

Cultures and Context: Russia between East and West
Fall 2015

Monday and Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:45
194 Mercer, room 306

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Office hours: Wednesday, 11:00 – 12:15
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This course uses the culture of one country to explore general questions of interpretation and critical thought. We are interested in Russia because it embodies questions of identity and development that concern any student of the modern world. Russia has always been treated as part Europe, part Asia, sometimes Eurasia, and sometimes just an exceptional Russia. This course proposes that any country can be examined for what is specific about it but also on a continuum of modern world cultures. The great examples of Russian culture and the great moments in Russian history should be appreciated for their dualities, as something specifically Russian and as a contribution to a global whole.

We will approach Russia from a variety of angles: its tumultuous history, its vibrant modern literature, its bold art and architecture, its music and political institutions. We will move from one medium (primary sources and texts) to others (visual culture and music), and we will consider how each of these offers a specific window onto a larger set of questions.

Format:

The course combines lectures and a textbook with film, visual art, music, and literature. We will look at each of these media as sources that require their own type of analysis, in ways that will be explained in the lectures. Familiarity with all of these sources will be necessary to do well in the course. The textbook is required, and will provide the necessary background.

The lectures will raise questions and set up a series of questions; they will make sense only if students have kept up with the readings. The recitations will be used for a more intense examination of particular topics and genres under the leadership of the preceptor.

Grading and Requirements:

There will be four essay questions. The first three will be written during the recitations, and the fourth will be a take-home paper of up to 10 pages. Each is worth 20 percent of the final grade, for a total of 80 percent. Writers should use detail gleaned from the lectures, readings, and other media in order to offer

broad arguments and critical analysis. Success will depend on (a) a mastery of the sources used, (b) mastery of the issues raised in lectures and recitations, and (c) a capacity to use this information to produce coherent arguments and narratives.

Attendance at lectures, and attendance and participation in discussion sections, are mandatory, and comprise 20 percent of the final grade. Final grades will be reduced by two or more unexcused absences, at the discretion of the instructor. The recitation leaders have been instructed that a person who attends irregularly or is regularly unprepared can receive no more than 80 percent as a final grade. This means that the grade can be no higher than a B-, assuming excellent written work.

Participation does not simply mean speaking frequently. It means rhetoric, i.e., the ability to convey an idea orally, critique and engage the ideas expressed in the sources, and it requires one to be prepared. This is a component part of a college education, and will be weighed heavily. The instructor will be looking for preparedness as well as a growing ability to make coherent arguments.

Recitation:

The recitation instructors will review the materials and lectures from the preceding week. They have the option of selecting specific texts and issues from the readings and lectures and using them as the focus of the session, and also assigning additional readings. They may or may not use all the materials from a given week.

Special note:

At the start of the semester, please acquire and start reading Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita* (2001 Penguin Classics Edition). You should complete the reading by 2 December, when it will be the subject of a lecture and used in the recitations.

Books and readings:

Most texts are available on NYU Classes.

The following are available for purchase at the Book Centre:

Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia* (Eighth Edition)

Nikolai Gogol, *The Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*: "The Nose"

Evgeny Zamiatin, *We*

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*.

Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*.

Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*

Kurban Said, *Ali and Nino*

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES

Wednesday, 2 September

-Introduction to the course; requirements and structure;
-East and West as cultural constructs
Reading: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, introduction and ch.1

Wednesday, September 9: Kievan Rus'

Riasanovsky, chapters 3-4
Images: Bogatyrs

Monday, September 14: Asia in Europe: The Mongols and the Rise of Moscow

Riasanovsky, chapters 8, 9, 11
Alef, "The Adoption of the Muscovite Two-Headed Eagle."

