

HIST 129a. Medieval Russia.

Fall 2024 ver. 8-15-24

Part 1: Course information

Time and place: In person Tuesdays and Thursdays noon-1:15 p.m. in BRH 210.

Instructor information

Instructor: Aaron J. Cohen, PhD.

Office hours: TuWeTh 1:30-2:30 p.m. or by appointment in Tahoe Hall 3092 OR via Zoom @ <https://csus.zoom.us/my/cohenofficehours>.

E-mail: cohenaj@csus.edu.

Catalog description.

Emergence of early modern Russia from the principalities of medieval Russia. Emphasis on Eastern European, Byzantine, and Eurasian contributions to Russian history.

Registration details

Graded: Graded Student.

Units: 3.0.

Prerequisite: None.

GE area: **C2 (Humanities).**

Course description

For most people, medieval Rus and early modern Muscovy are unknown chapters in the wider European and Eurasian historical experience. In this course we will study a broad outline of early Russian political, cultural, social, and economic history from the ninth to the seventeenth century, including the formation of Rus, the significance of Byzantium and the Mongols for early Russian history, and the rise of Novgorod, Lithuania, and Muscovy. Major themes include the emergence of different cultural traditions and political regions out of the shared historical experience of medieval Rus, the importance of war and religion in these changes, and early Russia's place in the wider medieval world.

Textbooks and course materials

Required texts

1. *Reinterpreting Russian History* (Kaiser and Marker). ISBN 9780195078589.
2. *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (Zenkovsky) **revised and enlarged edition**. ISBN 9780452010864. **DO NOT USE OTHER EDITIONS.**
3. Various required pdf readings listed on the syllabus and posted on the Canvas lecture notes page for each week. These materials are free of charge.

Course technology requirements

Handouts and assignments are distributed only via Canvas. **Students have a responsibility to access course materials and assignments in a timely manner**; the instructor will not be held responsible for any circumstances, technical or personal, that prevent access to course material. **Students who have not logged into Canvas by 11:59 p.m. Monday, September 2, will be administratively dropped and not be allowed to re-add the course.**

All required technology is available at low or no cost through student support services at Sac State. The CSUS library and Instructional Resource Technology office provide **free laptops** and Microsoft Word for students to use on a short- or long-term [basis](#). Students may use personal computers, but they must meet the following requirements:

- High-speed internet connection.
- Access to Canvas throughout the semester.
- Ability to use Zoom, Microsoft Word, and Adobe software.

Please do NOT use Google Docs OR portable devices as word processors in this course. The history profession uses Microsoft Word for its robust tools, especially footnotes. Google Docs often does not format footnotes correctly, and it is good to practice using the industry standard. **Use a computer and the desktop version of MS Word.** To obtain your free desktop version of MS Word (and Microsoft 365), go to office365.csus.edu and login with your Sac State login and password. Click on "Install and more."

For technical questions about Canvas, please:

- See [Canvas for Students](#) for common Canvas questions and solutions.
- Email the [Academic Technology Center](#) in AIRC 2005.
- Call (916) 278-7337.

The use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments without instructor permission is considered by the university to be academic dishonesty. The goal of an education is not to complete assignments but to learn. Learning involves direct engagement with material and practice. Anything that prevents students from engagement and practice (such as plagiarism, buying a paper from someone else, or using AI to write papers) does not contribute to learning but in fact undermines it. Any work determined to be AI generated in this class will therefore be treated as the equivalent of plagiarism according to the policies in this syllabus. However, spelling and grammar checkers that do not write or rewrite papers are allowed.

Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support (CARES)

If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The [CARES](#) office provides case management support for any enrolled student.

Disability Access Center (DAC)

Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact the [Disability Access Center \(DAC\)](#) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from DAC is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.

Title IX information

Sac State is committed to supporting students and fostering a campus environment free of sexual misconduct and gender-based discrimination. If a student chooses to disclose to a faculty or staff member an experience related to sexual misconduct which includes, but is not limited to rape, relationship violence, or stalking, all faculty and staff members are obligated to report this disclosure to the university's Title IX Coordinator. Contact Sac State's Title IX Coordinator, Skip Bishop, at (916) 278-5770 or email at william.bishop@csus.edu. Upon receipt of the report, the Title IX Coordinator will contact you to inform you of your rights and options as a survivor and connect you with support resources, including resolution options for holding accountable the person who harmed you.

