

HI 272

IMPERIAL RUSSIA: FROM PETER THE GREAT TO THE BOLSHEVIKS

MWF 10:10-11

CAS 229



**“The history of Russia is
the history of a country
that colonizes itself.”**

-Vasilii Kliuchevskii

DOOMED! Peek inside most popular histories of the Romanov family and you will read that: “the Romanovs were doomed from the start.” They were weak, illiberal, and archaic, and they were inevitable victims of modernization and revolution.¹ The bloody demise of the Romanovs has so engrossed the popular imagination that it has blinded many folks (including some scholars) to the fact that they were one of the longest ruling dynasties in European history. When a family stays in power for nearly 300 years and rules one of the largest, most diverse, and most enduring empires in history, we *should* ask: what allowed them to rule successfully for so long? And what might this suggest about autocracy as an effective, dynamic form of government?

Such questions about empire and authoritarianism will drive our study. The typical view of tsarist Russia is one of conservatism and stagnation. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Romanovs believed that autocracy was necessary for stability, but they constantly worked to modernize and reform their empire. Along the way, they contended with the challenges of secularization, westernization, and industrialization, and revolt. And many of these threats they fomented themselves. Russia’s first revolutionaries came from within the ruling family itself.

In our journey through the Romanovs’ Russia, we will pay particular attention to the following themes: the interactions between reform and revolution; the growth of Russia’s multi-ethnic, multi-confessional empire; the origins of enormously consequential theories of terrorism and socialism;

and the vexed question of Russia's identity. We will focus on the period between 1721—when Peter I declared himself emperor—and 1917, when Lenin announced “all power to the Soviets!” And yes, we will delve into the blood-spattered and diamond-crusted lives of the individual tsars, but we will give equal attention to the less-known but critical contributions of women, workers, serfs, Muslims, and Jews who shaped the political and economic landscape.

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Course Learning Objectives:

In this class, we will:

- Immerse ourselves in the key themes, events, and personalities of Russia's imperial past.
- Evaluate conflicting scholarly arguments that address major events in Russian history, especially with respect to causality and change over time.
- Formulate original arguments built on sound logic and historical evidence.
- Mobilize interpretive concepts like modernity, revolution, socialism, imperialism, autocracy, intelligentsia, and official nationality as frameworks for understanding the Russian empire.
- Analyze primary sources by using tools from historical, literary, visual, and film studies.
- Explore the diversity of the 30+ ethnic and religious groups who comprised Russian imperial society, appreciating their individual experiences, contributions, and interests.
- Uncover the role that nationalism played first in strengthening the Romanovs' power and later in expediting their empire's collapse.
- Learn to apply creativity to analytical pursuits, cultivating resourceful approaches to research and using historical imagination to enrich our understanding of the past.
- Craft our own scholarly questions and create our own works of historical fiction by nurturing the intellectual forces of creativity and curiosity.

In meeting these learning objectives, we will engage 2 Hub areas (1) Historical consciousness (2) Intercultural Understanding & Global Citizenship as well as the Creativity Toolkit. Their learning outcomes are:

Toolkit:

Creativity and Innovation Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in

response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.

2. Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

Hub Areas:

Historical Consciousness Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of religious traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, or socio-economic forces, and how these have changed over time.

Intercultural Understanding and Global Citizenship Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems, or societies. Note: A course in this area might, for example, explore the political systems of two countries, while another might explore multiple religious traditions within a single country, and another might explore the literature of a single country and, in assignments, invite comparative analysis of works of other national literary traditions, including those of students' countries of origin.
2. Students will demonstrate detailed understanding of at least two cultural contexts through foreign language or culture study at BU

Course Materials:

In every class meeting, we will collectively analyze primary sources such as film clips, photographs, paintings, and historical documents. The books below are available for purchase at the bookstore and on 24-hour reserve at Mugar Library. All other readings are posted on blackboard.

- Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). (**textbook**)
- Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat* (New York: Vintage, 2012).
- *Days Of A Russian Noblenoman: The Memories Of Anna Labzina, 1758-1821* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).
- *Life under Russian Serfdom: The Memoirs of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii, 1800-1868*, Boris B. Gorshkov, ed. (Central European University Press, 2005) Also available as an e-book through Mugar Library's website.
- Leo Tolstoy, *Sevastopol Sketches* (Neeland Media: 2013).

