

Russian Civilization

RUS161/Rus161Z

TTh 2:45-4:05

HUM 124

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HUM 240, 442-4151

T 4:15-5:15, W 3-4 & by appointment

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MF 1-2 & by appointment

Course Description

For centuries, Russians have argued about who they are as a people and a nation. Is Russia like Europe or like Asia, or is it unique? Is Russia inferior or superior to Europe? Are Russians barbarians, or especially spiritual, or like everyone else? After the fall of Rome and Constantinople, is Moscow the third Rome? This course is about such arguments. Today, a mere fifteen years after the breakup of the Soviet Union and its empire, we will return to Russia's past to understand her present and her destiny. After seventy years of communism as the Soviet Union, is Russia gone forever? Does Russia now only serve as a lesson to the world in what *not* to do? With a firm grounding in Russian history, we survey politics, religion, society, art, literature, music, architecture, customs, and folklore to understand how Russians have imagined themselves and their nation, and how they have disagreed with each other. We will examine Russian civilization through central tensions created by rapid change, comparisons with the West, and a melting pot of nationalities.

Required Texts

- *The Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*, Suzanne Massie, Heart Tree Press, 1998, 0-9644184-1-X
- *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism*, Steven G. Marks, Princeton UP, 2003, 0-691-11845-0
- *Notes from Underground*, Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Knopf, 2004, 1-4000-4191-0 (this translation ONLY)
- Books available at Campus Bookstore
- Course Packet available at Shipmates in Stuyvesant Plaza
- Course Content, WebCT
- **The Russian Chronicles Ten Years Later:**
www.washingtonpost.com/russianchronicles.

Between Sept. 1 and Nov. 22, you can follow writer Lisa Dickey and photographer David Hillegas as they journey across the whole of Russia, posting a daily blog about their adventures with live online discussions and message boards. In 1995, Dickey traveled from Vladivostok to St. Petersburg, stopping in 11 different cities to do "Road Stories" about the Russians she met along the way <http://russianchronicles.com/rc95/Russia/>. This time around, Dickey and Hillegas will try to track down those same people she wrote about in 1995, to find out how they're faring now, and more broadly, how Russia has changed over the past ten years.

Requirements

- Quizlette on Tuesdays on dates, people, places, and events, from list provided the previous Thursday. In short paragraphs, describe and analyze the significance of dates, etc. (15%)
- Midterm on Tuesday, October 18 that includes identification of passages, key terms, and images(15%)
- Final exam on Thursday, December 15, that includes identification of passages, key terms, images, music, and a thematic essay. (15%)
- A three-page paper due on **The Russian Chronicles**, comparing Russian civilization in 1995 to that in 2005. What has changed and what has remained the same about how Russians talk about Russia and Russians? Develop your interpretation of civilization based on the handout on the definitions of “civilization.” Due Tuesday, September 13. (10%)
- A five-page paper on a work of literature, art, architecture, film, or music, and how it explicitly or implicitly develops or rejects arguments about Russia and Russians. A paper that simply describes a work will not earn a grade higher than C-. Due Tuesday, October 11. Revisions due Tuesday, October 25. (20%)
- A seven-page paper on an important turning point in Russian history, examined through interpretations of that moment in 2-3 works in or outside the course, due Tuesday, November 22. On Tuesday, November 15, please submit a brief paragraph stating the turning point you wish to examine, your idea, and the 2-3 works you have chosen. Revisions due Tuesday December 6. (25%)
- Writing Intensive students *must* revise their three- and seven-page papers; revisions are optional for other students. For Writing Intensive students, the five-page and seven-page papers are worth 15% and 20% respectively.
- In addition, Writing Intensive students must write a four-page paper that is a film review. Papers are due Tuesday, November 8. (10%)

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. I will take formal attendance. Let me know ahead of time if you cannot come to class. After 4 unexcused absences, your grade for the course will drop half a grade. Most Tuesday classes will begin with a quizlette. Missed quizlettes must be made up by the next Thursday class.