Students who elect not to discuss their experience with the Title IX Coordinator can speak confidentially to the following confidential resources: Student Health & Counseling Services at The WELL On Campus Phone Number: 916-278-6461 Website: www.csus.edu/shcs. Campus Confidential Advocate – Laura Swartzen Email: weave@csus.edu. On Campus Phone Number: 916-278-5850 (during business hours) WEAVE 24/7 Hotline: 916-920-2952.

Student Health and Counseling Services

Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. [Student Health and Counseling Services \(SHCS\)](#) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers: Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost.

Important notes: Any form of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, may be reported to the office of student affairs. **This syllabus and course policies are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or typographical errors. In case of a conflict between the syllabus and Canvas instructions, the syllabus will take precedence unless the syllabus shows a clear error.** Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. It is the student's responsibility to check Canvas for corrections or updates to the syllabus.

All students are expected to follow the [Hornet honor code](#). Students will:

- Promote an inclusive campus and community.
- Listen and respect each other's thoughts, interests, and views.
- Value diversity and learn from one another.
- Engage daily with mutual trust, care, and integrity.
- Support a culture of honor and adhere to campus policies for honesty, ethics, and conduct.
- Be proud to be Sac State Hornets.

Part 2: Course objectives

In this course, students will be able to:

General course learning outcomes

- Recount a broad outline of Russian history from 800 to 1698 CE.
- Understand the contribution of non-Russian peoples to early Russian history and the political, cultural, and social differences between early Russia and medieval Europe, including issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and religion.
- Practice written communication, critical thinking, and other skills necessary for professional development in history, teaching, and related occupations.
- Discover something interesting about the world and about the self.

GE Area C2 (Humanities) learning outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
- Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
- Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

Part 3: Course assignments

Students will meet these objectives through a combination of these course activities. Details on rubrics, criteria for grading, and other information are posted on Canvas.

I. Classroom attendance. For each class meeting, students will receive 1 point for attendance and 0 points for non-attendance. Points will be added together and scored using the standard percentage scale, e.g. five absences = 25/30 or 83%, B. **No late work accepted.**

II. Identification quizzes. There are **three (3)** thirty-minute **in-class** identification quizzes as indicated on the class schedule. For each quiz, **seven quiz items** (people, places, dates, and concepts) will be chosen from lecture material and primary source assignments. Students will identify, describe, and state the significance of **four (4)** out of these seven items. Each answer should be at least a paragraph containing the “who, what, where, when, and why” for that item in as much detail as possible. Quizzes are not cumulative. **No late work accepted.**

III. Primary source analyses. The primary source analysis assignment is an online space where students argue for the historical significance of **any single (1) primary source assigned for the same week** (e.g., the week 3 analysis is on week 3 assigned material). The instructor encourages you to read the essay questions first and choose a primary source for the analysis that you can use to make your argument in the essay. In this way you will be able to scaffold your work, i.e., use the analyses to help write the essays. Do not analyze multiple sources in any individual analysis or submit an essay rough draft as an analysis. The due dates are **Tuesdays, 11:45 a.m. Pacific Time. No late work accepted.**

IV. Formal take-home essays. There are **three (3)** short (750-word minimum) formal take-home essays due when indicated on the class schedule. **Late work accepted with a penalty.**

V. Final examination. The final examination will take place in our classroom. Students must complete the final to pass the class. **No late work accepted.**

Part 4: Course schedule

Note: Readings and film viewing should be completed for the week they are listed. **Students are not expected to read duplicate assignments if they occur in the schedule.** The instructor may add assignments or alter the schedule for special events. Changes will be communicated via Canvas.

Module 0 (read this material first and use as a reference). **Course information.**

Week 1 (August 27, 29): **Introduction.** Read Kaiser/Marker, preface; Zenkovsky, introduction; Canvas readings: Putin.

Week 2 (September 3, 5): **Slavs, Varangians, Constantinople, and the steppe.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 1; Zenkovsky, “Stories from the *Primary Chronicle*” (43-77).

