

History 539

Siberia in World History

Professor Nick Breyfogle
Office Hours: Wed 11-12, Fri 2-4, and by appointment
Office: 159 Dulles Hall. Phone: 292-3560
breyfogle.1@osu.edu

Siberia is a country, or rather a continental division of the globe, which holds out the promise of a gigantic and incalculable future destiny.... Siberia in the great social relations of the world is hardly less important than America.... I may be over sanguine, but I can see no reason why Siberia, two centuries hence, may not hold one of the most powerful nations on the globe, and be the supreme arbiter of the destinies of Asia.

— George Kennan (late 19th c)

Course Description

Welcome to the wonderful world of Siberian history!

This course will introduce upper-level undergraduates and beginning graduate students to the history, geography, culture, ethnic diversity, inter-communal relations, economy, and strategic importance of Siberia in Eurasia's past and present. It is designed as a combination of lecture and discussion, utilizing a variety of multi-media tools. The course will begin by investigating the centuries before the Russian conquest, explore in detail the process of Russian occupation and control up through the Soviet period, and end with an examination of current economic, cultural, geopolitical, environmental, and social issues in the region.

For most Americans, "Siberia" conjures up images of vast frozen tundra and the horrors of exile and the GULAGs. Yet, as we will explore in this course, the massive Siberian region of the Russian Federation is more physically beautiful, diverse in human society and culture, rich in resources, and strategically important to international security than these two pervasive images would leave us believing. Indeed, Siberia was and is a crucial component of Russia—economically, culturally, strategically, and socially—constituting more than three-quarters of Russia's landmass albeit only a small percentage of the total population. If Siberia were to become an independent country, it would be the largest in the world in terms of territory.

Located at the meeting of Russia, China, Korea, Mongolia, Japan, and the United States, Siberia is of tremendous geopolitical importance, embroiling Russia in myriad entanglements (and friendships) in the Asia-Pacific zone. It is a region enormously well endowed with natural resources such as gold, coal, copper, iron ore, oil and gas (Siberian petroleum makes Russia one of the world's leading producers and accounts for three-quarters of Russia's hard currency receipts), lumber, and water (Lake Baikal alone holds one fifth of all the world's non-frozen surface water, more than all of the Great Lakes combined). "Siberia will make us rich," Mikhail Lomonosov famously prophesied in the eighteenth century, yet more recently, other Russian analysts have noted that, for all its natural wealth, "Russia is making Siberia poor" and environmentally ravaged.

The region is home to an extraordinary human diversity with an alluring history and unique ethno-cultural amalgam. Siberia also boasts many natural wonders, including the world's largest wetland, producing substantially more oxygen for our planet than the Amazon, and large numbers of endemic and endangered species. This is not to mention Siberia's multiple climatic zones (from the temperate Altai to the frozen lands of Chukotka, to the startling volcanic zones of Kamchatka, to name but a few).

For history majors, this course fulfills either of the pre-1750 and post-1750 requirements. Geographically, it fulfills either B5 (Europe) and A2 (East Asia).

Course Themes and Objectives

The course will approach Siberia from three broad thematic perspectives.

First, we will explore Siberia as a region unto itself. Is there such a thing as "Siberia?" What are Siberia's human and geographic boundaries? When can we say a geographic and/or cultural entity called "Siberia" came into being, and for whom? Who were/are Siberians and how did/do they identify themselves? What were the patterns of Siberian regionalism and self-identification? What characteristics can we ascribe to Siberia as a collective? What have been the human and ecological rhythms internal to these people and their lands? As a regional rather than national history, should we approach the land and people differently?

Second, the course will examine Siberia as part of Russia and the Russian empire. In particular, we will investigate the reciprocal influences of one on the other: how did Russia and Russians transform Siberia, and in what ways did the presence of Siberia within the Russian empire (in its various guises) alter the nature and historical trajectory of Russia? To what degree is it true, as one contemporary observer has noted, "when Siberia is healthy, Russia is healthy"? This aspect of the course will examine the process of conquest, economic development, environmental change, exile, inter-ethnic contact and cultural change among Russian settlers and indigenous Siberians, tsarist policies and views towards Siberia (and Asia), and Siberian regionalism, to name a few topics.

Third, this course will think about Siberia in the context of Eurasian and world history. Siberia has acted over the centuries as a cultural, economic, and population bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Americas. We will analyze the place of Siberia in Great Power diplomacy, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during the Great Game and the Cold War. In the process, we will investigate the labyrinth of strategic and geopolitical relationships that enmeshed Siberia in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the course will examine the Russian conquest and colonization of Siberia as part and parcel of the larger process of European global expansion that began in the late fifteenth century. Finally, we will discuss Russia's presence in Siberia as one important example of the broader meeting (and conflict) between, on the one hand, sedentary, agricultural, politically centralized societies and, on the other hand, nomadic, pastoral, tribal confederations that has characterized the history of the Eurasian steppe over the past centuries.

