

RUSS105HY: INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN CULTURE

Course Information:

Autumn 2019
Online course
Credits: 3

Instructor Information:

Professor: Ona Renner-Fahey
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On-campus office hours:
M 11:00, W 3:00, F 9:00
in Liberal Arts 329

Course description:

A survey of Russian culture and civilization from its beginnings to the contemporary period. No language or literature prerequisites. We will cover Russian culture chronologically, considering major historical and political events from each period to establish a context through which we will study the developments of such cultural aspects as the literature, art, and music. Course may be taken for a traditional letter grade only. Course is required for Russian majors and Russian Studies minors.

Goals and Outcomes: In this course students will learn through a variety of contexts about both the “big-C culture” and “little-c culture” of the Russian people and will trace its cause and development to the contemporary period. Through attentive reading, analytical thought, and some active discussion, the students will finish the semester with a foundational knowledge of Russian culture from its birth in the medieval period to the present day.

Disability accommodations: If you are a student with a disability who will require reasonable accommodation in this course, please let your instructor know immediately and, if you have not already done so, consider contacting Disability Services for Students in Lommasson 154 for assistance in developing a plan to address program accommodations.

Requirements:

- **Forum posts:** Most weeks students are required to post a 200-250-word response to the course material (lectures, interviews, music) by Thursday at midnight. The responses should aim for both breadth and depth. The most successful responses will demonstrate familiarity with the various required materials but will also point to common themes and core cultural values found across the diverse course material. Students are then required to comment on at least two of their peers' posts by Sunday at midnight. Comments should be between two and five sentences and should move beyond “I also wrote about that” or “I also found that interesting.” More specifics and a grading rubric can be found on the Moodle page.
- **“Pop” reading quizzes:** Reading assignments from our two main texts will have guided reading questions available on Moodle. Students should answer the questions while they are reading and then study the answers. If there is a multiple choice “pop” quiz on that section, it will be based on those same questions. (In addition, some of the same questions will appear on the final exam.)
- **Films:** Students will be required to watch two films and write short responses to them. More specifics and a grading rubric can be found on the Moodle page.
- **Cooking project:** This is due toward the end of the semester. The format may be video or photographs (possibly using Prezi or Powerpoint). As some people may not have the experience or software to create videos, a photographic documentation is equally acceptable and could receive full credit. You may use a recipe from a cookbook or one you find online; either way, just be sure to credit your source. Show all of your ingredients, a couple different points of the preparation process, and the dish in its final form. Proof that you were involved in the preparation can be in the form of a visual of you with the final dish or of a note next to the dish with your name written on it. You will not receive a set number of points for this requirement; rather, the entire project will be given a zero if it does not contain this requirement. Comment upon two of your peers' projects by the end of the class. More specifics and a grading rubric can be found on the Moodle page.
- **Final exam:** This will be based on material from: the readings, lectures, films, slides, and music. It will be a multiple-choice format.
- **HONORS STUDENTS:** Once the all-class discussion group is broken up into smaller groups, you will all be in your own group. The other way in which your experience in this course will differ somewhat will be that you are required to write two 1-2 page responses to specific readings that will be required of everyone in the course. Specific instructions will be found on Moodle and these will be due in weeks 11 and 15.

Course grade breakdown:

Forums: (5 + 15 @ 10): 155
"Pop" reading quizzes: 56 points
Film responses (2 @ 10): 20 points
Cooking project: 20 points
Final exam: 80 points
Total points: 331

*Honors students: Each of your additional responses will be worth 20 points, bringing your total points to 351.

Required textbooks:

- A MOUNTAIN OF CRUMBS: A MEMOIR (ELENA GOROKHOVA)
- THE TIGER: A TRUE STORY OF VENGEANCE AND SURVIVAL (John Vaillant)

Texts on Moodle:

There will be some additional readings other than the two main books. There will not be any pop quizzes on these but questions about them might appear on the final exam.

Suggestions for further reading:

- GULAG: A HISTORY (Applebaum, Anne)
- THE ICON AND THE AXE (Billington, James)
- RUSSIA IN SEARCH OF ITSELF (Billington, James)
- THE CAMBRIDGE INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN LITERATURE (CAMBRIDGE INTROS TO LITERATURE) (Emerson, Caryl)
- THE MAKING OF MODERN RUSSIA (Kochan and Abraham)
- THE LAND OF THE FIREBIRD (Massie, Suzanne)
- AN ANTHOLOGY OF RUSSIAN LIT FROM EARLIEST WRITINGS TO MODERN FICTION: INTRO TO A CULTURE (N. Rzhevsky)
- RUSSIAN POPULAR CULTURE: ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIETY SINCE 1900 (Stites, Richard)
- A CONCISE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN ART (Talbot Rice, Tamara)
- THE MAGICAL CHORUS: A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN CULTURE FROM TOLSTOY TO SOLZHENITSYN (Volkov, Solomon)

COURSE TOPICS:

- Intro and Historical contexts: Beginnings through the "Mongol Yoke"
- Geography
- Religion and language
- Folk traditions and dvoeverie
- Historical contexts: Time of Troubles through Westernization
- The Rise of literature
- St. Petersburg
- Historical Contexts: Napoleon's Invasion through Emancipation
- The Golden Age of Literature
- The Arts in the 19th century
- Historical Contexts: The fin de siècle through Putin
- Moscow
- The Arts in the Soviet Union Part I
- The Arts in the Soviet Union Part II
- Politics and Journalism

