An overview of the modern Russian empire, from the emancipation of the serfs to the resurrection of a new Russian Federation. The underlying theme of the course is how Russia confronted and dealt with its sense of “backwardness” vis-à-vis Europe: through Alexander II’s Great Reforms, building and maintaining a colonial empire, and the Soviet attempt to plan a modern, scientific society. There will be one mid-term exam and a final. In addition, students will write two short essays and a 10-page/3500-word research paper due Thursday, May 9. 

Attendance policy: I do not take attendance. I assume you are responsible adults. It is in your best interests to attend class every day, or get notes from someone if you must miss a session. If you choose to skip classes, I will not track you down. Be warned, however, that you will pay for it on the exams and papers.

Grade basis: 2 short essays, 10% each  Research paper 25%
Mid-term exam 25%  Final exam 30%

Required Texts:
978-0-19-536863-5 pbk

Disability services statement:
Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) with appropriate documentation of your disability.

January 22 – 25: Russia enters the modern world (reluctantly)
Tuesday: Introduction to course; the Great Reforms
Padenie dinastii Romanovykh. Kinofilm, 1927

Thursday: Defining the modern state

Reading: Moss, Chpts. 1, 2.
Fedor Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground, Part I, “Underground.”
January 28 – February 1: Empire
Tuesday: Expanding and ruling the empire  
first short essay

Thursday: State and society

Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground, finish.

February 4 – 8: Challenges to the tsarist system
T: Russo-Japanese War and 1905  
ESSAY 1 DUE

Th: Counter-revolution

Reading: Moss, Chpts. 5, 6, 7.  

February 11 – 15: War and revolution
T: Collapse of the old order

Th: The Civil War


February 18 – 22: Early Bolshevik rule
T: Building a government

Th: New Economic Policy  
MID-TERM EXAM

Reading: Moss, Chpt. 10. Suny, Structure, pp. 112–114; 120–124; 130–137.

February 25 – March 1: Stalin and the Great Break
T: Economic crisis and the end of NEP  
MID-TERM DUE

Th: Toward the Great Break

Reading: Moss, Chpt. 11.

March 4 – 8: Terror and resistance
T: view Red Empire

Th: Kirov’s murder and the purges


March 11 – 15: The Great Patriotic War
T: Foreign policy and fascism

Th: Great Fatherland War


SPRING BREAK MARCH 16 – 31

April 1 – 5: High Stalinism
T: Creating the post-war world second short essay

Th: NO CLASS


April 8 – 12: Khrushchev and the thaw
T: Beginning of the Cold War ESSAY 2 DUE

Th: Hare-brained schemes


April 15 – 19: The Era of Stagnation
T: Managing the empire

Th: Brezhnev and re-stalinization *annotated bibliographies due*


April 22 – 26: Glasnost’ and perestroika
T: Gorbachev launches perestroika

Th: The empire begins to crack


April 29 – May 3: Collapse and a new era
T: New countries, old problems
Th: Chechnya and the Caucasus

Reading: Moss, Chpts. 21, 22. Kotkin, pp. 113–end

May 6 – 10:
T: Public health and the Soviet legacy

Th: Putin

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE at 5:00 PM

Reading: catch up on everything

FINAL EXAM Saturday, May 18, 2 – 5 PM