

Course Syllabus: Social Science Modeling of a Complex Industrial System: Anthropology of the Former Soviet Union

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Short Description

The course is designed to expose students to a series of fundamental theoretical problems in social science analysis and to use the former Soviet Union (the Russian empire and the Newly Independent States in its orbit) as a case study.

Much of Soviet Studies in the past projected character traits on the peoples in the Soviet empire's sphere of influence through quotation of formal ideology (citation of Marxist Leninist doctrine) or projections that served particular interests in the United States. Since students will be unable to conduct their own observations without being in the Soviet Union itself, the goal of this course is to train students in ways of thinking and methods of observing and analyzing reality that are basic to social science research and analysis, rather than in remembering a series of recorded observations that others have made.

The course will focus on:

-- Macro models of the former Soviet Union (the Russian empire and the Newly Independent States), their strengths and weaknesses;

-- Methods of conducting social science research in the former Soviet Union or from the U.S. using materials available here.

-- Biases in previous studies conducted on the former Soviet Union; the scholarly community of Sovietologists in the U.S., their funding and outlook;

The emphasis of this course will be on the Russians, comprising more than 50% of the population of the Soviet Union, with only lesser attention paid to the other ethnic groups in the country.

Grading and Projects

Students will be required to complete the following projects:

1. Design an anthropological field study (or an historical study of the former Soviet Union using an ethnographic approach) which could be conducted by either a single anthropologist or a small team of social scientists in any part of the former Soviet Union for six (6) months.

Specify theoretical assumptions, methods, goals, and hypotheses, with specific explanations of the types of measurements to be taken (particular variables.)

You may think first of a study which could be conducted in the United States and then note all of the differences which would need to be taken into account given the peculiarities of the societies in the region. (Note that if your hypotheses and measurements cannot be translated to uncover similar principles in the U.S., your topic is probably too narrow.)

2. Conduct a short ethnographic study on cultures from the region, here in the U.S., using whatever resources are available here. For example, study a Russian (Russian-Jewish, Russian-Annenian) émigré community to reveal aspects of Soviet culture and subculture strategies as they become apparent here.

Or, read (or glance through if you do not read Russian/other Slavic or regional languages or cannot find English translated versions) publications of some sort and find some of variable to measure. (You may also look at television or films from the region.)

Or, conduct a small "experiment" on a group of émigrés from the region (e.g. a Stanley Milgram experiment on response to authority, a Cole-Scribner type experiment on cognitive approach, or a legal/Socratic case method study) in order to discover what strategies Soviets are trained to use in approaching new situations. (Use an appropriate control group and make sure to consult with me closely so that it is clear you will be following all of the appropriate ethical guidelines for research with human subjects.)

Alternatively, you may choose to study American "Sovietologists" and area development specialists or actors in government, military, business, academia, (These categories are not mutually exclusive) and private citizens with regional contacts, as a subject of anthropological research.

Course grade will be based on the following:

- one third, respectively, on each of the two projects.

- one third on short (1 page) critiques of the approaches suggested in the readings as mini book reports on course materials.

Basic Text:

Much of the material for this course is now available in the first complete ethnography of the Russians and the Soviet Russian Empire, though it should be noted that the work focuses specifically on the Russians rather than on the many minority groups still in the Russian sphere of influence or which were previously part of the Soviet Empire.

Daily Life in a Crumbling Empire: The Absorption of Russia into the World Economy

A complete ethnography of contemporary urban Russian political and legal culture. Three books prepared in two volumes - 1,800 pages, with photographs. Columbia University Press/ Eastern European Monographs, 1996.

Book I - An Ethnography of Urban Russia

Book II - Life in a Russian and Soviet Institution: "The School for Useless Things"

Book III - Perestroika: Changing Russian Life and Culture

Structure of the Course

The course is divided into two major sections: one on theory and one on specific aspects of Soviet society and culture. The sections on theory take an holistic view of the study of an industrial society, looking at various methods of characterization or prediction. The second section works on an implicit structural functional model, splitting up Soviet society into various sectors for study.