The study of Siberia through these themes will allow students to acquire a deeper knowledge of the factors that shape human activity and the ways these have changed over time. It will broaden historical understanding chronologically and will offer an important international perspective on the nature and diversity of the human experience. Throughout the course, students will learn skills that will be necessary for them both as history students and in most of life's endeavors: critical and analytical thinking through historical analysis, writing, conducting thorough research, reading, listening, note taking, working in groups, and public speaking.

Other Important information

This course does not require prior exposure to Russian or Eurasian history, but a solid grounding in modern European history (History 112 or the equivalent), Asian history, or Russian history is certainly helpful. Although the course will generally proceed chronologically, we will explore Siberian history topically and thematically rather than following a strict sequence of dates and events.

The format of the course will be a combination of lectures, in-class discussions, workshop activities, and presentation of your work to your fellow classmates. You are required to attend classes faithfully, participate actively, and come to class prepared to discuss your ideas about the readings and to listen to your colleagues. (More on this below).

Students are very welcome to come and talk with me about any aspect of the course and the marvels of history. My office hours and location are listed above. I can also be reached by e-mail (breyfogle.1@osu.edu) to set up an appointment.

In accordance with departmental policy, all students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the quarter. No requests to add the course will be approved by the department chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of each student.

If you are in need of particular pedagogical or physical accommodations, please let me know so that we can work together. Students with disabilities should be registered with the Office of Disability Services (292-3307).

Readings

*All books and the Coursepack have been put on two-hour reserve at the Main library.
All books and Coursepack are available for purchase at SBX, and likely at other bookstores
near campus.*

Textbook

W. Bruce Lincoln, The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians

Discussion Readings

Orcutt Frost, Bering: The Russian Discovery of America

Fedor Dostoyevsky, The House of the Dead

V K. Arseniev, Dersu the Trapper

Anna Bek, The Life of a Russian Woman Doctor: A Siberian Memoir, 1869-1954

John Scott, Behind the Urals

Anne Applebaum, Gulag: A History

Piers Vitebsky, The Reindeer People: Living with Animals and Spirits in Siberia

Valentin Rasputin, Farewell to Matyora

Coursepack from Zip Publishing (also at SBX and www.zippublishing.com)

Recommended

Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History (4th edition)

Assignments and Grading

Requirements for this course include:

- 1) active class participation, informed in-class discussion, regular attendance, and map assignment [20%]
- 2) take-home examination # 1 [15%]
- 3) take-home examination # 2 [15%]
- 4) take-home final examination [25%]
- 5) Museum Exhibit Assignment [25%]
- 6) Extra credit work [up to an extra 10%, see explanation below]

Grades will be computed on the following standard scale:

A+: 97.5% and above	B+: 87.5% and above	C+: 77.5% and above	D+: 67.5% and above
A: 92.5% and above	B: 82.5% and above	C: 72.5% and above	D: 62% and above
A-: 90% and above	B-: 80% and above	C-: 70% and above	E: below 62%

I reserve the right to consider improvement when determining final grades

Class Participation and Attendance

Active class participation and informed discussion (in the form of questions and comments) requires not only that you attend class regularly, but also that you have completed the reading assignment prior to class and have taken the time to think about what you have read so that you are ready to discuss it. Class participation includes small-group presentations and in-class debates, both of which will require some preparation outside of class.

Attendance at lectures and especially discussion meetings is mandatory. Irregular attendance (you are entitled to no more than two unexcused absences), or a pattern of lateness, will result in a poor class participation grade.

Map Assignment

Students will complete a take-home map exercise on Siberia geography, and will be permitted a maximum of four mistakes on the assignment. Those who submit work with more than four mistakes will be required to re-do the assignment until it is satisfactory.

Exams and Papers

Warning! I expect a great deal from your exams and papers. It is one of the tasks of these projects to write clearly and concisely, saying a lot in a small amount of space. You will need to write and re-write these papers many times in order to fit an insightful, intelligent, and in-depth discussion into the space allotted. As with all work in this class, these assignments must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font. Correct grammar and spelling and your writing style will be used to determine your grade.

Any time you refer to an idea or quote from any of the books and readings from the class (you will do this often in your essays, often a few times per paragraph), you **must** reference the quotation or information by placing the page number in square brackets beside the quotation/information drawn from the text. For example: [Tolstoy, p. 27]. If you reference other readings or sources of information, proper footnotes and bibliography must be included.

***** See the “Writing Tips and Guidelines” handout and Rampolla for helpful guidelines for writing papers and exams, and correct citation of sources *****

I. Take-Home Exams

There will be three (3) take-home exams during the course, which includes the final.