Week 3 (September 10, 12): **Rus.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapters 2-3; Zenkovsky, “Homiletic and Didactic Works” (85-100).

- Week 4 (September 17, 19): **Religion and culture in Rus.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapters 4-5; Zenkovsky, "Lives of Saints and Monks" (101-152).
- Week 5 (September 24, 26): **Mongols and Kipchaks.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 6; Zenkovsky, "Military Tales" excluding the "Zadonshchina" (193-211), "Life of the Great Prince Alexander" (224-236), "Sermon on the Merciless Heathens" (243-248).
- Week 6 (October 1, 3): **Essay 1 due (October 3). Suzdalia and Novgorod.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 7; Zenkovsky, "Tales from the *Novgorodian Chronicle*" (77-83), "The Story of Great John" (310-314); Canvas reading: Novgorod Chronicle.
- Week 7 (October 8, 10): **Quiz 1 (October 10). Lithuania and Moscow.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 8; Zenkovsky, "Prince Roman" (83-84).
- Week 8 (October 15, 17): **The rise of Muscovy.** Read Zenkovsky, "Zadonshchina" (211-223), "Life and Death of Grand Prince Dmitry" (315-322), "Tale of the White Cowl" (323-332); Canvas readings: Contarini, Herberstein, Shields-Kollman.
- Week 9 (October 22, 24): **Society and economy in Muscovy.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapters 10-11. Canvas readings: Sudebnik of 1497.
- Week 10 (October 29, 31): **Ivan IV.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 9; Zenkovsky, "Epistolary Polemics" (366-376); Canvas readings: Early life, Chancellor, Perrie (Ivan IV).
- Week 11 (November 5, 7): **Essay 2 due (November 7). Religion and culture in Muscovy.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapters 8, 12; Zenkovsky, "Life of our Holy Father Sergius" (262-290), "Life of St. Michael, Fool in Christ" (300-310).
- Week 12 (November 12, 14): **Quiz 2 (November 14). Beginnings of empire.** Read Zenkovsky, "Afanasy Nikitin's Journey" (333-353), "Stephen Bathory's Campaign" (354-365); Canvas readings: Ermak, Siberia, Nerchinsk.
- Week 14 (November 19, 21): **The Time of Troubles.** Read Zenkovsky, "Historical Works" (379-390), "Message of a Nobleman" (487-489), "Lament of Boris Godunov's Daughter" (503-505); Canvas readings: Fletcher, Bussow, Conditions for Ascension, Shuiskii, Dunning, Perrie (Legends).
- Week 13 (November 26): **In the borderlands.** Read Canvas readings: Ukraine, Cossacks, Plokhyy.
- Week 15 (December 3, 5): **Essay 3 due (December 5). More troubles.** Read Kaiser/Marker, chapter 13; Zenkovsky, "Life of Yuliania Lazarevsky" (391-399), "Life of Archpriest Avvakum By Himself" (399-448), "Rules of Falconry" (520-522); Canvas readings: Olearius, Ulozhenie, Martin.

**Final exam: Tuesday, December 10, 12:45 - 2:45 p.m., in our classroom.
Quiz 3 will take place during the final exam period.**

Deadline for late work: Thursday, December 12, 11:59 p.m.

Important policies: Course deadlines are enforced by Canvas and cannot be extended for any reason. Keep copies of all your work on a hard drive, flash drive, or paper in the event of a computer malfunction or other technical problem.

Part 5: Grading policy

Graded course activities

Grades are based on the average grade in each activity category, not a cumulative point system. **In category III the lowest five (5) scores will be dropped to allow for circumstances that might cause students to miss assignments. To pass the class, students must demonstrate passing competence (60% or above) attempted in 60% or more of assignments within categories AND in 60% or more of all categories. In this class, then, students who fail more than three categories will fail the course. Students must also complete the final to pass the class. Students will be expected to follow the writing guide posted on Canvas in categories with formal writing.** Each category will be combined using this weighting:

Category	Assignment	% of course grade
I	Classroom attendance	10
II	3 identification quizzes	20
III	14 primary source analyses (9 required to pass the category, lowest 5 dropped)	20
IV	3 formal written essays	30
V	Final examination	20

Late work

To be fair to students who work hard to make deadlines, late essays will receive a full letter grade penalty. **No other assignments will be accepted late.** Late essays will normally be graded at the end of the semester, not when submitted, except upon request by the student directly to the instructor.

