COURSE SYLLABUS – Spring 2021
US-Soviet Nuclear Security in Historical Context
NPTG 8537A (4 credits)
Tuesday and Thursday, 8 AM-9:50 AM Pacific on Zoom
Instructor:
Sarah Bidgood Director, Eurasia Nonproliferation Program, CNS
Co-Instructor:
Rebecca Mitchell, Assistant Professor of History, Middlebury College
Office Hours (virtual): Fridays from 9:00-10:00 AM and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The crisis in U.S.-Russia relations—and the collapse of bilateral arms control and nonproliferation cooperation—raise tough questions for policymakers today. Could resuming joint work on nuclear security build trust and ease tension between Washington and Moscow? Or must US-Russia relations stabilize before cooperation in this sensitive area can begin again? How might closer analysis and understanding of past successes (and failures) in US-Soviet relations inform resolution of the current crisis?

This interdisciplinary, semester-long course will seek answers to these interlinked questions. It will place past examples of US-Soviet nuclear cooperation into broad historical context. Students will examine how US-Soviet nuclear security cooperation was shaped by the social and political environment in which it occurred—and explore how US-Soviet collaboration on nuclear security drove change in other areas. With an emphasis on interactive discussion and primary source analysis, this course offers students a more holistic view of the opportunities and challenges for reviving US-Russia nuclear security cooperation today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the course is to examine the relationship between past successes and failures in US-Soviet arms control, nonproliferation, and nuclear security and the historical context in which they took place.
Over the course of the semester, this course will:

- Introduce students to the diverse range of drivers, inhibitors, and influences on US and Soviet nuclear policy, including domestic politics, public discourse, religion, economic considerations, environmental issues, and civil and human rights.
- Familiarize students with relevant primary sources including declassified and unclassified government documents, memoirs, literary works, film, interviews, and samizdat;
- Equip students to analyze and interrogate primary sources—including an understanding of whose perspectives are and are not reflected in them;
- Afford students a critical understanding of existing secondary source scholarship relevant to the topics covered in this course.

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**TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS**

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, all required weekly readings are available on Canvas. Links to asynchronous lectures, about which more is said below, will be made available on Canvas. Both the course Timeline and class discussion board are also accessible on Canvas.

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**METHODOLOGY AND POLICIES**

This course will be heavily discussion-based. Each aspect, including the asynchronous assignments, is designed to facilitate interactive debate while providing opportunities for you to ask questions and exchange views—all in a distance-learning format. Sarah Bidgood is the instructor of record for this course. Rebecca Mitchell, assistant professor of history at Middlebury College and course co-instructor, will join us synchronously for the first five weeks of the course and asynchronously for the remainder of the semester.

**Course structure:**

Each weeklong unit of this course will focus on a different period of time between 1945 and 2002. For the most part, the first class meeting of each weeklong unit (Tuesday) will focus on the social and political environment that characterized this period of time. The second class meeting (Thursday) will focus on a specific example of US-Soviet/Russian nuclear security engagement that occurred during this same period. This structure will enable us to examine more closely the relationship between context and nuclear security outcomes. It will also help to prepare you for your midterm reflection and annotated bibliography, your final presentation, and your final paper, where you will explore this same relationship in a case study of your choosing.

To help minimize Zoom fatigue and to accommodate the different academic calendars at Middlebury and MIIS, this course will include both synchronous and asynchronous components.

**Synchronous Components.** The synchronous class meetings will convene on Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 AM Pacific. Between January 25th and February 23rd, we will meet for the full scheduled class time (8:00-9:50 AM). After February 23rd, we are likely to meet for a shorter period of time because some components of the class lecture will be delivered asynchronously (see below). Regardless of their length, our class meetings will be heavily discussion-based and will focus on the assigned texts, as well as primary source documents we examine together in
class. It is therefore essential that you come to class having read the assigned material carefully so we can engage in a meaningful dialogue.

*Asynchronous Components.* The asynchronous portions of the class will include recorded mini-lectures and guidance about the readings. You should watch this material before you start the readings, because it is designed to give you important background information that will help you understand the assigned texts better.

**Assignments:**

In addition to completing the readings each week, there are six main assignments for this course.