Syllabus

Week 1 Before 900 AD

T Aug 30 Introduction: Defining Russia, Russians, Europe, and Civilization
Handout on Russian civilization and maps of Russia and Europe

Th Sept 1 The Beginning of the Russian State (862 AD)

- CP 34-6 *The Primary Chronicle* (1040-1118 AD): Prolegomenon [MR 43-46]
- CP 37-8 *The Primary Chronicle*: The beginning of the Russian State and the Arrival of Rurik [MR 49-51]
- CP 38-40 *The Primary Chronicle*: Igor’s Death and Olga’s Revenge [MR 54-8]

Week 2 988 AD

T Sept 6 Russian Orthodoxy

Map quiz

- CP 40-2 *The Primary Chronicle: The Siege of Kiev and Olga's* [MR 59-62]
- CP 42-5 *The Primary Chronicle: Vladimir Christianizes Russia* [MR 65-71]
- CP 45-7 *The Primary Chronicle: The Martyrdom of Boris and Gleb* [MR 101-5]
- CP 64-71 Helen C. Evans, "Christian Neighbors," [GB 273-78]

Th Sept 8 Russian Churches

- Massie, Introduction, Fable, ch. 1-2 (13-34)
- CP 72-9 Olenka Z. Pevny, "Kievan Rus'" [GB 281-86]
- CP 31-3 The Glagolitic and Cyrillic Alphabets, Русский алфавит

Week 3 Medieval Russian Principalities (1000-1240)

T Sept 13 3-page paper due on The Russian Chronicles

Alexander Borodin (1833-87), *Prince Igor*, opera (1887)

- CP 51-63 *The Lay of Prince Igor* (1185 AD) I-IX [MR 167-81]
- CP 48-50 Major and minor Slavic gods

Th Sept 15 The Tatar Yoke (1240-1380 AD)

- CP 51-63 *The Lay of Prince Igor* (1185 AD) X-XV [MR 181-90]

Week 4 Prince Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod (1219-62)

T Sept 20 Writing Intensive students: revised 3-page paper due

Alexander Nevsky (1938, 111 min, Sergei Eisenstein) DK93.A435 2001

- Massie, ch. 3 (35-39)
- CP 80-1 Tale of the Destruction of Riazan (1237 AD) [MR 198-205]

Th Sept 22 Moscow Expands (1340-1450); The Third Rome (1450-1600)

Andrei Rublev (1966, 205 min. Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-86)) PN1998.3.T36 A637 1998

- Massie, ch. 4-5 (40-60)
- CP 88-93 Irena Grudzinska Gross, "Saint Basil's Cathedral as a Symbol of the Otherness of Russia," CLS 28.2 (1991): 178-88.

Week 5 Tsar Ivan IV, the Terrible (1533-84)T Sept 27 *Ivan the Terrible* (1944, 1946, 181 min, Sergei Eisenstein)

PN1995.9 H5 I835 1984 and DK106.I835 2001 DVD

- Massie, ch. 6 (61-76)
- CP 82-7 Correspondence between Prince Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan the Terrible (1564) [MR 366-76]

Th Sept 29 The Time of Troubles (1600-13): Boris Godunov (1598-1605)

Modest Musorgsky (1839-81), *Boris Godunov*, opera (1869)

- Massie, ch. 7 (77-88), ch. 20 (325-56)

Week 6 The Romanov Dynasty: Tsars Mikhail (1613-45) and Alexei (1645-76)

T Oct 4 Classes suspended for Rosh Hashanah

Th Oct 6 The Schism (1667)

- CP 94-102 *The Life of Archpriest Avvakuum* (1620-82) (excerpts) (1673) [MR 399-48]

Week 7 Emperor Peter I (the Great) (1682-1725)

T Oct 11 5-page paper due

- Massie, ch. 8 (89-107)
- CP 104-6 Feofan Prokopovich (1681-1736), “Sermon on the Interment of the Most Illustrious, Most Sovereign Peter the Great” (1725) [LR 141-48]
- CP 107-10 Mikhail Shcherbatov (1733-90), “[The Pace of Russia’s Modernization]” (1770?) [RIH 56-60]
- CP 111-14 Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856), “The Legacy of Peter the Great, From ‘Apology of a Madman’” (1837) [RRC 310-314]