For the **first two exams**, students will have one week to write a 5-page essay in answer to one of a choice of two questions. I will distribute the exam questions in class on October 3 and October 24, respectively. Exams will be due at the beginning of class on October 10 and October 31, respectively.

The **final exam** will be a similar format, except that students will write two five-page papers in answer to two of a choice of four questions. Final Exam questions will be handed out on November 18, and completed finals will be due in my office before 3 pm on Wednesday, December 8th.

Please note these dates in advance and be sure to free up your calendar then to ensure sufficient time to work on the exam.

As with all work in this class, these assignments must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font. Correct grammar and spelling and your writing style will be used to determine your grade.

II. Research Assignment – The Museum Exhibit

The Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC recently began preparations to put on a full-scale exhibition of the history of Siberia. As part of its government-mandated outreach program, the Smithsonian has picked history students at Ohio State to help them construct the project.

Your assigned task is to design a mini-exhibit on one topic of Siberian history and hand in those plans. Your findings will then be synthesized by a campus representative and sent on to the Smithsonian. Your topic must focus on a specific historical theme and trace it across the centuries. In doing so, you will demonstrate both change and continuity, while also highlighting any particularly important moments in the history of that specific theme.

The project that you will hand in will be composed of three parts:

1) The first five pages will be a concise, clear, and complete summary of the most salient aspects of your topic (i.e. a first draft of the text that will appear on the wall as the exhibit go-ers enter and are first introduced to the topic). In these five pages you must present the large historical issues and highlight salient historical moments and turning points. In order to complete this section, you will need to do considerable research in books, articles, and websites not assigned for this course. Please be sure to include a bibliography and footnotes for your introductory paper. [We will meet in advance to go over possible topics and sources.]

2) On the sixth and seventh pages of your proposal you will outline in written form a “wish list” of material objects, images, interactive activities, etc., that you feel should be included in this museum exhibit. You are to pick out those material objects that you believe best represent the historical processes of your topic and what it was like to live through them. (i.e. how do you best get across the essence of your topic to the exhibition go-ers through material objects?). For each object you will include a two or three line description that will accompany it in the exhibit. This description must tie the exhibition piece into the larger historical questions. (i.e. explain to the museum visitor why he or she should care that you have included the object. What meaning should they take from the object, why does the object tell us anything about the historical topic?)

3) The final five pages will include copies of photographs, material culture, posters, maps or data graphs that illustrate your topic. [Feel free to include more than five pages of copies if your topic warrants. Some topics will be much more visually oriented than others. Also, please feel free to make posters or computer presentations of your exhibit.]

In class, we will hang these exhibitions on the wall and wander through as exhibition go-ers. We will learn from each others' projects but at the same time we will be critical of the choices that our fellow curators have made in designing their exhibit. As we walk through, we will use our knowledge of Siberian history gleaned from the course and think about what we might have included if we had presented the topic ourselves. In a large group discussion we will ask each other why we chose to present specific topics in certain ways. In doing so, we will re-cap the history covered in the last ten weeks and begin to understand the meanings of Siberia in world history.

- **A one-paragraph description of your idea for the Museum exhibit is due October 21.**
- **The museum Exhibit is due and will be viewed on December 2.**

III. Extra-credit work: Film Analysis

In connection with this course, I recommend a series of relevant films, both documentaries and feature films. The titles of the films are listed below, but they will not be shown in class. Instead you may check out copies of the films from the public library, from a commercial video rental store, or from the Slavic Center (in Oxley Hall, which has one of the best collections of Eurasian film in the country and the films are free for rental for OSU students), and view them outside of class.

To obtain extra credit you must turn in a two-page, double-spaced paper, in which you discuss the relevance of the film to the material covered in class. In particular, you should analyze each film in order to explore the ways in which Siberians, Russians, and others have chosen to depict Siberia's people, lands, and history.

Each extra-credit assignment you complete will be counted as two points towards your class participation grade. Over the course of the quarter you may submit up to five extra-credit assignments for a maximum total of 10 extra-credit points.

Extra-credit papers may be handed in at any point during the quarter, up to and including November 11. Students may submit extra-credit papers one at a time or in groups as they wish.

Films to Choose From

Dersu Uzala
The Empire of the Stroganoffs
Storm over Asia (The Heir of Chinggis Khan)
Freeze, Die, Come to Life
Kolyma
Siberiade
Under the Polar Star
The BAM Zone: Permanent Residents
Logging Siberia

General Paper Information

Late Assignments

Extensions for written work are granted at the discretion of the instructor to those students presenting valid and verifiable excuses. Students who are unable to fulfill assignments as scheduled for family, religious, or medical reasons must contact me **before** the due date of the assignment. If you submit work late without just cause, or without a previously approved excuse, you may have your grade reduced by a full letter per day late. The pressures of other course work, employment, and extra-curricular activities do not constitute valid excuses for late

assignments. Note due dates on the syllabus and plan ahead. If I am not available to approve excuses, leave a message on my e-mail or office voice-mail. There is no provision in this course for additional papers for extra credit or to substitute for requirements.