1. Theory

The first three subsections of the course present some theoretical problems on doing anthropology of the region.

Overview

Models of (what was) Soviet Society and History: Goals of Models -

The course begins with an overview of the various models which have been used to describe what was Soviet society (totalitarian, bureaucratic, convergence theory, etc.), with Tolstoy's classic discussion of the causes of history, and with debate on the use of the

concept of "state and society" (which fields much of the social science literature,) along with a piece on the social organization/ bureaucratic - cybernetic type models of the 1950's (Firth.) The goal here is to introduce students to the ideas of social modeling and the general issues of usefulness and methods of modeling which can be done on large scale industrial societies.

Anthropology of the Peoples of the Soviet Union

There is still little existing body of field ethnographies or ethnographic analysis of Russia or of the Soviet Union. The course begins with some examination of work which has been done (Mead, etc.) and discussion of the issues of doing anthropology without being able to do fieldwork or with severe restrictions on field work.

Controllers of Access

One of the keys to interpreting social science data is to understand the biases of the observer. Much of what is written or taught about the Soviet Union in the academic community in the United States is directly or indirectly tied to military or governmental objectives. This section of the course looks at American Sovietologists as an organizational culture with ideological predisposition as well as the ideological purging of American Universities during the cold war in order to promote ideologies.

Models in Detail

Seeking Strategies or Finding "National Character Traits"

Much of Sovietology and now, current studies of the region, include the projection of generalized character traits on the Russians as explanations for their behavior. By contrast, a more precise and thorough anthropology defines cultural strategies in dealing with specific types of circumstances. This section of the course deals with path breaking work in the field (Ned Keenan's piece) and with basic methodological issues in looking for characteristics of an industrial culture.

Convergence Theory Industrial Society

This part of the course looks at one of the explanatory models in detail -- that of convergence theory -- its strengths and weaknesses; and the advantages of looking at Russian and formerly Soviet society through comparison with the U.S. The use of a convergence theory model is that it stresses similarities rather than differences of industrial

societies as a basis for understanding those societies, though not necessarily distinguishing their peculiar characteristics.

Geography or Ethos

One great tension in cultural explanations is between environmental determinism and the importance of ethos. This section presents the various theoretical explanations (including excerpts from Weber's work on the Protestant ethic as a counterpoint to ideological explanations of the Soviet Union,) followed by specific examples of explanations of what was Soviet culture, which explain behavior in terms of communist ideology or geography/climactic factors.

A subsection looks at the special issue of the revolutionary and Stalinist periods and looks at potential biological-demographic explanations.

Internal Relations Ethnic Stratification

As a multi-ethnic society, the Soviet Union and now, Russia and many of the Newly Independent States, faced and face many of the same internal conflicts as many developing nations trying to integrate various groups into an integrated system. While there are too many ethnic groups to study in the country in this course, to understand the complexity of interethnic relations (just to do so in a superficial way would require another complete course) it is interesting to look at the models of ethnic relations in pluralist societies to see how they fit in the Soviet case. It is also interesting to consider the dependency and center/periphery models used to describe first world-third world relations in capitalist countries, to see how the model might work in Russia or the former Soviet Union (a potential case of internal colonialism.)

Aspects of what was Soviet Society and Culture

To divide study of the former Soviet Union up into conceptual categories is itself a projection of an underlying structural functional model. I have chosen a few of these categories as topics - education/socialization, the workplace and economy, male/female relations and family, political system, and the justice system -- not necessarily implying that these categories have meaning in themselves or that they are all inclusive. I have also included additional topics which stand out on their own -- social structure, cultural symbols, rural Russia, and television/media.