Wednesday, September 16: Fun with Ivan the Terrible: The Great Russian Ruler in History, Art, and Film

Joan Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible*, excerpts.
Viewing of excerpts of Sergei Eisenstein's "Ivan the Terrible"
Images of Ivan: what does a painting tell us?
Background research: the painters Vaznetsov and Repin

Monday, September 21: Can Russia Live without an Autocrat? Boris Godunov and the Time of Troubles

Riasanovsky, chs.16-19

RECITATION, 22 September: First in-class exam:

Wednesday, September 23: Russia as a Laboratory, pt 1: Peter the Great

Riasanovsky, chs.20-21
"Bronze Horseman": poem and image
Images of Peter
Background research: Alexander Pushkin

Monday, 28 September, Russia as Laboratory, pt 2: Catherine the Great

Russian Architecture until the Eighteenth Century
Background research: Neoclassicism, Rococo

Catherine's Instruction of 1767.
Images of Catherine
Riasanovsky, chs 22, 23, 24

Wednesday, September 30: Russia in Asia. Ermak and Pushkin

Images of Ermak;
Holdings of the Kunst-Kamera;

Read: Pushkin, *Journey to Arzrum*

Monday, October 5: Lecture by James Phillips: Journeys of the Late Enlightenment: Catherine Goes to Crimea; Criticism Close to Home

Alexander Radishchev, *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), selections TBA

Personal correspondence of Catherine and Potemkin, selections TBA

Memoirs and Recollections of Count Segur: Ambassador from France to the Courts of Russia and Prussia, selections TBA

Wednesday, October 7: Europe in Russia, Russia in Europe; Napoleon and After; the Russian Bear

Riasanovsky, chs 25, 26, 27, 28

Wednesday, October 14: Russian Painting in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: On Nation, Class, Culture, and the Self

Students should conduct background research on Repin, Kandinsky, Chagall, and Malevich

Monday, October 19: Literature: Gogol' and His Times

Students should conduct background research on Gogol'

Read: Gogol, "The Nose"

Wednesday, October 21: Russia as Laboratory, 3: The Great Reforms and Visions of Liberalism

Riasanovsky, chs 29, 32

"The Valuev Rescript"

Monday, October 26: Music and Empire, Music and Nation; The Travels of Musical Forms

Background research on each of these composers:

Borodin

Mussorgskii

Rimskii-Korsakov

Chaikovskii/Tchaikovsky

RECITATION, October 27: Second in-class exam.

Wednesday, October 28: The Rise of Romantic Nationalism and the Fate of the Empire

Read: The Census of 1897

Monday, November 2: Islam and the Empire; The Conquest of Turkestan

Painting: students should conduct background research on Vasili Vereshchagin
Robert Crews, *For Tsar and Prophet*, introduction.

Wednesday, November 4: The Modern Ideologies: Liberalism, Populism, Marxism

Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, pp.50-78

Monday, November 9: The Revolution of 1905: Class vs Nation

Riasanovsky, ch. 33

Manifesto of 17 October 1905

RECITATION, November 10: third in-class exam

Wednesday, November 11: Russia as Laboratory, pt 4: Stolypin, land reform, and constitutionalism

Decree of 3 June 1907

Monday, November 16: The First World War and Revolution; the Freakanomics of Vodka; Utopianism and the Birth of Dystopianism

Riasanovsky, ch.34

Zamiatin, *We*

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*

Wednesday, November 18: Civil War, NEP, and Stalinism: How socialism became a state project

Riasanovsky, chs 35, 36, 37.

Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*

Monday, November 23: New Location TBA: Special Lecture:

Sheila Fitzpatrick, "On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics."

Wednesday, November 25: Russia as Laboratory, pt. 5: Stalinism and the New Soviet Man

Jochen Helbeck, "Self-Realization"

Monday, November 30: The Second World War and the Stalinist Postwar; the Thaw

Riasanovsky, chs 38, 39, 40

Wednesday, December 2: Lecture by Devin McFadden: "Ambivalence and Consensus in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*."

Please use Penguin Classics edition (2001), transl. by Richard Pivear and Larissa Volokhonsky.

Monday, December 7: the formation of the USSR and the multi-national union

Kurban Said, *Ali and Nino*

Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment"

Wednesday, December 9: Collapse of the USSR and the-Post-Soviet Order

Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, chs 1-4

Monday, 14 December: Take-home essay due in lecture; deliver to your instructor.