Submission of Assignments

All assignments are mandatory. If you do not submit one assignment, your final grade will be reduced by one full letter grade in addition to giving you zero for that assignment. If you do not submit two or more assignments, you will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

Grade Reconsideration

A student who wishes reconsideration of his/her grade on a paper should submit the assignment in its entirety to the instructor. The paper should be accompanied by a written exposition, explaining why the grade is not an accurate appraisal of the work. Appeals must be initiated within one week after the paper was returned to the class. In reviewing a paper on appeal, I reserve the right to raise, confirm, or lower the grade.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism, cheating, or other academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Plagiarism is theft. Please read the attached definition of plagiarism (Appendix B from University Survey: A Guidebook and Readings for New Students) And see the web sites: <http://cstw.osu.edu/> and http://cstw.osu.edu/writing_center/handouts/index.htm. If you do not understand what plagiarism entails as it is described in this excerpt from the student handbook and/or websites, you should see me before beginning any of these assignments.

Be forewarned that I will pursue cases of academic misconduct to the appropriate University committee.

Topics and Readings

Week 1

September 21 Introduction to the class

September 23 Siberia before the Russians I: land and people

****** Map Assignment handed out in class ******

Week 2

September 26: Siberia before the Russians II: Turks, Mongols, and Chinese in the lives of the Siberian peoples.

September 28 Russia takes Siberia: the Stroganovs, Ermak, and their kin

****** Map Assignment due at beginning of class ******

September 30 Daily life on the Siberian frontier: Indigenous Siberians and Russian Colonists; fur traders on the edge of riches

Week 3

October 3 Russian Columbuses: Explorers in a frozen land

***** Take-Home Exam #1 Questions handed out in Class *****

October 5 **Discussion:** Orcutt Frost, Bering: The Russian Discovery of America

October 7
1) Muscovite governance of Siberia in the 17th and 18th cc;
2) Russia and China, Relations before 1800

Week 4

October 10 From Alaska to California: Siberia's American Colony

***** Take-Home Exam #1 Due at Beginning of Class *****

October 12 Siberia as Tsarist Penal Colony

October 14 **Discussion:** Fedor Dostoyevsky, House of the Dead

Week 5

October 17 Speranskii and Muraviev: Siberian Administration and the taking of the Amur

October 19 A New Identity? Siberia in the Mind of Russians, Russia in the Mind of Siberians

October 21 The Trans-Siberian Railway and the Great Peasant Migration

***** Topic Ideas for Museum Exhibit Due in Class (1 paragraph) *****

Week 6

October 24 **Discussion:** Vladimir K. Arseniev, Dersu The Trapper

***** Take-Home Exam #2 Questions handed out in Class *****

October 26 Dreams of Asia: Harbin and Russia's Manchurian Adventure

October 28 The Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905

Week 7

October 31 Siberia in Russia's Turmoil, Part I: War and Revolution

***** Take-Home Exam #2 Due at Beginning of Class *****

November 2 Siberia in Russia's Turmoil, Part II: Civil War, Intervention, and the Far Eastern Republic

November 4 **Discussion:** Anna Bek, The Life of a Russian Woman Doctor: A Siberian Memoir, 1869-1954

Week 8

November 7 Stalin's Siberia, Part I: Industrialization, Militarization, and Magnitogorsk

November 9 **Discussion:** John Scott, Behind the Urals

November 11 Stalin's Siberia, Part II: the GULAGs

***** Last Day to Submit Extra Credit Papers
(can be submitted any day before this) *****

Week 9

November 14 **Discussion:** Anne Applebaum, Gulag: A History [Excerpts]

November 16 Native Siberians in the Soviet State

November 18 "Yellow Perils"? Soviet Relations with the Pacific Powers before World War II and during the Cold War

****** Final Exam Questions Handed Out in Class ******

Week 10

- November 21 **Discussion:** Piers Vitebsky, The Reindeer People
- November 23 Ecocide, Environmentalism, and Industrial Development: Bratsk, BAM,
and Baikal
- November 25 No Class: Thanksgiving

Week 11

- November 28 **Discussion:** Valentin Rasputin, Farewell to Matyora
- November 30 Siberia today: Prospects for the Future, Legacies of the Past
- December 2 A Day at the Museum: Presentation of Museum Exhibits

****** Museum Exhibits Due ******

***** Final Take-Home Exam due Thursday December 8 before 3
pm at my office (159 Dulles Hall) *****