Social Structure

The segment on social structure touches on the theoretical issues of how to define it (given that "class" has a different meaning and manifestation in the USSR than in the U.S.) and whether it is inevitable for maintaining a social order (doing a critical reading of Marx's The Communist Manifesto.) Works on the Soviet Union then explain the nomenklatura system and the existence of various social classes.

Socialization and Education

The Workplace Economic Administration

The Home Male Female Relationships and Family

Political System

Justice System and Criminality

Each of these sections is somewhat more informative than theoretical. Where possible, I have tried to find some Russian theory which explains other potential alternatives for types of structures (different educational approaches, different types of workplace management or organization) which have a basis in Soviet thought even though they do not reflect the reality of the current system. Again, there is an emphasis in these weeks of the course on measurement issues -how to do good social science when looking at these particularized areas -- as well as on the use of anthropology as cultural critique (pushing students to look at other methods of social organization which are possible in industrial societies.)

Social Problems Social Pathology

Although a category of social "problems" or "pathology" implies that certain cultural phenomena (alcoholism, delinquency, crime) can or should be eliminated from a culture and are not an integral part of it, is conclusory or judgmental, such phenomena are important aspects of the Soviet system and merit special attention.

Television and Media

There is a tradition of recent scholarship in the U.S., attributing cultural change to new forms of media -- television and computers -- both through content analysis (propagandizing) and neurological effect. Propaganda as a tool of social change has always been an important element of the Soviet system. The effect of the recent spread of television on the Soviet Union is as yet a relatively unexplored phenomenon.

Rural Russia

As a counterpoint to the study of the cities of Russia, it is important to look at the rural areas and their relation to the city, both as part of the economic system and as a source of migration and two directional diffusion of values.

Religion and Leisure

Cultural Symbols

Not only is the relation of cultural symbols and ideas to social activity an important anthropological issue, but the tradition of Russian literature is itself an intrinsically beautiful form of creation, expression and meaning revealing not only Soviet thought, but basic human conflicts and ideals.

Soviet View of Anthropology (Ethnology)

For the serious student interested in conducting anthropological field work in the former Soviet Union and engaging in productive exchanges with colleagues, this section of the course includes a short survey of trends in field work in the former Soviet Union. For those without a professional interest, this section provides a short case study on the production and transmission of new knowledge in Soviet Institutes of higher learning; useful in the context of theoretical materials on the production and exclusivity of certain knowledge in the U.S. in the "Controllers of Access/Information Filters" section at the beginning of the course.

Topics

1. Theory:

Overview

Models of Soviet Society and History (General)/Goals of Models

Soviet /Russian-

Tolstoy, Leo, War and Peace (epilogue)

Bell, Daniel, "Ten Theories in Search of Reality: The Prediction of Soviet Behavior," The End of Ideology, 1960.

Inkeles, Alex, "Models and Issues in the Analysis of Soviet Society," Survey, July 1966, pages 3-18.

Theory -

Firth, Raymond, "Some Principles of Social Organization," Essays on Social

Organization and Values, 195 1.

Almond, Gabriel, "The Return to the State," American Political Science Review 82: 3, September 1988, pages 853 - 901, and critiques.

Doing Anthropology of the Soviet Union - Theory

Barry, Donald D., and Carol Bamer-Barry, Contemporary Soviet Politics, Chapter 15, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1982.

Nader, Laura, "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," Reinventing Anthropology, Pantheon Books, New York. Custine, Marquis de, Journey For Our Time, 1839, translated by Phyllis Penn Kohler, Pefligrini and Cudahy, New York, 195 1.

Mead, Margaret, Soviet Attitudes Toward Authority: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Problems of Soviet Character, Rand Corporation, 1971. Fainsod, Merle, Smolensk Under Soviet Rule,

Controllers of Access/ Information Filters Cold War

Theory

Meyer, Alfred G., Paper Delivered at AAASS Conference, Fall 1990

Mills, C. Wright, The Power Elite, Oxford University Press, 1956.

