Course description: “Socialism: The Dream and the Nightmare” examines the history of socialism, from Marx to the triumph of socialist states around the world and, then, their sudden collapse in the 1990s. This course examines the writings of socialist thinkers and their critics, histories of communism in various nations, democratic socialism in Europe, along with the experiences of those who lived under socialism. This is a multi-disciplinary course that incorporates philosophy, history, film, literature and other media.

Background: Socialism was a secular faith that swept the globe more rapidly than Christianity or Islam, which took centuries to spread their gospels. “Faith” is a word that socialist converts used to characterize their zeal for eliminating private property and establishing a “Heaven on Earth” that required no God. Their faith ran so deep it justified the slaughter of millions in the name of the greater good. Like Christianity or Islam, socialism was a millennialist faith: humanity was heading toward an End of History, with all goods owned in common (through the State); the divisions caused by private property ownership and self-interest would end as humans pursued the common good. More than an economic system, Socialism promised a New Socialist Man and Woman free of self-interest, greed, and envy. That was the Dream that enraptured some of the brightest minds of the 20th century.

The Nightmare ensued wherever Socialism was fully implemented: mass poverty, forced famines, Great Terrors, brutal one-party rule, total censorship, the destruction of religion and the press or any institution separate from the State. The death toll from socialism and communism was somewhere between 60 and 100 million people. The Soviet “Great Terror” (1930s) and Chinese “Great Leap Forward” (1950s) each killed twice as many people as the number of those who died in the Holocaust. Yet Western socialists denied what was happening or proclaimed that it would be “different next time.” But it was always the same.

Definitional issues: "socialism" is a loose term in American politics. It does not mean a large welfare state, a busy-body government or the piecemeal “safety net.” Socialism proper is the elimination of private property rights and their replacement by common ownership (almost always by the State). Democratic socialists worked to create a piecemeal socialist State but sought the eventual socialization of all property. Communism was the revolutionary form of socialism (“socialists in a hurry”). The Dream was the end of income inequality, rising living standards for workers, and fraternal attachment to your fellow “comrades” rather than family, ethnic groups, nations, religions—all attachments that had fueled hatred, hostility, and war. Explaining how the Dream became Nightmare is one of the objectives of this course.
In the course of our weekly discussions, we will discuss “big questions”:

1. How did intellectuals devise a philosophy that inspired activists to make the Dream come true?
2. Why did socialism take a democratic form in Western countries and revolutionary communism elsewhere? Why did both types of socialism collapse at the same time?
3. Why did intellectuals submerge themselves in a movement that demanded Groupthink and conformity? What did they find so appealing?
4. What role did “faith” play in becoming a socialist/communist?
5. How and why did the USSR stand as a beacon for so many “political pilgrims” devoted to socialism?
6. Was the Nightmare inevitable? Is socialism “good in theory, fatal in practice?” Or, is socialism flawed in theory?
7. Why has the West remembered the horrors of National Socialism in Germany (Nazism) but forgotten the class genocides and brutal terror of the Soviet Union, Mao’s China, or Pol Pot’s Cambodia?
8. Why did Third World countries adopt variants of socialism? Were they rebelling against their former “capitalist” rulers or adopting the socialism promoted by European labor parties?
9. What did we learn about communism once internal records of the Soviet Union were available after the collapse?
10. What has happened to the socialist Dream since the collapse of the 1990s? Why does it still inspire so many?
11. How have filmmakers and writers dealt with communism?

Required Readings (see schedule of reading assignments below). E-reserve available on SIUOnline.

Film

Muravchik, “Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism” (2003). PBS series. The book (by the same name) is optional but provides a good overview of topics in this class and will be on course reserve: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfWOF__ADqw

Books


Selected Chapters and Articles

Fabian Essays (1889), preface to American edition (10 pp.)
Bernstein, Evolutionary Socialism (1899): very brief excerpt (10 pp.)
E-Reserve: Revel, Last Exit to Utopia: The Survival of Socialism in a Post-Soviet Era, chap. 5-6; Cockburn, Fukuyama, Heilbroner, Huntington, Wright. Go to course site – Content – Important Course Documents and download these and the other above articles.

REFERENCES: For the film review assignment, check out Miss Liberty's Guide to Film and Video (print) and http://www.missliberty.com/
ASSIGNMENTS:

**Discussion (30%):**

The quality of the seminar depends upon active discussion of the readings. Convey your understanding of the material, place it in context, but also bring your own perspective to bear. **Discussion Leaders:** You will team up with a partner and lead two class discussions. Try to involve everyone. I am here to provide background information and help moderate the discussion. See “Discussion Tips” below.

**Reading log (30%):**

Keep a **reading log or journal.** Submit a weekly copy (or original) of your log to me. I will grade, comment upon, and return your log the following week. Journal writing is *informal*, a diary of your reflections on the material, not a simple regurgitation. You *should* summarize the main points of each article or chapter—bullet-point lists are fine—but also engage with the reading by writing your own comments.

I will grade on how well you a) demonstrate **content** mastery; b) **reflect** critically on the reading; c) list **questions or criticisms** for discussion; d) **relate** the material to other readings. You may digress by relating the reading to other courses, current events or your life experience but, in general, stay focused on the reading. See “Reading Log Tips” below.

**Book Reviews (20%):**

Choose two books not part of the required (common) readings. Then, write two reviews and present your findings to the class. Distribute a one-page sheet summarizing the book's main points. The written review is due the following week.

**Film Reviews (20%):** write and present **two film reviews**

See “Socialism: Selected Readings and Films” to locate works that interest you. You are not bound by that list and may present any other suitable work, subject to instructor approval.