Because we will analyze all readings closely, I require you to bring a copy of them to the class meeting for which they are assigned. The only exception to this is the textbook, Freeze's *Russia*. It explains thoroughly topics I may review quickly and is recommended to you as a reference.

Course Assessments:

2 Close Readings	10%
2 Creative Assignments	30%

Midterm	15%
Final Exam	25%
Attendance & Active Participation (in lecture, discussion, exercises given in class or at the end of on-line videos)	20%

Close Readings:

The ability to analyze texts and images closely is essential for every historian. We will practice this skill collectively as a class every week in designated class periods I call “Skills Analysis Workshop” below. Twice during the semester you will be asked to do a close reading of a particular text or image on your own. You will be given two items—texts or images from recently discussed class materials—and you will choose one as the subject for a 2-page analysis of said item. More detailed instructions will be given in close prior to the first assignment. Please note: these assignments appear at the very beginning of the semester because they are golden opportunities for you to get feedback before taking the midterm, where you will be asked to analyze sources closely. They also will help you to participate in our regular class discussions more confidently and effectively and to ace the final exam.

Creative Projects:

Many of us are drawn to history because we share a fascination with “what life was like” in bygone times and places. Empathy and imagination are key parts of a historians’ toolkit. Twice during the semester, you will demonstrate how well you understand life within the Russian empire in more creative ways. You will choose one of several open-ended creative tasks such as writing historical fiction, inventing diplomatic exchanges over “Fakebook,” designing a historical board game, or recreating lost historical documents. Specific prompts will be handed out. You may pursue your own topic as long as you get instructor approval (in office hours or over email) 7 days before the deadline. No matter which topic you choose, you will carefully document all of your historical evidence in footnotes. Your project must be 4-5 pages (or 2 pages of explanation if you are making a physical object, like a board game, hand in), typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font and double-spaced with 1-inch margins. Your project must have a title, page numbers, and footnotes in Chicago format. Footnotes should be in 10-point font and single-spaced. A citation guide and grading rubric are posted on Blackboard.

Exams:

The midterm and final exams will be “closed book” and “closed notes.” They will assess your abilities to 1. analyze primary sources critically and 2. evaluate and craft historical arguments. In addition to analyzing visual and textual material, you will answer 1-2 essay questions, where you will take a stance on a debate or issue in Soviet history and craft your own argument about it. In lieu of taking the final exam, you have the option of crafting a well-researched, well-argued a research paper (7-9 pages) on a major historical question that engrosses you. You must get the instructor’s approval of your topic 10 days before the deadline. The paper will be due the same day and time as the officially scheduled final exam.

Attendance & Active Participation:

The most important way to ensure your success in this class is to prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all class meetings. Weekly class periods (called “Source Analysis Workshops” below) will be entirely devoted to practicing historical analysis. Moreover, in many class meetings, you will do small activities—individually or in groups—to enhance your interpretive skills. For instance, you may write a “minute paper” at the end of a lecture, or track a certain theme on an index card while you read an assigned novel. You will also work in small groups during class—for example: to draft a petition to the tsar or craft statements for a debate on the emancipation of the serfs. Your participation grade will be based on your preparedness for and good faith effort on all such activities.

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences from lecture without penalty. Additional, undocumented absences will hurt your grade. Students who miss 5 or more class meetings will be in danger of not passing the course. Student athletes, musicians, actors, employees, and others whose extracurricular activities may conflict with class must tell me within **first 2 weeks** (14 days) of the semester what dates they will miss, so that arrangements can be made for them to make up the work. They also should notify me as soon as possible if conflicts emerge because of postseason play, performances, etc. Any student who is unable to take the midterm, or final at the scheduled times must give me 2 weeks (14 days) prior notice for rescheduling.

Completion of all Assignments:

You must complete all the assignments and take all of the exams for this course. Even if you are taking this class pass/fail. Failure to complete all required assignments will result in a failing grade for the course.