These late policies will be in force also for foreseeable scheduled power outages, COVID-19 physical distancing regulations, travel, and work

schedule changes. Students are expected to be aware of technical and social limits that may impact their area of residence and to plan around them by completing work in advance and notifying the instructor.

Viewing grades in Canvas

This class does not use the Canvas gradebook for calculations. Grades and student progress indicators are calculated in an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded by the instructor. They can be viewed in the Canvas gradebook or Canvas assignments section (**click "View By Type"**). **For information see the week 0 module.** The instructor will update the online grades each time a grading session has been complete (typically 7 days after the completion of an activity but often quicker).

Letter grade assignment

Grades for most work are given as letter grades, calculated and averaged using a 12-point system. Some assignments may be graded on a percentage basis. All are computed and rounded by Canvas or Excel. Missing work will be scored as 0.

Letter grade earned	Points used in calculation	Percentage equivalent	GPA equivalent	Standard
A	12	93-100	4.0	Excellent work
A-	11	90-92	3.7	Nearly excellent work
B+	10	87-89	3.3	Very good work
B	9	83-86	3.0	Good work
B-	8	80-82	2.7	Mostly good work
C+	7	77-79	2.3	Above average work
C	6	73-76	2.0	Average work
C-	5	70-72	1.7	Mostly average work
D+	4	67-69	1.3	Below average work
D	3	63-67	1.0	Poor work
D-	2	60-62	0.7	Very poor work
F	1	Below 60	0.0	Failing work
F	0	0	0.0	Not attempted

Part 6: Course policies

Build rapport

If you find that you have any trouble keeping up with assignments or other aspects of the course, make sure you let your instructor know as early as possible. As you will find, building rapport and effective relationships are key to becoming an effective professional. Make sure that you are proactive in informing your instructor when difficulties arise during the semester so that we can help you find a solution.

Complete assignments

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline. Late or missing assignments will impact the student's grade.

Understand when you may drop this course

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider disenrolling from a course. Refer to the Sac State Course Schedule for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is required to drop from the course. Serious and compelling reasons include documented and significant change in work hours, leaving student unable to attend class, or documented and severe physical or mental illness or injury to the student or student's family.

Incomplete policy

Under emergency or special circumstances students may petition for an incomplete grade. Incompletes will not be given except for a documented emergency that prevents completion of the final assignments (missing online work is not eligible).

Communication policy

The instructor monitors email daily and will respond when contacted with questions. Normally a response should come immediately, but students should wait at least 24 hours before sending follow-up communications. The instructor will normally give feedback on assignments only through Canvas course rubrics but is happy to provide more personalized feedback by email, Zoom, or in person.

Part 7: Commit to integrity

By taking this class you agree to abide by the guidelines described in this syllabus and on the academic honesty page available on the Canvas site.

Students must respect the intellectual property of others in this class. Make sure to cite sources of other people's ideas; do not pass them off as your own. Copying from other students, assigned course work, or outside web sites without quotation and attribution will be treated as plagiarism and dealt with according to university policy. Students who plagiarize will be warned and receive an F for that assignment.

On the second infraction, the student will receive an F for the course.

Turnitin tool

Formal written essays are reviewed using the Canvas Turnitin tool for writing feedback and originality check purposes.

Consistent with Sacramento State's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a "similarity score." The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work.

Students should submit essays to Turnitin assignments without identifying information included in the paper (e.g., name or student number), the system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

Sac State's academic honesty policy & procedures

"The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars and teachers. California State University, Sacramento expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles, and in so doing, will protect the integrity of academic work and student grades."

Definitions (from the Sacramento State University Library)

At Sac State, "**cheating** is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means." For clarity, "**plagiarism is a form of cheating**," defined by the university as "the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person's contribution."

The use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments without instructor permission is considered by the university to be academic dishonesty. Any work determined to be AI generated in this class will be treated as the equivalent of plagiarism according to the policies in this syllabus.

Read more about Sac State's [Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures](#).