Mills, C. Wright, The Sociological Imagination, Oxford U. Press, London, 1959. Domhoff, William, Hillier Circles,

Blake, Robert, and Jane Srygley Mouton, "Comprehension of Own and Out group Positions under Inter-group Competition," Journal of Conflict Resolution 1961, 5: 304 - 310.

History

Davies, Joseph, Ambassador to Moscow, Life Magazine, 1943

More Recent

Hough, Jerry, The Soviet Union and Social Science Theory, Harvard University Press, 1977, pages 1 - 10.

Atkinson, Dorothy, "Soviet and Eastern European Studies in the United States," Slavic Review, Fall 1988.

Elen Schrecker, No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities, Oxford University Press, 1986.

Packard, Vance, The Naked Society, David McKay Company, 1964, Chapter 7.

Models in Detail

Seelcin L- Strategies or Finding "National Character Traits"

Keenan, Edward, "Muscovite Political Folkways," The Russian Review, vol. 45, 1986.

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, "Misconceptions About Russia," Foreign Affairs, Spring 1980.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew, "Soviet Politics: From the Future to the Past," in Cocks, The Dynamics of Soviet Politics, 1976 or, alternately, "The Nature of the Soviet System," Slavic Review, 20:3:351-369.

Convergence The@ Industrial SociM

Theory (excerpts only)

Kerr, Clark, The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?, Harvard U. Press, 1983.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, A Scientific Theory of C@, University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Durkheim, Emile, The Division of Labor in Society: Study of the Organization of Higher Societies, 1893.

Whyte, William, The Organization Man, Doubleday Anchor, 1986.

Galbraith, John Kenneth, The New Industrial State, Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

Dimock, Marshall, Free Enterprise and the Administrative State, University of Alabama, 1951.

Yablonsky, h , Bobbs Merrill, 1972.

Bell, Daniel, "Technocracy and Politics," Survey, 16:1, Winter 1971.

Toffler, Al, The Third Wave, William Morrow and Co., 1980.

Orwell, George, Animal Farm (final chapter).

Soviet

Lempert, David, "Golem Ink: The Power of Trust," 1987

Rogers, Everett M., Diffusion and Innovations, Free Press, New York, 1983.

Sakharov, Andrei, "Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom,"

Sakharov S@, p. 97 - 106.

Inkeles, Alex, and Raymond Bauer, The Soviet Citizen, 1959.

Meyer, Alfred G., "USSR Incorporated," Slavic Review, 20:3:369-376, 1961.

Granick, David, The Red Executive, Anchor Books, 1960.

Zaslavskaya, Ile Neo-Stalinist State,

Geography or Ethos

Theory/Ethos

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., The Nuer, Oxford U. Press, 1940.

Weber, Max, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Scribner, 1958 (1904).

Bell, Daniel, "The Post Industrial Society: the Evolution of an Idea," Survey, 17:2, Spring 1972, pages 102-168.

Rigby, T.H., "Stalin and the Mono-Organizational Society," in Robert Tucker, ed., Stalinism,

Walder, Andrew, Communist Neo-Traditionalism,

Geographic/Climactic/ Environmental Psychology Explanations

Holahan, Charles J., "Performance in Learning and Work Environments," Environmental Psychology, Random House, New York, 1982, pages 123 - 155.

Balzak, S.S., V.F. Vasyutin, and Y. G. Feigin, Economic Geography of the USSR, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1961 [1949.]

French, R.A., "The Individuality of the Soviet City," in ed. R.A. French and F.E. Ian Hamilton, The Socialist City: Spatial Structure and Urban P li@ John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1979.

Demographic/ Culture Conflict/ Industrial Revolution
Explanations for the Revolution,

Stalinist Periods

Davies, James, "Toward a Theory of Revolution,"
American Sociopolitical Review, 6 (1), p. 5-19,
February 1962.