Th Oct 13 Classes suspended for Yom Kippur

Week 8 Catherine I, Peter II, Anna, Ivan VI, and Elizabeth

T Oct 18 Midterm

Th Oct 20 Coup d’états

- Massie, ch. 9 (108-27)
- CP 115-24 Natalia Dolgorukaia, *Memoirs* (excerpt) (1767)

Week 9 Empress Catherine II (the Great) (1762-96)

T Oct 25 Writing Intensive students (optional): Revised 5-page paper due
Massie, ch. 10 (128-51)

CP 125-31 *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great* (1729-96) (1794-6) (excerpt)

CP 132-7 *The Memoirs of Princess Dashkova* (1743-1810) (1805) (excerpt)

Th Oct 27 Alexander I (1801-25)

- Massie, ch. 11-13 (152-201)
- CP 138-9 Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826), “Why Are There So Few Talented Authors in Russia?” (1802) [LR 454-58]
- CP 140-5 Nikolai Karamzin, *Forward to The History of the Russian State* (1815) [RIH 117-24]

- CP 146-55 Nadezhda Durova (1783-1866), *Notes of a Cavalry Maiden* (excerpt) (1837)

Week 10 Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

T Nov 1 Petersburg

- CP 156-72 Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), *The Queen of Spades* (1833) [FK 79-103]
- CP 173-8 Alexander Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* (1833)
- CP 179 Andrei Bely (1880-1934), *Petersburg* (1916) (excerpt)

Th Nov 3 Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-93), *The Queen of Spades*, opera (1890)

- Massie, ch. 14-15 (202-32), 17 (246-83)

Week 11 Nicholas I (1825-55); Petersburg

T Nov 8 Writing Intensive students: 4-page paper due

- CP 180-97 Nikolai Gogol (1809-52), *The Overcoat* (1842) [FK 104-33]
- CP 198-201 Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48), "Letter to Gogol" (1847) [RRC 315-320]

Th Nov 10 Alexander II (1855-81)

- CP 202-3 Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-81), *Notes from Underground* (1864)
- Fyodor Dostoevsky, "On Russian Distinctiveness and Universality" (Pushkin speech, 1880) [PNCRR 433-36]
- Marks, ch. 3 (58-101)
 - Massie, ch. 19 (307-24)

Week 12 Nicholas II (1894-1917)

T Nov 15 Writing Intensive students (optional): revised 4-page paper due

- CP 204-35 Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910), *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886) [FK 229-83]
- Marks, ch. 4 (102-39)

Th Nov 17 Bolshevik Revolution (1917)

- CP 237-47 Isaac Babel (1894-1941), *Red Cavalry* (1926) (excerpts)
- Marks, ch. 8 (275-98)

Week 13 1905, WWI, 1917-34

T Nov 22 7-page paper due.

Avant-garde literature, art, theater, ballet, film, and music

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), *The Rite of Spring (Le sacré du printemps, 1913)* MX 1520 S77 V47 2001

Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes

- Massie, ch. 22 (384-406), ch. 24-26 (420-60)
- Marks, ch. 6-7 (176-274)

T Nov 24 Classes suspended for Thanksgiving

Week 14 The Soviet Union (1917-1991)

T Nov 29 Vladimir Lenin (1917-24) & Joseph Stalin (1928-53): WWII
The Cranes Are Flying (1957, 94 min. Mikhail Kolotozov (1903-73)) PG2074.C736 1992

- Marks, ch. 9 (299-332)
- CP 248-62 Anne Applebaum, Introduction, *Gulag: A History* (xv-xl)
- CP 263-86 Simon Vilensky, ed., *Till My Tale is Told: Women's Memoirs of the GULAG*, ch. 16, "Zayara Vesnyolaya" (287-333)

Th Dec 1 Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-91)
Repentance (1984, 151 min., Tengiz Abuladze (1924-94)) PG2074.M663 1987

- Marks, ch. 9 (299-332)

Week 15 Boris Yeltsin (1991-99) and Vladimir Putin (2000-8)

T Dec 6 Post-Soviet Russia
Writing Intensive Students: Revised 7-page paper due.