**NOTE:** This is a seminar and there is no final exam.

*The syllabus is a tentative schedule of lectures and discussions. The instructor may change it as his discretion.*

**Per SIU rules, book scholarships awarded after you send a thank you note to the Koch Foundation. This is a SIU requirement, not one of the donor (Koch Foundation).**
**Schedule of Reading Assignments**

The reading load varies over the course of the semester. Make sure that you complete the assigned readings by the dates listed below. Unit reading loads are estimates. Use them to manage your time wisely. It doesn’t hurt to read ahead if you see you have a “heavier” load following a “light” week. Common readings equal approx. 900 pages over 16 weeks (55 pages/week). The books and films you select to present are on top of that load.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Jan. 16:</th>
<th>NO CLASS (MLK, Jr. Day)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>23:</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: What is Socialism? Communism?</strong></td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>30:</td>
<td><strong>The Dream: Universal Brotherhood and an End to Capitalism</strong></td>
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<td>“Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism” film – watch (3 hours)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Feb. 6:</td>
<td><strong>Dreamers and Visionaries: Revolution or Democratic Politics?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(65 pp.)</td>
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<td>• Marx, <em>Communist Manifesto</em> (any good version with an introduction)</td>
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<td>• Excerpt, <em>Fabian Essays in Socialism</em> (1889), preface</td>
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<td>• <a href="https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_New_International_Encyclopedia/Bernstein,_Eduard">https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_New_International_Encyclopedia/Bernstein,_Eduard</a></td>
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<td>• Eduard Bernstein, “Evolutionary Socialism” (1899) (edited – see D2L)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>13:</td>
<td><strong>The Disillusioned Dreamers</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(110 pp.)</td>
<td><em>The God that Failed</em> (1949), introduction, Koestler (15-17, 59-75 only), Wright, Gide (175-195 only). Also, read my summary of the 2001 foreword on SIU Online Course site.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>20:</td>
<td><strong>The Great Critic of Socialism: Hayek</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(110 pp.)</td>
<td>For background, context, and information on the book’s impact, read <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_to_Serfdom">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_to_Serfdom</a></td>
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<td><em>The Road to Serfdom</em> (first half), Introduction through Chap. 7</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>27:</td>
<td><strong>The Great Critic of Socialism: Hayek</strong></td>
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<td>(110 pp.)</td>
<td><em>The Road to Serfdom</em> (second half), chaps. 8-11, 14-16</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Mar. 6:</td>
<td><strong>The Nightmare: The Crimes of Communism</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>13:</td>
<td>NO CLASS (Spring Break)</td>
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Week 9 20: **The Nightmare: The Gulag** (continued)
Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 129-36, 166-237, 290-96

Week 10 27 **The Nightmare: The Gulag** (continued)
Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 297-347, 424-72

Week 11 Apr. 3 **Black Book of Communism**
Each of you will read an assigned chapter on a nation other than the USSR and present your findings to the class.

Week 12 10 **Why? “Never again?”**

Week 13 17: Individual Presentations

Week 14 24: Individual Presentations

Week 15 May 1: Individual Presentations
Reading Lists Compiled by Others:
http://yalebooks.com/series/annals-of-communism-series


http://www.infography.com/content/074596864206.html


Film Lists Compiled by Others

https://theculturetrip.com/europe/russia/articles/the-top-12-communist-movies-every-film-buff-should-see/

http://missliberty.com/tag/anti-socialism/

http://missliberty.com/tag/escape-from-socialism/

http://www.imdb.com/search.keyword?keywords=socialism – many of these deal with socialism (but not all).

http://www.imdb.com/search.keyword?keywords=communism – some of these deal with communism but not all. See, e.g., The Way Back (2010): “Siberian gulag escapees travel 4,000 miles by foot to freedom in India.”


http://www.videoproject.com/Rockin-the-Wall.html

SIU has a wonderful streaming movie database:

https://siu.kanopystreaming.com/s?query=socialism

https://siu.kanopystreaming.com/s?query=communism
Books and Literature


Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (1925) [https://www.amazon.com/Heart-Dog-Mikhail-Bulgakov/dp/0802150594](https://www.amazon.com/Heart-Dog-Mikhail-Bulgakov/dp/0802150594) many other editions available for less.


https://www.amazon.com/Political-Pilgrims-Western-Intellectuals-Society/dp/1560009543

https://www.amazon.com/Making-People-Disappear-Photographic-Pergamon-Brasseys/dp/0080374301

Kenney, 1989: *Democratic Revolutions at the Cold War's End: A Brief History with Documents* (2009):  


https://archive.org/details/1926AnIslandHellMalsagoff


Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* 

Popov and Smelev, *The Turning Point: Revitalizing the Soviet Economy* (1989),  
https://www.amazon.com/Turning-Point-Revitalizing-Soviet-Economy/dp/0385246544

https://www.amazon.com/Youth-Rock-Soviet-Bloc-Cultures/dp/1498508758


**Films**


“Ballad of a Soldier” (1959) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052600/?ref_=nv_sr_1


“How the Beatles Rocked the Kremlin”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sw6OCDiKLQ (four parts – one hour total)


“Man in the White Suit” (1951): http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0044876/?ref_=nv_sr_1

“Mission to Moscow” (1943): http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036166/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

“Moscow Does Not believe in Tears” (1980): http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079579/?ref_=nv_sr_1


“We, the Living” (1942): http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092194/

“When Father was Away on Business.” Yugoslavia. 1985.