Gurr, Ted Robert, Why Men Rebel, Princeton U.
Press, 1970.

Walliman, Isidor, and George Zito, "Cohort Size and
Youthful Protest," Youth and SociM, 16:1, p. 67 - 81,
1984.

Barth, F., "Introduction," Ethnic Groups and
Boundaries, p. 9-38, 1969.

Internal Relations/ Ethnic Stratification - Internal
Colonialism* Social Enp-i

Theory

Gunder Frank, Andre, Doendence and
Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political
Economy, 1972.

Wallerstein, Immanuel, "An Historical Perspective:
The Emergence of the New Economic Order," The
Capitalist World Economy, Cambridge U. Press,
1979.

Marx, Karl, "Progressive Production of Relative
Overpopulation or an Industrial Reserve Army:
Modem Theory of Colonialization," Capital,
Lenin, V.I., Imperialism, excerpts.

Shibutani, Tamotsu, and Kian Kwan, Ethnic
Stratification: A Comparative Approach, MacMillan
Co., New York, 1965, pages 168 - 198.

Practice

Clem, Ralph S., "The Ethnic Dimension of the Soviet
Union" in Parkhurst, Jerry, ed., and Michael Paul
Sacks, Contemporary Soviet Society, 1980, Praeger
Publishers, pages 11 - 62.

Kolarz, Walter, Russia and Her Colonies, George
Philip and Son, Limited, 1952. intro. and pages I - 31.

Massell, Gregory, The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem
Women and Revolutionary Strategies, 1974.
111, Aspects of Former Soviet Society and Culture

Social Structure

Theory

Marx, Karl, The Communist Manifesto,

Bames, J.A., Class and Committees in a Norwegian
Parish, Human Rel 7:39-58.

Goffman, Irv, Asylums,

Netten, Norman, "Strategies of Adaptive Mobility in
the Colombian-Ecuadorian Littoral," American
Anthrolopologist, 7 1: 1, February 1969, p. 228-242.

Domhoff, William, Who Rules America Now?. 1983.

Reality

Voslensky, Michael, Nomenklatura,

Wilkes, David K, Klass: How Russians Really Live,

Amahik, A., Will the Soviet Union Survive Until
1984?, 1970.

Socialization and Education

Theory

Tolstoy, Leo, Yasnaya Polyana, 1853.

Geiger, Kent, "Changing Political Attitudes in
Totalitarian Society," World P, January 1956,
8:2:187-205.

Sutton-Smith, Brian, Toys as Culture, Gardner Press,
Inc., NY, 1986.

Practice

Bronfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood, U.S. and
USSR, Touchstone, 1970.

Barry and Barry, Contemporary Soviet Politics,
Chapter 4.

The Walacel Economic Administration

Theory

Marx, Karl, "Alienated Labor," Collected Works,

Lenin, V.I., "Better Fewer, But Better," March 2,
1923, Collected Works, Volume 33.

Practice

Moskoff, William, Labour and Leisure in the Soviet
Union, St. Martin's Press, 1984

Morton, Henry W., "The Contemporary Soviet City, (in Morton and Stewart, The Contemporary Soviet City), M.E. Sharpe, Inc., Armonk, N'Y 1984, p. 3-24.

Bater, James H., The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality, Edward Arnold, London, 1980, pages 134-162.

Barry and Barry, CSP: AI, Chapter 10.

Domar, Evsey, "The Blind Men and the Elephant: An Essay on Isms,"

MIT Working Paper, Department of Economics, January 1988. Simis, Konstantin, USSR: 'ne Corrupt Society: The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism, Simon & Schuster, NY, 1982.

The Home/ Male-Female Relations and Family

Juvelier, Peter, "Soviet Families," Survey, July 1966, pages 57 - 62.

Mamonova, Tatyana, ed., Women and Russia: Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union, Beacon Press, Boston, 1984, pages 1 - 50.

