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## HIS 239: Kiev, Muscovy, and Russia Final Paper Assignment

### Overview

This paper is the culminating assignment of this class. It serves as an opportunity to put the critical reading and writing skills you have been building all semester to work in service of a unique historical argument. In these prompts, you are asked to place our sources in dialogue and draw your own, evidence-based conclusions about what they reveal about major developments in Russian history from the Kievan period to the end of the Empire. These topics are designed to be open-ended and give you room to develop a unique analytical perspective. You may choose one of the topics below or create your own. If you create your own topic you must get my approval by Monday, Nov. 18. I encourage you to be bold, be creative, and have fun!

### Requirements

- Length: Your paper must be **2000 words long**, *not including* your bibliography. I will allow a maximum of 200 words deviation.
- Formatting: Include your **name and title** on the first page. **Number** your pages. You must use **12-point font, double spacing, and 1-inch margins**.
- Citations and Bibliography: In the body of your paper, you may use either **internal citations** or **footnotes** (not both). You must also attach a **Works Cited** as a separate page at the end of your text. Both your Works Cited and your footnotes should be formatted using the *Chicago Manual of Style* (available online through the Library's website). If you do not have the complete bibliographic information for a source, you can find it on **WorldCat**, which is also available on the Library website.

### Instructions

Choose one of the following topics (or create your own, with my approval!) and respond to it using **only** the texts we have read in class. You must formulate a **thesis statement** (an argument in response to the topic), which should appear in the first paragraph of your paper. Your argument should be based on your interpretation of the texts and be backed up by properly cited quotations. Remember to explain your interpretation! The main question for each topic is in **bold**. That's the part you must be sure to answer. The other questions function as suggestions to help you think through your chosen topic. You do not have to address every one of them.

This assignment is scaffolded into three steps:

- 1) **Thesis statement**. Draft a one sentence thesis statement, which encapsulates the argument you will make in response to the prompt you have chosen. Write it down and bring it with you to your **thesis statement meeting** with me on **Nov. 18** or **19**.

**2) Rough Draft.** The rough draft should consist of the first three pages of your paper. That includes your **introduction** and part of the **body**. Our goal is to practice the distinct skills at work in these sections. The introduction should set up the problem, preview the argument, explain the stakes, and articulate the thesis statement. The body should use direct quotations from your sources as evidence for your argument. Please review the **Writing Handout** (available on the website and on Sakai under “Syllabus”) for more information.

We will workshop our rough drafts together in class on Monday, Dec. 2. To make that possible, you must email your draft to me and everyone in your group by the due date.

**Due: Sunday, Dec. 1 at 8pm.**

You must read your group members’ drafts before we meet on Monday! You will only be able to give your colleagues useful advice if you read their work carefully. I will hand out further instructions before our peer critique day.

**3) Final Draft.** Your completed paper will be due **Saturday, Dec. 14 at 8pm**, submitted via Sakai. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day. I will not accept late papers after December 18.

\*\*\*\*\*In case you missed it before, here is my policy on **plagiarism**: Don’t do it! Plagiarism is a very serious offence, which can destroy your academic career and professional prospects. If you plagiarize, **you will automatically fail my class.** I am all-seeing and all-knowing, and I *will* catch you. Please, save us both a lot of time and worry: don’t even try it. If at any time you have questions about how to avoid plagiarism, feel free to ask me.

I will do my best to be available to meet with you as often as you like. I will read partial drafts up until December 12.

**Good luck!!!! Please let me know if you have any questions!**

## Essay Topics

### Topic One:

Peter the Great has a reputation as the ruler who transformed Russia through modernization and Westernization. Catherine the Great also has a reputation for importance, but less so for transformation. Consider the primary sources we have studied in relation to each of these rulers and place them in the broader context of Russia’s imperial period. **Which ruler was more significant for Russia’s development, Peter I or Catherine II?** What new ideas and habits did each ruler introduce into Russian politics, society, and culture? How did their ideas and habits shape future generations of Russian subjects? How did their ideas, habits, and approaches to imperial rule impact future emperors? Did the Russia of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century look more like Peter’s vision or Catherine’s vision of the ideal society?

### **Topic Two:**

From the Kievan period through the Imperial period, women in Russia were never accorded a status equal to men. While the opportunities available to them increased with time, women's position remained inferior, both legally and socially. Take the *Domostroi* as your guide to traditional views of women's place in Russian society, while making allowances for the more public role granted them under Peter I. Then, select either Nadezhda Durova or Vera Figner (not both!) as the focus of your paper and answer the following question. **How did traditional views of women's place in Russian society shape the trajectory of a woman who defied them?**

How was Durova's decision to join the military as a man shaped by her mother's efforts to teach her feminine skills and her observations of male and female roles? How was the role Figner made for herself in revolutionary circles shaped by the values she learned at home, at school, and in her marriage? How did the contrast between her world and the village galvanize her thinking? How do the roles prescribed to each defiant woman reflect the values of the *Domostroi*? How did the restrictions placed on each woman make her the woman she came to be?

### **Topic Three:**

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian intellectuals were deeply concerned with the plight of the peasants. But this line of thought originated more than a century before, with thinkers like Alexander Radishchev. One notable difference between Radishchev and the radical intelligentsia is that he did not interact with peasants directly. Rather, he examined their situation through thought experiments. Consider Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* in light of Savva Dmitrievich Purlevskii's *A Life Under Russian Serfdom*. **How well did Radishchev understand the situation and concerns of the Russian peasantry?** What did Radishchev get right? What did he miss? How does his conception of the peasants as people compare to how Purlevskii conceptualizes himself and neighbors? How does each author understand power relations, economics, and moral behavior? How do these considerations reveal the closeness or distance of the nobility from the peasantry in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

### **Topic Four:**

Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionary thought formed a small but persistent trend in Russian intellectual life. With time, this trend became increasingly radical, leading up to the successful overthrow of the autocracy in 1917. Select a limited number of sources and answer the following question: **To what extent were the radical revolutionaries of the 1870s the heirs of the Decembrists of 1825?** What ideas from the Decembrist documents remain constant through the century? What new ideas of the later period represent an outgrowth of their predecessors? Are there ideas of the 1870s that were without precedent and would have been rejected by the Decembrists? Can we trace a continuous line from the Decembrists to the Westernizers to Figner and Bakunin and Nechaev, or is it more complicated than that? What role, if any, did the Slavophiles play in the radicals' intellectual development? For this topic, do not try to incorporate all of the sources from Weeks 11 and 12! Choose the sources that best suit your thesis and analyze them closely.

**Topic Five:**

In his “Letter to Gogol,” Vissarion Belinskii places a firm duty on the shoulders of Russian writers to depict Russian society with unvarnished realism and speak truth to power about social ills. Begin by analyzing Belinskii’s charge to Russian writers. What exactly does he expect of them? Then select either Alexander Pushkin’s poem “The Bronze Horseman” or Leo Tolstoy’s novella *Hadji Murat* and answer the following question: **To what extent does Pushkin/Tolstoy fulfill Belinskii’s demands?** What is Pushkin’s message about imperial power? How does he render Russian reality in poetic form, and is this rendering effective in conveying his message? How does Tolstoy depict Russia’s quest for empire? Is his Orientalization of the mountain peoples of the Caucasus effective and therefore justified, or does it undermine his message?