Late Work:

Assignments are to be handed in on the date listed below at the very start of class. Papers handed in during the middle or end of class will be considered 1 day late. A paper or exam will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day it is late (an A will become an A-, a B+ will become a B, etc.). I will not accept assignments that are more than 7 days late. If you need an extension, let me know in advance (at least 4 days). I consider extensions only when there is a compelling reason and sufficient notice. Do not ask for an extension a day or two before the deadline.

Extra Credit:

You may earn up to 3% extra credit by doing 1 of the following 2 tasks:

1. Attend a lecture, conference, talk, film screening, or exhibition in the Boston area on Russian imperial history and write 2-3 pages reviewing it (what did you learn; how do you evaluate the speaker's argument; what further questions do you have? etc.). Check the website of Harvard's Davis Center <http://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/>, which has a fully monthly calendar of events. This assignment must be handed in no later than Week 12/7.
2. Write a 3-page analysis of a film on some aspect of the Russian imperial past. Your film must be approved in advance by the instructor. This assignment must be handed in no later than Week 13. Specific instructions about how to do your critique are posted on blackboard.

Laptops and Mobile Devices:

Laptops maybe used in class to take notes and consult the electronic readings. During discussions, I may ask you to close your laptop, so always have paper and pencil with you for note taking. Cell phones and mobile devices must be silenced and cannot be used at any time. If I find that students are using laptops or other devices for purposes other than taking notes (web-surfing, emailing, checking Instagram, etc.), I will ban them from classroom use.

Accommodations:

Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations should contact me and the Office of Disability Services at 353-3658 or <http://www.bu.edu/disability/> as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will be confidential.

Additional Resources for Success:

All of us need a little help with writing, research, and mastering historical material. There are many places on campus that offer tutoring and writing help, including assistance for English Language Learners. Look ahead and make appointments before the paper and project deadlines. Tutors are available at the Educational Resource Center <http://www.bu.edu/erc/> . Additional writing help is offered via CAS, COM, and other offices listed here:

<http://www.bu.edu/erc/writingassistance/additional-writing-assistance/>

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism--the passing off of another person's research, ideas, or writing as one's own--and cheating will not be tolerated. Paraphrasing without acknowledgment of authorship also is plagiarism. If I witness or hear of any academic dishonesty, I am **obligated** to report it to the Dean's Office. As BU students, you are responsible for knowing and following Boston University's Academic Conduct Code:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

Grade Scale:

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76
B = 83-86	C- = 70-72



Schedule of Lectures, Readings, & Assignments:

WEEK LECTURES, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

1

Wed. Sept 5 **Introduction**

- Sean Guillory, “A Genealogy of American Russophobia,” <http://inrussia.com/a-genealogy-of-american-russophobia>

Fri. Sept. 7 **In the Beginning, there was Rus’**

Textbook: skim chpts. 2-3

“I have conquered an empire, but I have not been able to conquer myself.”

-Peter I

2

Mon. Sept. 10 **Boyars to Serfs: Who’s Who in Muscovite Society**

Wed. Sept. 12 **How did Russia become an Empire?**

Fri. Sept. 14 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Law Code (*Ulozhenie*) of 1649²
- *Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the Terrible*. Carolyn Johnston Pouncy ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

3

Mon. Sept. 17 **Off with their Beards!: Domestic Reform under Peter I**

Wed. Sept. 19 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Korb, *Scenes from the Court of Peter the Great*³
- Peter’s reforms regarding the calendar, clothes, beards, sale of serfs, the Table of Ranks, the Holy Synod, the Academy of Sciences⁴

Textbook: Chpt. 4

Fri. Sept. 21 **Game of Thrones: Women of the Palace Revolutions**

FIRST CLOSE READING DUE (2 pages)

“You philosophers are lucky men. You write on paper & paper. [...]

Unfortunate Empress that I am, I write on the susceptible skins of living beings.”

