Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 6: 2, 2009, 50-58
- David Brandenberger, “A New Short Course?: A. V. Filippov and the Russian State’s Search for a ‘Usable Past’” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 10, Number 4, Fall 2009, pp. 825-833
- Nanci Adler, “The Future of the Soviet past Remains Unpredictable: The Resurrection of Stalinist Symbols Amidst the Exhumation of Mass Graves,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 8, 2005, 1093-1119
- Tatiana Shcherbina, “Stalin – a hero for our time” OpenDemocracy.net, November 13, 2009.
- Alexei Levinson, “The Uses and Abuses of Stalin’s Image,” OpenDemomcracy.net, March 25, 2010.
- Arseny Roginsky, “The Embrace of Stalinism,” OpenDemocracy.net, December 16, 2008

Discussion: What is/was Stalinism?