

**HISTORY 33**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF RUSSIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**  
**FALL 2015**

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Office Hours: W 4-5  
T/TH 10-12  
By Appointment

This course explores how ideology and politics gave rise to policies that had deleterious effects on Russia's environment. We will examine several cases of environmental degradation and disaster such as Chernobyl, Lake Baikal, and the Aral Sea, in order to understand how politicians and scientists alike pursued policies that endangered the health of millions of citizens and threatened the environment. We will also study efforts to protect the environment from the challenges of modernization.

You are expected to read the College's policy on academic honesty and integrity that appears in the Swarthmore College Bulletin. The work you submit must be your own, and I will submit suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the College Judiciary Council for adjudication. When in doubt about citing sources, please check with me.

I will not accept late papers and will assign a failing grade for the assignment unless you notify me and receive permission from me to submit the paper after the due date. In addition, you must submit all written work in order to pass the course.

You are required to attend and participate in all class discussions (20 percent). Not surprisingly, it is crucial to your success in the course that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading for each session. **Keep in mind that the History Department has a draconian policy on attendance: unexcused absences will be penalized by a lower grade.** If you are unable to attend a class session due to illness or some other issue, you are responsible for contacting me in advance.

In addition, you are required to submit two six-page papers during the course of the semester (20 percent each) and a twelve-page paper based on research (20 percent). You will also have a final examination (20 percent).

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore and on reserve in McCabe. Some are also E-books that can be accessed via Tripod. All other readings are posted on Moodle.

Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl*  
Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905-1953* (E-book)

Valentin Rasputin, *Siberia on Fire*

John Scott, *Behind the Urals*

Peter Thompson, *Sacred Sea: A Journey to Lake Baikal* (E-book) Not available in print

Christopher Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (E-book)

### **Week One (September 2)--Introduction: The Environment in Russian Culture and History**

Ivan Turgenev, "Forest and Steppe" and "A Journey to Polesje"

Paul Josephson, "Industrial Deserts: Industry, Science, and the Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union"

Paul Josephson, "Projects of the Century in Soviet History: Large-Scale Technologies from Lenin to Gorbachev"

### **Week Two (September 9)—Prometheus Unbound**

John Scott, *Behind the Urals*

M. Ilin, *The Story of the Great Plan*

### **Week Three (September 16)— Stalin and the Environmental Question**

Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905-1953*

### **Week Four (September 23)--No Class**

### **Week Five (September 30)— Water at Risk**

Peter Thompson, *Sacred Sea: A Journey to Lake Baikal*

### **Week Six (October 7)-- The World We Have Lost: Regional and National Identities**

Valentin Rasputin, *Siberia on Fire*

### **FIRST PAPER DUE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9 BY 3 PM**

### **Week Seven (October 21)-- Prometheus Unbound: The Khrushchev and Brezhnev Years**

Christopher Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism*  
Films: *The BAM Zone* (20 minutes) and *Against the Current* (27 minutes)

### **Week Eight (October 28)-- Chernobyl**

Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl*

**Week Nine (November 4)— Ecocide, Civil Society, and Environmentalism:  
Gorbachev and Beyond**

Doug Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (selections)

Murray Feshbach, *Ecocide* (selections)

**Week Ten (November 11): Coming to Grips with Soviet and Post-Soviet Power**

Andrew Wiget and Olga Balalaeva, *Khanty: People of the Taiga* (selections)

**SECOND PAPER DUE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13 BY 3 PM**

**Week Eleven (November 18)— TBD**

**Week Twelve (November 25)—Individual Meetings on Research**

**Week Thirteen (December 2)--Presentations**

**FINAL EXAMINATION**

**FINAL PAPER DUE: DECEMBER 18 BY 3 PM**