

History 208G/308G
Russia's Muslim Frontiers
Autumn 2024
Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00 PM—1:20 PM
Building 200, Room 013
4-5 Units



The Battle of Sultanabad (1812)

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This course explores the history of Islam and Muslim communities across Russia and its southern frontiers adjoining the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Xinjiang. We will investigate the interconnected histories of these regions through the study of original primary source documents, poetry, novels, photography, paintings, and film as well as through interdisciplinary scholarship.

Learning Outcomes

Through in-class and at-home writing assignments and oral presentations, students will gain an understanding of the history of Russian imperial conquest, expansion, and the incorporation of Muslim communities; varieties of anti-imperial, anti-Soviet, and post-Soviet resistance; tsarist and Soviet policies of confrontation and accommodation; the complex effects of the projection of Russian/Soviet power beyond its formal borders into Iran, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang; tsarist and

Soviet approaches toward the institutionalization and policing of Islam; state management of the categories of ethnicity and nationality—and popular responses to them; the evolution of connections with a global Muslim *ummah*; state attempts to reframe Islamic law and gender relations within Muslim communities; labor migration; Muslim adaptation to revolutionary ideologies and secularization—as well as to state violence.

Design

The course proceeds from twenty-first century, beginning with the experience of Central Asian migrants in Moscow, and then excavates the history of Muslim communities since the collapse of the Soviet Union, focusing on conflict in the North Caucasus. Turning to the Soviet period, it examines the impact of Soviet rule and Bolshevik efforts to unleash Islam as a global, revolutionary, and anti-colonial phenomenon. The course then pivots to the tsarist era and looks at shifting patterns of imperial subjugation and integration and Muslim responses to them from the early twentieth century through to the first contacts between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Books to Acquire

The following books are available for purchase at the Stanford Book Store and are on reserve at Green Library:

Alisa Ganieva, *The Mountain and the Wall* (2015)

Iwona Kaliszewska, *For Putin and for Sharia: Dagestani Muslims and the Islamic State* (2023)

Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts Longer than a Hundred Years* (1980)

Lev Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat* (1912)

Class Schedule

Week 1: Introduction and Framings—September 24 and 26

Week 2: Diaspora, Empire, and Nationhood-- October 1 and 3 (Rosh Hashanah)

Tuesday:

Ayka (2018) [100 minutes]

Thursday:

Alisa Ganieva, *The Mountain and the Wall*, parts 1 and 2.

Week 3: Borderlands—October 8 and 10

Tuesday:

Ganieva, *The Mountain and the Wall*, remainder.

Thursday:

Iwona Kaliszewska, *For Putin and for Sharia*, intro. chpts. 1-2.

Week 4: Radicalism and “the War for the Middle?”—October 15 and 17

Tuesday:

Kaliszewska, *For Putin and for Sharia*, remainder.

Thursday:

[Terror in Moscow](#) (2003) [54 minutes]

Week 5: Soviet Dissolution-- October 22 and 24

Tuesday:

Prisoner of the Mountains (1996) [96 minutes]

Thursday:

[What We Left Unfinished](#) (2019) [72 minutes]

Week 6: A Soviet Islam? (Part One)—October 29 and 31

Tuesday: No class.

Thursday:

Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts Longer than a Hundred Years*, chpts. 1-6.

Week 7: A Soviet Islam? (Part Two)—November 5 and 7

Tuesday: No class.

Thursday:

Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts Longer than a Hundred Years*, chpts. 7-9.

Week 8: Islam and Revolution—November 12 and 14

Tuesday:

Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts Longer than a Hundred Years*, remainder.

Thursday:

Selections from [Russian Perspectives on Islam -- Documents](#)

Week 9: Islam and Empire-- November 19 and 21

Tuesday:

Selections from [Russian Perspectives on Islam -- Documents](#)

<https://islamperspectives.org/rpi/items/show/13258>

<https://islamperspectives.org/rpi/items/show/11372>

[*Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan: From Silk Road to Soviet Rule, 1834-1922*](#)

Thursday:

Lev Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat* (1912)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 10: Conquest and Discovery—December 3 and December 10

Tuesday:

Selections from [Russian Perspectives on Islam -- Documents](#)

[*Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan: From Silk Road to Soviet Rule, 1834-1922*](#)

Thursday:

Anthology of Russian Literature, excerpts: Afanasii Nikitin, *Travels to India*, “Zadonshchina,”
“Incursion of the Crimean Tatars”

Assignments

Reading and Discussion: The single most important element of this class is reading and discussion. This class is essentially a reading course in which you are expected to read (or view, in the case of films or photographs) all the material and participate in lively and informed discussions of the major themes raised each week. Your final grade will strongly reflect your class participation (40%). The goal is *quality*, not necessarily quantity of commentary. Feel free to raise issues that strike you as interesting, curious, problematic, or even absurd. Reading all the assignments carefully will help you point to specific references or examples to illustrate and support your claims. We will aim to create a class environment that is inclusive and supportive of a variety of perspectives and voices.

Paper (30% of final grade): Students will write one paper (5-7 pages for 4 units and 8-10 for 5 units) devoted to the analysis of a primary sources chosen in consultation with the instructor. These may include novels, short stories, poems, speeches, posters, photographs, or other artifacts. Please submit your paper in Microsoft Word by email to rcrews@stanford.edu between November 12 and December 12.

Presentation (30% of final grade): All students will be expected to make a presentation on a subject chosen in consultation with the instructor. These themes run the gamut from art to politics, so choose one that is of interest. The 10-minute presentation should be concise and professionally delivered to the class, preferably with supporting images and other relevant visual materials.

Class Guidelines

Attendance is mandatory. Please be in touch via email as soon as possible to excuse absences in case of illness, injury, or significant personal situation--or if challenges arise that may affect your ability to attend and/or participate. Students are permitted 1 unexcused absence. Each additional absence will lower one's final grade by one letter.

The Honor Code

Honor Code violations are a serious offense, even when committed unintentionally or out of ignorance. Academic integrity is one of the pillars of scholarship; without it, honest, open, and vigorous exchanges are not possible. Please read and get to know the University's honor code and well as its regulations regarding plagiarism.

Please note that the use of generative AI sources of any kind is not permitted in the drafting or composition of any assignment for this class.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>).