Russian Ark (2002, 83 min, Alexander Sokurov)

- CP 287-94 David Remnick, "Deep in the Woods: Solzhenitsyn, a new book, and the new Russia," (2001) [NY 32-40]
- CP 295-306 David Remnick, "Post-Imperial Blues: Billionaire oligarchs, Chechen suicide bombers, generals nostalgic for empire – and the reign of Vladimir Putin," (2003) [NY 78-89]
- CP 307-16 Michael Specter, "The Devastation: Since 1965, life expectancy for Russian men has decreased by nearly six years. And now there is AIDS," (2004) [NY].

Th Dec 8 *The Russian Chronicle* revisited

- CP 317-23 Victor Erofeev, "The Russian God: Vodka celebrates its five-hundredth anniversary" (2002) [NY 56-63]
- CP 324-9 Victor Erofeev, "Dirty Words: The unique power of Russia's underground language" (2003) [NY 42-48]
- CP 330-8 Gary Shteyngart, "Teen Spirit: Capitalizing on the rise of post-Soviet youth," (2003) [NY 42-49]

Final Exam: Thursday, December 15, 10:30-12:30

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is bad scholarship with serious consequences. It is defined in the University Undergraduate Bulletin as follows:

"Presenting as one's own work the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else). Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences for violating University regulations.

Examples of plagiarism include: failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper's or project's structure; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one's own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else. "

Read this and other regulations applying to academic dishonesty at http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html#integrity, particularly the section "Penalties and Procedures for Violations of Academic Integrity."

Penalties for Plagiarism

The nature and consequences of plagiarism will be discussed in class as the deadline for papers approaches. I am required to report plagiarism to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. At the very least, papers containing plagiarism must be revised; at worst, they will receive no credit and you will be referred to the Committee on Academic Standing, where you risk immediate suspension for a minimum of 2 semesters. You will in addition be required to sign and append to your written work a statement certifying that you have read and understood the University regulations and penalties.

Guidelines for Papers

Papers must be double-spaced and responsive to all aspects of the assignment, including length (provide a word count on the first page), and prepared according to the Modern Language Association or *Chicago Manual of Style*. *Make sure you document every reference--in quotation or paraphrase--including page numbers whenever possible.* Your name should appear only on the back of the last page. Feel free to write in the first

person. Support claims with evidence and conclusions with argument. **Please read the last section of the Course Pack on Writing (CP 310-17).**

Paper grades

An “A” paper demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but also has applied them in an imaginative and incisive way. The paper shows a command of language that allows the writer to express worthwhile ideas or perceptions clearly, effectively, in detail and with virtually no mechanical errors. There is grace to the sentence structure, which is clear and varied throughout. The paper consistently includes adequate argumentation and documentation. The “A” grade is reserved for exceptional papers; “A-” papers tend to be exceptional in part but marred by one or two problems.

A “B” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course, and has applied them with some originality. The paper shows the writer can organize a coherent essay with few mechanical errors. The thesis statement is clear and is responsive to the assigned topic. It is supported with strong, logical argumentation and use of evidence. The paper for the most part includes adequate documentation.

A “C” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course, but needs to pay more attention to details in reading or writing. Thesis statement and topic sentences are weak, and documentation is erratic.

A “D” paper demonstrates that the writer has only a minimal understanding of the concepts of the course. Significant gaps in the writer's comprehension indicate the need for more study. Moreover, the writer's basic compositional skills are below satisfactory for university work. Documentation is unsatisfactory.

An “E” paper demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course. Because of the writer's lack of skill or concern, the work includes gross errors as well as a conspicuous lack of content. Documentation is negligible. The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

A paper may combine different levels of work. In that case, the grade will depend on the paper's overall demonstration of knowledge of the material and of writing skills