

EXAMINATION #2

Instructions: Below you will find two essay questions. Choose **ONE** of these questions and answer it in an essay of three pages or so. Make sure that your essay actually answers the question posed. Do your best to articulate a clear thesis or argument early on in the essay (best of all in the first paragraph). Use the body of the essay to develop that thesis and to provide specific evidence from the readings specifically assigned in this course. Do not restrict yourself to one or two sources when a wider range of materials will allow you to compose a much better and more comprehensive answer. Remember that instructors will have to read many of these essays, so clarity of organization and expression is essential for success.

QUESTION #1. Autocracy, Bolsheviks, and Constitutions. Evaluate the attitude of the Russian autocracy and the Bolsheviks to the constitutions and law. What were the different conditions in which the tsarist regime and the Bolsheviks produced their constitutions? How willingly did they write constitutions, and what aspects of policy and administration were *exempt* from constitutional regulation? To what extent did these regimes seem to respect these constitutions in practice, and what efforts did they make to limit the constraints of constitutional provisions on their actions? Here you might think about the goals of each regime and the degree to which constitutional forms and practices were perceived to be relevant for their attainment. Be sure to consider the October Manifesto, various provisions in the Fundamental Laws of 1906, Lenin's *State & Revolution*, and the Soviet constitutions in your answer. Other sources may also be relevant.

QUESTION #2. Violence in Russian Politics. We know that the Americans had to fight a war against the British in order to secure the independence of their new country. But it seems safe to say that violence occupied a more prominent place in the revolutionary process in Russia from 1905 to 1936. Write an essay addressing this problem of political violence in Russia from the late tsarist period through the first two Soviet decades. It will not be enough simply to list acts of violence. Rather, you should seek to explain the role and function of violence in comparison to other ways of resolving political problems. In what cases were tsarist statesmen or Bolsheviks willing to use instruments like law, constitutions, elections, and compromise? And in which cases did these same people resort to force, coercion, or even violence to solve political problems? What do the answers tell us about the nature of the late tsarist and early Bolshevik regimes?

General guidelines & advice. The basic idea of this exercise and the standards by which it will be assessed are the same as in exam #1. It should be immediately apparent that these questions are complex and need to be answered by including a range of factors and issues. The space allotted for your answer is nonetheless quite limited. This means that you will have to think very carefully about organization and about which issues are truly important to answering the question and which are of only secondary significance. You will also need to distill your main ideas to their essence, while also choosing evidence that is both succinct and effective. Clear topic sentences are always crucial to a good essay, and no essay can possibly earn an "A" or "B" grade if topic sentences are missing or badly related to the content of each paragraph. In short, doing well will involve a good deal of work, so you should be sure to allot yourself an appropriate amount of time.

There also arises the question of whether the Fundamental Laws of 1906 should be considered a constitution. There is no correct answer to this question, but you will probably have to make some kind of assessment of your own in order to answer either question above. Alternatively, you could say that the Laws, even if they do not represent a constitution, had constitutional significance or were part of a larger process of constitution-making.

Formal Requirements: Make sure that your essay fulfills all the formal requirements listed below. Violations will be penalized in the assessment of your exam.

- The essay should seek to articulate an argument, a thesis, or some kind of main idea. The more clearly you can articulate (and defend) that idea, the stronger the paper will be.
- There must be evidence from the reading, and this must include both the segments with two columns (that is my prose) and those with one column (documents and readings).
- The essay should be around 3 pages in length, but **we will measure this by word count**. An acceptable length is **800-1100 words**. Papers outside of this range will be penalized, just as will be the inclusion of unnecessary words. MS Word conveniently displays a word count (you can usually see it at the bottom of the document).
- The text should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Pages must be **numbered**.
- Your name, the name of your TA, and the number of your section **must** appear in the upper right-hand corner of the essay. Do not include anything else (date, instructor's name, name of the course, etc.).
- Your essay must have a title, and this should **not** be the same as the gloss for the question itself above (e.g., "Violence in Russian Politics"). Do not include a title page. Simply put your title at the top of the first page. You do not need a "works cited" page if you use only the required readings for the course.
- Your essay must be typed or computer-printed. Handwritten documents will not be accepted.
- References to the textbook should be simple—for example (Werth, 75). If the words belong to someone other than the textbook author, then you should make clear whose they are. Example: Edward Carr notes that the 1918 constitution of the RSFSR "was scarcely expected to last as a working instrument" (Werth, 93).
- Your exam essay should reflect your own thinking and writing. Discussing the issues in the question(s) with others in the class is certainly acceptable, but the final written product should be your own. Please bear in mind that the instructors of this course take the issue of academic honesty very seriously and will keep vigilant watch for examples of plagiarism. In the case of a violation of academic honesty, you will be failed in the course and formal proceedings against you will be initiated.

Grading Standards

Each essay will be graded on a 50-point scale (as the essay comprises 50% of the exam grade). Those 50 points will be granted based on the following standards:

Argument & evidence (25 points): Your main propositions or argument should be clearly stated and should be supported with concrete and specific evidence. Do not simply narrate or summarize the material. Show that there is thought behind your argument. If you make a claim, find an example from the readings that supports it. Next, either paraphrase or take a short quote, and cite your source properly. Often a few words or a phrase can be quoted more effectively than an entire sentence. Quotations that neither support nor advance the argument are detrimental to the essay, as are quotations unrelated to the issue at hand. Block quotes take up a lot of space and cannot replace your own analysis; avoid them altogether. A paper that contains no references to course readings is not acceptable. **THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR SOURCES ANSWER THE QUESTION EXPLICITLY.**

Accuracy/plausibility of ideas (10 pts): You cannot build a good argument with inaccurate information, so check the ideas/facts you are using to ensure they are accurate. By no means is the essay a matter of simply reciting a series of facts, but factual accuracy nonetheless remains the foundation for a good interpretive essay.

Organization and coherence (10 pts): Proper organization is monumental to any essay, at the level of both individual paragraphs and the essay as a whole. You should have a clear thesis, proper paragraph structure (topic sentence first, then supporting details, possibly with a transition sentence at the end), and a clear conclusion – not a *summary*, but a *conclusion* that articulates the vision of the issue that the reader should have at the end. What insights have you provided? How is your argument important? For a very good web page on this topic, see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/conclusions.html>. If you need a refresher on organization: go to your TA's office hours or go to the writing center (both of which are free).

Grammar and Style (5 pts): Relatively minor and infrequent grammatical mistakes will not affect your grade substantially (though instructors are likely to draw your attention to them). Egregious and frequent errors – especially ones that begin to erode the reader's ability to understand your ideas – will have more serious consequences. For example, a grammatically incomplete sentence is almost impossible to interpret precisely because it is not complete. It needs to be stressed that your ideas are only as good as the language in which they are presented. If you need assistance with grammar issues (for example, if you do not know or understand proper comma usage) you can see your TA during office hours or go to the writing center. All the formal requirements listed above concerning length, font, margins, etc. must also be met. **DO NOT** write in colloquial language, using contractions, slang, and sports metaphors; adhere to academic standards.