–Catherine II

4

Mon. Sept. 24 **“Minerva Triumphant:” Catherine II’s Enlightened Absolutism**

Wed. Sept. 26 **Source Analysis Workshop:**

- Catherine II’s “Instruction (Nakaz)”⁵

- Samples of Peoples' Instructions to the Autocrat⁶
 - *Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memories of Anna Labzina*, 1-116
- Fri. Sept. 28 **Building an Empire: Standardization or Colonization?**
SECOND CLOSE READING DUE (2 pages)
Textbook: Chpt 4, p. 124-131; Chpt 5. 132-155, 161-167

5

Mon. Oct.1 NO CLASS. ON-LINE LECTURE (ON BLACKBOARD UNDER "ECHOCENTER"):

Enlightenment's Revenge: Revolt & Revolution

Wed. Oct. 3 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Catherine II's Manifesto on Pugachev (1773)⁷
- Pugachev's Emancipation Declaration (1774)⁸
- Serf Petitions to Pugachev⁹
- Catherine's Epitaph (1788)¹⁰
- Catherine II's Decree on the Rupture with France (1793)¹¹

Textbook: Chpt. 5 p. 155-161, Chpt. 6 168-182

Fri. Oct. 5 IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

6

Mon. Oct 8 No Class. Columbus day

Tues. Oct. 9 **The Great Patriotic War**

Wed. Oct 10 **Russia: Peacekeeper of Europe?**

Fri. Oct 12 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Alexander's Proclamation to the Nation (1812)¹²
- Alexander's Manifesto on Napoleon's Retreat from Russia (1812)¹³
- Nadezhda Durova, *The Calvary Maiden: Journals of a Female Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars*, Mary Fleming Zirin, trans. (London: Paladin, 1990) (selection)

<p>"The Russian emperor is a military chief & every day with him is a day of battle." –Marquis de Custine on Nicholas I</p>

7

Mon. Oct 15 **Russia's "Orient" & Islam**

Wed. Oct. 17 **The Decembrists: Russia's First Revolutionaries?**

- Nicholas I's Manifesto Upon Ascending the Throne, December 24, 1825

Fri. Oct 19 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat* (all)

Textbook: Chpt. 6 182-198

8

Mon. Oct 22 **"For Faith, for Tsar, for Fatherland"**

1st CREATIVE PROJECT DUE

Wed. Oct 24 **The Forgotten War in Crimea**

Fri. Oct 26 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Leo Tolstoy, “Sevastopol in December” and “Sevastopol in May”¹⁴



“It is better to abolish serfdom from above than wait for it to abolish itself from below.”
-Alexander II

9

Mon. Oct. 29 **Tsar Emancipator, Alex II**

Wed. Oct 31 **(Not so) Great Reforms**

Fri. Nov 2 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Alexander II’s Manifesto Emancipating the Serfs (1861)¹⁵
 - Samples of Peasants’ & Nobles’ Responses to the Emancipation¹⁶
 - *Life under Russian Serfdom: The Memoirs of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii, 1800-1868*
- Textbook: Chpt. 7 199-225

10

Mon. Nov. 5 **Russia’s *Intelligentsia*: Westernizers vs. Slavophiles**

Wed. Nov. 7 **Challenges from the Left: Socialists & Terrorists**

Fri. Nov. 9 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Alexander Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman”
- Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts* (excerpt)¹⁷
- Konstantin Aksakov, “On the Internal State of Russia” (excerpt)¹⁸

Textbook: Chpt. 7 225-233

11

Mon. Nov. 12 **Challenges from the Right: Pan Slavism & Russification**

- Manifesto of Alexander III Affirming Autocracy (1881)¹⁹

Wed. Nov. 14 **Industrialization**

Fri. Nov. 16 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- S. Nechaev, “Catechism of a Revolutionist” (1869) (excerpt)²⁰

- The Program of the People's Will (1881)²¹
- S.D. Urusov Explains Russian Anti-Semitism (1907)²²
- F.P. Pavlov Depicts Life in a Textile Mill (1890s)²³

“The railroad is like a leaven, which creates a cultural fermentation among the population. Even if it passed through an absolutely wild people along its way, it would raise them in a short time to the level requisite for its operation.”

