Department of History/College of Arts and Letters

HIST 129A: Medieval Russia
Fall 2020 Coronavirus edition

Part 1: Course information

Time and place: Wednesdays 12:00-1:15pm as Zoom meeting only.

Instructor information

Instructor: Aaron J. Cohen, PhD
Office hours: MoWeTh 1:30-2:30 pm or by appointment 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 remain little-known 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. Please make sure to obtain the correct edition and to allow for extended shipping times if you purchase used books through a bookselling site.

- Reinterpreting Russian History (Kaiser and Marker, ISBN 9780195078589).
Other required readings, usually articles and excerpts from books that contain primary sources, will be made available through Canvas.

**Course technology requirements**
This course is delivered 100% online. 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 are expected to plan around scheduled power outages, COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions, and work schedules.

All required technology is available at low or no cost through student support services at Sac State. Students may use personal computers or similar devices, but they must meet the following requirements:

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

**Technical assistance**
For technical questions, please:

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

For course content questions, please contact the instructor by email or post to the course discussion boards.

**Basic needs support**
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. Email the CARES office at [cares@csus.edu](mailto:cares@csus.edu) to speak with a case manager about the resources available to you. Check out the [CARES website](#).

**Inform your instructor of any accommodations needed**
If you have a documented disability and verification from the **Office of Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD)** and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. It is the student’s responsibility to provide documentation of disability to SSWD and meet with a SSWD counselor to request special accommodation **before** classes start. SSWD is located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice) (916) 278-7239 (TDD only) or via email at [sswd@csus.edu](mailto:sswd@csus.edu).


**Covid-19 related information**

If you are sick, stay home and do not attend class. Notify your instructor. If you are experiencing any COVID-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, loss of smell or taste, nausea, diarrhea, or headache) or have had exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID contact Student Health & Counseling Services (SHCS) at 916-278-6461 to receive guidance and/or medical care. You are asked to report any possible COVID related illnesses/exposures to SHCS via this [COVID-19 Illness/Exposure Report Form](mailto:COVID-19%20Illness/Exposure%20Report%20Form). Expect a call from SHCS within 24 hours.

Students in quarantine must contact the instructor to arrange an accommodation for missed course assignments.

Students are expected to comport themselves consistent with [Hornet honor code](http://hornet.honorcode).

**Part 2: Course objectives**

**General course learning objectives**

In this course, students will be able to

- 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.

Specific topical learning objectives are available on Canvas.

**Area C2 learning outcomes**

Students completing C2 requirements should be able to:

- 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.

**Course assignments**

You will meet these objectives though a combination of these course activities:

1. Three (3) short online identification quizzes.
2. Three 3-4 page (c. 750 word) formal take-home essays.
3. Online commentaries (tool available on Canvas), due each week before class on **Wednesday, 11:45 am** Pacific Time.
4. Online participation every **Wednesday at noon** in a weekly Zoom session.

Detailed information about these assignments is posted on the course Canvas site.

**Part 3: Course schedule**

**Note:** Readings should be completed for the week they are listed. **Students are not expected to read duplicate assignments if they occur in the schedule.**

Week 1 (September 2): **Introduction.** *Read:* Kaiser, preface; Zenkovsky, introduction.

Week 2 (September 9): **Slavs, Varangians, Constantinople, and the steppe.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapter 1; Zenkovsky, 43-77.

Week 3 (September 16): **Rus.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapters 2-3; Zenkovsky, 85-108.

Week 4 (September 23): **Religion and culture in Rus.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapters 4-5; Zenkovsky, 108-152.


Week 6 (October 7): **Essay 1 due (October 7). Vladimir-Suzdalita and Novgorod.** *Read:* Zenkovsky, 77-83, 211-223, 310-314; Canvas reading: Chronicle of Novgorod.

Week 7 (October 14): **Quiz 1 (October 14). Lithuania and Moscow.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapter 7-8; Zenkovsky, 83-84, 315-322.

Week 8 (October 21): **The Rise of Muscovy.** *Read:* Zenkovsky, 323-332; Canvas readings: Shields-Kollman, Contarini, Herberstein.

Week 9 (October 28): **Society and economy in Muscovy.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapters 10-11.

Week 10 (November 4): **Ivan IV.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapter 9; Zenkovsky, 366-376; Canvas readings: Perrie (Ivan IV), Ivan IV’s early life, Chancellor.

Week 11 (November 11): **No Zoom meeting due to Veterans Day, but questions are due as usual. Essay 2 due (November 12). Religion and culture in Muscovy.** *Read:* Kaiser, chapters 12-13; Zenkovsky, 259-310.

Week 13 (November 25): **In the borderlands. Read:** Zenkovsky, 333-353; Canvas readings: Plokhy, Ukraine, Siberia, Nerchinsk, Cossacks.

Week 14 (December 2): **The Time of Troubles. Read:** Zenkovsky, 379-390, 487-489, 503-505; Canvas readings: Bussow, Shuiskii, Conditions for Ascension, Dunning, Perrie (Legends).

Week 15 (December 9): **Essay 3 due (December 9). More troubles. Read:** Zenkovsky, 452-486, 511-519; Canvas readings: Olearius, Ulozhenie, Martin.

**Quiz 3: Wednesday, December 16, 10:15 - 11:00 am, online format.**

**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 computer malfunction or other technical problem.

**Part 4: Grading policy**

The final grade assigned will be based on the average grade for each graded course activity. Each graded course category will then be combined using this weighting:

**Graded course activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment category</th>
<th>% of final course grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification quizzes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal written essays</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly commentaries (only highest 9 scores counted)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (Zoom sessions)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation (Zoom sessions)**

**Procedure for participation.** Online participation includes the reading of lecture notes for each week, the posting of one or more questions on the Canvas discussion board before 11:59 pm Wednesday, and participation in the weekly Zoom session on Thursdays at noon. The instructor will not answer all questions but will deal with the aggregate in the weekly Zoom session, which will end when all questions are answered (e.g., it may not last the entire period).

**Grading standards for participation.** Each week students will receive one point for posting one or more questions and one point for participating in the Zoom session. **You do not have to ask questions for the Zoom session but must be present to receive credit.** The total online participation grade will be added together (29
points maximum), which will be graded using the standard percentage scale (not a letter grade) on the next page, e.g., three missed questions and two missed Zoom sessions = 24/29 or 83%, B. Students must begin participation in Zoom sessions at noon and must participate for at least 95% of each session to receive credit. If the instructor ends the session early, late students will NOT be allowed to join and will not receive credit.

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

Marks received for graded activities will be posted in the Canvas grade book. The instructor will update the online grades each time a grading session has been complete (typically 7 days after the completion of an activity).

**Letter grade assignment**

Grades for most work are given as letter grades, calculated and averaged using a 12-point system (those not attempted receive 0). Participation is graded on a percentage basis. Grades are computed and rounded by Canvas or Microsoft Excel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Points used in calculation</th>
<th>Percentage equivalent</th>
<th>GPA equivalent</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Excellent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Nearly excellent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Mostly good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Above average work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Average work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Mostly average work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Below average work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important note: For more information about grading at Sac State, visit the academic policies and grading section of the university catalog.

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

Part 5: Course policies

Attend class and participate
Students are expected to attend all class sessions as listed on the course calendar.

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.

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 individualized feedback by email or Zoom. Any changes to the course will be communicated by email and Canvas.
**Part 6: 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 in this course may be reviewed using the Canvas Turnitin tool for grading 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.”

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

**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.”

**Plagiarism** is a form of cheating.” At Sac State, "plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person’s contribution.”
Important Note: 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. 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.