1. *Weekly discussion board posts/text annotations.* At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to one of two groups. Each week, the members of one group will post one discussion question about the readings on Canvas for the members of the other group to consider. These questions will be due on Saturdays at 12 PM Pacific. The members of the other group will then pick any one of these questions and provide a paragraph-long response. These responses will be due the following Monday by 12 PM Pacific. We will switch groups each week, so you if you ask a question one week, you will respond to one the following week. These questions and responses will inform our conversation during Tuesday’s class, so it is important that you meet these deadlines. **Submitting these questions and responses on time is worth 20% of your grade.**

2. *Timeline submissions.* We will be building a virtual timeline together over the course of the semester using a platform called Knight Lab Timeline. This timeline will help us visualize the relationship between context and outcomes. As we’ll explore on the first day of class, some major events have already been prepopulated in the timeline, but there are many more that could be added. One of your assignments each week will be to suggest one event you think should be added to the timeline on our class discussion board, along with a short paragraph explaining your reasoning. These will be due by 3 PM Pacific each Wednesday, and we’ll discuss your proposals during Thursday’s class. **Submitting these proposed events on time is worth 10% of your grade.**

3. *Midterm Reflection and Annotated Bibliography.* The midterm assignment for this course is a short, 2-page reflection and annotated bibliography. In it, you will identify the case study you plan to examine in your final paper, explore how it shaped and was shaped by the context in which it took place, and identify ten preliminary sources related to your topic—with a one sentence explanation of how each informs your perspective. More detailed information about the midterm reflection and annotated bibliography will be provided during the first few weeks of class. This reflection will be due by March 23rd at 5 PM Pacific (the first Tuesday after we return from Spring Break). **It is worth 15% of your grade.**

4. *Final Paper.* The final paper for this course is a 10-12 page case study that examines the
relationship between context and US-Soviet/Russian nuclear security cooperation. More detailed information about the final paper will be provided during the first few weeks of class. The final paper will be due on Sunday, May 16th at 5 PM Pacific. It is worth 30% of your grade.

5. Final Presentation. During the last two weeks of class, you will deliver a presentation on your case study. These presentations will serve as an opportunity to test out the arguments you put forward in your paper and to receive feedback before you submit. More detailed information about the final presentation will be provided during the first few weeks of class. It is worth 15% of your grade.

6. Participation. Your participation is important to making our course effective, especially since we are not meeting in person. At the same time, the distance learning format of the course also offers many ways for you to participate, both synchronously and asynchronously. Participation goes beyond attendance in our class meetings and can be demonstrated in multiple ways. These include, but are not limited to, actively engaging in discussions in class; reflecting upon the readings in a manner that shows you have read them carefully; and considering and responding to the ideas your colleagues put forward in our Canvas-based discussions thoughtfully and respectfully. Participation is worth 10% of your grade.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

All students will be held to all policies and procedures listed in the most current Policies and Standards Manual (PSM). This includes but is not limited to our Student Honor Code and regulations on plagiarism. A complete copy of the Policies and Standards Manual (PSM) can be found here: http://www.miis.edu/offices/records/policies

Self-Plagiarism: Re-use of a student’s work, in part or in its entirety, for another course without the express permission of the course instructor may be considered a form of plagiarism.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will be based on the following performance criteria:

- Discussion questions and responses 20%
- Timeline submissions and rationale 10%
- Participation 10%
- Midterm reflection/annotated bibliography 15%
- Final Paper 30%
- Final Presentation 15%

TOTAL 100%
For information on standard MIIS Grading Policies, please refer to the Policy and Standards Manual. Please note that “participation” can be demonstrated through synchronous as well as asynchronous activities. If you have to miss a class meeting for any reason, please let Sarah Bidgood know so she can identify alternate ways for you to participate. Please also note that Sarah Bidgood is the instructor of record for this course, so she will be evaluating your work and determining your grade.

POLICY FOR STUDENT DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with documented disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in class are encouraged to contact Assistant Dean of Student Services, Ashley Arrocha, as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. Assistance is available to eligible students through the Office of Student Services. Please contact aarrocha@miis.edu or 831-647-4654 for more information. All discussions will remain confidential.

SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 (January 25-29)

Introductions

Tuesday, January 26th

Zoom Lecture: Introduction to the course, assignments and syllabus, resources

Thursday, January 28th

Zoom Lecture: Entering the Nuclear Age

Readings:


Assignment:

Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, January 27th.

Week 2 (February 1-5)

Late Stalinism and the Emergence of the Cold War

Tuesday, February 2nd

Zoom Lecture: Late Stalinism, Concerns at Home and Abroad
Readings:


Primary Sources:


Assignment:
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, January 30th. Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, February 1st.

Thursday, February 4th
Zoom Lecture: Establishment of the UN Atomic Energy Commission — 1945-1946

Readings:


Primary sources:
Assignment:
Proposal one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, February 3rd.

Week 3 (Feb. 8-12)
Khrushchev’s Thaw

Tuesday, February 9th
Zoom Lecture: Thaw and de-Stalinization

Reading:


Primary Sources:
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115995.pdf?v=3c22b71b65bcbbe9fddfdae9419e995


Assignment:
Group 2 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, February 6th. Group 1 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, February 8th.

Thursday, February 11th

Readings:


**Primary Sources:**


**Assignment:**
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, February 10th.

**Week 4 (Feb. 15-19)**

**The Cuban Missile Crisis and its Aftermath**

**Tuesday, February 16th**

**Zoom Lecture:** Crises at home and abroad, and the fall of Khrushchev

**Readings:**


**Primary Sources:**

https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/621027%20Dobrynin%20Cable%20to%20USSR.pdf

https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/621030%20Memorandum%20for%20Sec.%20of%20State.pdf

**Assignment:**
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, February 13th.
Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, February 15th.

Thursday, February 18th

**Zoom Lecture:** Negotiation and Conclusion of Limited Test Ban Treaty – 1961-1963

**Readings:**


**Primary Sources:**
USSR. Memoir. “Recollections of Vadim Orlov (USSR Submarine B-59): We will Sink Them All, But We will Not Disgrace Our Navy.” (2002). PDF available for download here: [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/docs.htm](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/docs.htm)


**Assignment:**
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, February 17th.

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**Week 5 (Feb. 22-26)**

**Internal Dissent and Critique**

Tuesday, February 23rd

**Zoom Lecture:** Brezhnev and the Growth of Internal Dissent

**Readings:**


**Primary Sources:**
Audio Sources: Bard Singers Vladimir Vysotskii, Bulat Okudzhave.

Excerpts from Brezhnev’s Speech at the April 1968 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, April 9, 1968.
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/177818

Assignment:
Group 2 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, February 20th. Group 1 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, February 22nd.

Thursday, February 25th
Zoom Lecture: Negotiation and Conclusion of the Nonproliferation Treaty—1965-1970

Readings:


Primary Sources:

Assignment:
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, February 24th.

Week 6 (Mar. 1-5)
Society in the Brezhnev Era

Tuesday, March 2:
Mini-lecture: Stagnation or Stability?

Readings:

Primary Sources:

_Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears: Part 1_ (1979)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=X7GuhjGZ-xs

Assignment:

Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, February 27th.
Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, March 1st.

Thursday, March 4

Zoom Lecture: Negotiation and Ratification of SALT I—1968-1972

Readings:


Primary Sources:


Memorandum from Andropov to Ustinov regarding US positions in the Anti-Ballistic Missile negotiations, April 19, 1971.
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115980

Assignment:

Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, March 3rd.

Week 7 (Mar. 8-12)

Stagnation and Upheaval

Tuesday, March 9th

Zoom guest lecture: Professor Juliane Fürst, University of Bristol

Readings:


Assignment:
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, March 6th. Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, March 8th.

Thursday, March 11th
Zoom lecture: The Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War—1972-1973

Readings:


Primary Sources:
Anatoly Chernayev’s diary entry for June 3, 1972, p. 24-26
https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB379/1972%20as%20of%20May%2024,%202012%20FINAL.pdf

https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98/octwar-73.pdf


Assignment:
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, March 10th.

Spring Break

Week 8 (Mar. 22-26)
Soviet International Diplomacy: Afghanistan

Tuesday, March 23rd:
Zoom guest lecture: Professor Timothy Nunan (Free University, Berlin)

Readings:

Assignment:
Group 2 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, March 20th. Group 1 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, March 22nd.