Stem, Philip, and August Stem, Sex in the USSR, translated by Mark Howson and Cary Ryan, The New York Times Book Co., New York, 1980.

The Political System

White, Stephen, "The USSR: Patterns of Autocracy and Industrialization," in Archie Brown and Jack Gray, Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York, 1979.

The Justice System and Criminality

Berman, Harold, and Donald D. Barry, "The Soviet Legal Profession," Harvard Law Review, November 1968, Vol. 82: 1, pages 1-41.

Feifer, George, Justice in Moscow, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1964.

Shelley, Louis M., "Urbanization and Crime: The Soviet Experience," pages 113-126 in Morton and Stuart,

Social Problems

Theory

Calhoun, John B., "Population Density and Social Pathology," Scientific American, Goodman, Paul, Growing lb Absurd. Vintage, 1956.

Soviet

Chalidge, Valery, Criminal Russia: Essays on Crime in the Soviet Union, Random House, New York, 1977, Chapter 1.

Powell, David E., "Alcoholism in the USSR," Survey, Winter 1971, 16: 1, pages 123 - 138.

Keller, Bill, "Russia's Restless Youth," New York Times Magazine July 24, 1987.

Television and Media/ Social Change

Theory

Handwerker, W. Penn, "Population, Power and Evolution,"

McLuhan, Marshall, Understanding the Media

Soviet

Hollander, Gayle Durham, Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in M-Media and Propaganda Since Stalin, Praeger Publishers, 1972.

Mickiewicz, Ellen Propper, Split Signals: Television and Politics,

Rural Russia

Laird, Roy D., and Ronald A. Francisco, "Observations on Rural Life in Soviet Russia," in Parkhurst, M, pages 138 - 154.

Kaplan, Cynthia S., "Use of Leisure Time and Changing Values in Rural Areas of the USSR," paper delivered at 1987 AAASS Convention, Boston, November 8, 1987.

Humphrey, 'Me Karl Marx Collective, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Religion and Leisure

Starr, S. Frederick, Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1980, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, pages 316-321.

Cultural Symbols

Theory

Marx, Karl, Structure and Superstructure

Tolstoy, Leo, "What is Art?" Collected Works,

Hofstadter, Douglas, Gödel, Escher, Bach, "Ant Fugue", "One to One Mapping,"

Literature (Brief excerpts)

Chulkov, M.D., The Comely Cook or the Adventures of a Debauched Woman,

Karamzin, N.M., Poor Liza

Pushkin, Tales of Belkin, History of Gorjagina

Gogol, Nikolai, The Nose, The Overcoat, Dead Souls

Dostoyevski, Fyodor, The Idiot, The Double, Crime and Punishment, Notes from Underground,

Tolstoy, Ana Karenina, Kreutzer Sonata, Death of Ivan Illich

Goncharev, Ivan, Oblamov

Zamyatin, Eugene, We

Krylov, Fables

Mayakovsky, The Bedbug

Bulgakov, Mikhael, The Master and Margarita, Heart of a Dog

Abuladze, Repentance (Film)

Recent Films -- "We Can't Live Like This", "Inter-Girl", "Burnt by the Sun"

Book Announcement: Daily Life in a Crumbling Empire: The Absorption of Russia into the World Economy

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Daily Life in a Crumbling Empire: The Absorption of Russia into the World Economy. 1,800 pages in 2 volumes, case bound. Cloth: ISBN: 0-88033-341-3. Columbia University Press. (136 S. Broadway, Irvington, NY 10533, Fax: 1-800-944-1844) \$168.00 list.

This is the first comprehensive ethnography of urban Russia and its political, economic, legal, cultural, and social system and reforms. Modeled on de Tocqueville, Warner and Gibbon, it details the collapse of the Russian Empire and described the political social and cultural processes which have been underway this century in Russia. The work provides a model for other complex industrial societies, while providing insight into changes underway in Russia and the world economy.