-Sergei Witte

12

Mon. Nov. 19 **Autocracy's Demise: War and Scandal of Autocracy**

2nd CREATIVE PROJECT DUE

Textbook: Chpt. 8, p. 234-250

- Optional Reading: Rasputin: The Holy Devil (1912)²⁴

Wed. Nov. 21 NO CLASS. Thanksgiving Break

Fri. Nov 23 NO CLASS. Thanksgiving Break

13

Mon. Nov. 26 **The 1905 Revolution**

Wed. Nov. 28 **Russia's Experiment with Constitutional Monarchy**

Fri. Nov 30 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Petition Presented to Tsar Nicholas II, January 1905²⁵
- Workers' Petitions, Instructions, and Demands (1905-1906)²⁶
- Tsar Nicholas II, “A Speech from the Throne” and 1st Duma's Response²⁷
- The October Manifesto of Nicholas II (1905)²⁸

Textbook: Chpt. 8, p. 250-268



It is the duty of the revolution to put an end to compromise,
and to put an end to compromise means taking the path of socialist revolution.

-Lenin

14

Mon. Dec. 3 **Who Were the Bolsheviks?**

- V.I. Lenin, “What is to be Done?” (1902) (selection)²⁹

Wed. Dec. 5 **The February Revolution**

Fri. Dec. 7 **Source Analysis Workshop**

- Nikolai de Vasily Recounts the Abdication of Nikolai II (1917)³⁰
- Petrograd Soviet’s Order No. 1 (1917)³¹
- Tsar’s letters from the front to the Tsarina (1912-1915)³²
- Peasant war songs, war poetry, and petitions from the front

15

Mon. Dec 10 **All Power to the Soviets!**

- V. I. Lenin, “Call to Power” (1917)³³

Textbook: Chpt. 9, p. 269-296

Wed. Dec. 12 **Conclusions**

Final Exam TBA (scheduled by the Office of the Registrar)

¹ Here are just a few links to much-respected popular books and journals that make this claim:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/31/the-romanovs-book-simon-sebag-montefiore-russia-royal-family-robert-massie>; <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/08/03/nnp/18621.html>;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/books/review/the-romanovs-1613-1918-by-simon-sebag-montefiore.html>;
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/30/four-sisters-romanov-duchesses-helen-rappaport-review>.

² From: James Cracraft, *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia* (Lexington: D. C. Heath & Co, 1994).

³ *Scenes from the Court of Peter the Great: A Series of Monographs. Based on the Latin Diary of F. Korb, a secretary of the Austrian Legation at the Court of Peter the Great*, F. L. Glaser, ed. (Nicholas L. Brown, 1921).

https://archive.org/stream/scenesfromcourto00korb/scenesfromcourto00korb_djvu.txt

⁴ From: Cracraft, *Major Problems*, 110-120.

⁵ From: Thomas Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*, Vol. 2: Imperial Russia, 1700-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

⁶ From: Gregory L. Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution: A Documentary Social History of Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁷ From: Basil Dmytryshyn, ed. *Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700-1912* (Hinsdale: The Dryden Press).

⁸ Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*.

⁹ From: Gregory L. Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution: A Documentary Social History of Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ From: George Vernadsky, et al., eds. *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

¹¹ Vernadsky et al., *A Source Book*.

¹² Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Leo Tolstoy, "Sebastopol in May," *The Raid and Other Stories* (Louise and Aylmer Maude, trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹⁵ From: Cracraft, *Major Problems*.

¹⁶ From: Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution*.

¹⁷ From: Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts* (Abridged Edition), Dwight McDonald, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹⁸ From: W.J Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord, eds. *A Documentary History of Russian Thought* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987).

¹⁹ From: Cracraft, *Major Problems*

²⁰ Vernadsky et al., *A Source Book*.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia*.

²⁵ From; Documents in Russian History.

http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Workers%27_Petition%2C_January_9th%2C_1905_%28Bloody_Sunday%29

²⁶ From: Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution*

²⁷ Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilization*.

²⁸ Documents in Russian History. http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Manifesto_of_October_17th,_1905

²⁹ From, V.I. Lenin: "What is to Be Done?" *Lenin: Collected Works* Vol. 5, 375-76, 451-53, 464-67.

³⁰ From: Cracraft, *Major Problems*

³¹ From: *An Illustrated History of the Great October Socialist Revolution: 1917*

(Moscow, 1988). <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/index.htm>

³² Vernadsky et al., *A Source Book*.

³³ Modern History Sourcebook. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1917lenin1.html>