Midterm reflections due March 23rd at 5 PM Pacific.

Thursday, March 25th:
Zoom Lecture: Negotiation, signature and failure to ratify SALT II – 1972-1979

Readings:

Primary Sources:

Assignment:
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, March 24th.

Week 9 (Mar. 29-April 2)
Perestroika and Glasnost’

Tuesday, March 30th
Zoom Guest Lecture – Professor Jeffrey Knopf

Readings:

Primary Sources:

Assignment:
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, March 27th.
Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, March 29th.

**Thursday, April 1st:**
**Zoom Lecture:** The Reagan-Gorbachev summits and the Negotiation of INF 1985-1989

**Readings:**


**Primary Sources:**
Ronald Reagan, Diary entry, Sunday May 9, 1982.
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-05091982/

Ronald Reagan, Diary entry, Friday, February 11, 1983.
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-02111983/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-10101983/

Ronald Reagan, Diary entry, Friday November 18, 1983.
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-11181983/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-03041985/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-11051985/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-11141985/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-11201985/
Ronald Reagan, Diary entry, October 11, 1986. 
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-10111986/

Ronald Reagan, Diary entry, October 12, 1986.  
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-10121986/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-12071987/

https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-12091987/

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121971


Assignment:  
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, March 31st.

Week 10 (April 5-9)  
Renegotiation of the Union or Dissolution?

Tuesday, April 6th:  
Zoom Lecture: Negotiation of the START Treaty and the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives—1990-1992

Readings:  
https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/casestudies/CSWMD_CaseStudy-5.pdf

Primary Sources:

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115467

https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/144979

Assignment:
Group 2 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, April 3rd.
Group 1 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, April 5th.

Thursday, April 8th:
Zoom lecture: Perestroika and its End

Readings:


Primary Sources:


Assignment:
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, April 7th.

Week 11 (April 12-16)
Moving Forward

Tuesday, April 13th
Mini-lecture: Failures of Reform and Forging the “New Russia”

Readings:
Assignment:
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, April 10th.
Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, April 12th.

Thursday, April 15th

Readings:

Primary Sources:


Assignment:
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, April 14th.

Week 12 (April 19-23)
The Cold War Legacy

Tuesday, April 20
Mini-Lecture: The “Feverish Nineties”

Readings:
Primary Sources:

Assignment:
   Group 2 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, April 17th. Group 1 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, April 19th.

Thursday, April 22nd
Zoom lecture: Negotiation and conclusion of the CTBT – 1993-1996
Readings:

Primary sources:
   “Oral history interview with Grigory Berdennikov,” October 20, 2016, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Contributed to NPIHP by Michal Onderco. Available at: https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/177422.pdf?v=396d1ecc6cecd1c6e3528c4980d75c14

Summary Report on One on One meeting between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, May 10, 1995
   https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/209785

David Hoffman, “Cold-War Doctrines Refuse to Die” March 15, 1998 (on the Norwegian Rocket Incident, Jan. 25, 1995)

Clinton-Yeltsin conversations, May 7, 1996.

Assignment:
   Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, April 21st.

Week 13 (April 26-30)
Beyond the End of the Cold War
Tuesday, April 27th
Mini-lecture: The Putin Era

Readings:  

Primary Sources:  

Assignment:  
Group 1 poses one discussion question by 12 PM Pacific on Saturday, April 24th. Group 2 provides a paragraph-long response to one question by 12 PM Pacific on Monday, April 26th.

Thursday, April 29th
Zoom lecture: US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty – 2002

Readings:  


Primary Sources:  

Telcon with Acting President Putin of Russia, January 1, 2000

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DWv6F_dc1Y

Assignment:  
Propose one event to add to the timeline on Canvas by 3 PM Pacific on Wednesday, April 29th.

Week 14 (May 3-7)
Final Presentations

Tuesday, May 4th
Final presentations

Thursday, May 6th
Final Presentations

Week 15 (May 10-14)
Final Presentations and Wrap-Up

Tuesday, May 11th
Final Presentations

Thursday, May 13th
Final Presentations and Wrap-Up [Reminder: Final Paper due May 16th by 5 PM Pacific]