

Stalinism in European Literature and Film Spring 2011

ENG 494/598 SLC 494/498/598/
POS 494 GCU 494/598 REL 494/598

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To understand the cultural sphere and the order of things in the former Soviet Union and in Central Eastern Europe after WWII, we need to examine the politics and ideology that led to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and to focus on the cultural aspects of the early twentieth century. We will then analyze the Stalinist era and we will take a closer look at the countries of the Communist block, a region viewed as monolithic in spite of its cultural past and religious diversity. Its complexity, which opens a new area of study, complicates our theoretical sophistication and invites an openness to dialogue across academic specializations, from literature and literary theory and criticism through anthropology, political science, religious studies, history and sociology, to the plastic and performing arts, to gender studies and cultural geography. Above all, it proves the growing need to cross academic disciplines and engage in discursive "contact zones."

Defining Europe: "Geographic Europe," the smallest continent which extends from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains, was always divided into two halves that evolved separately: one tied to ancient Rome and the Catholic Church, the other anchored in Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. After WWII ended in 1945, there were THREE Europes: Western, Eastern and **CENTRAL** or **The Other Europe**, which was geographically in the center: culturally in the West and politically in the East as it had to look to a new master, the Soviet Union or USSR.

Defining the Other Europe: the multi-lingual region situated between Germany and Russia, at the heart of the struggle between Western and Eastern Christianity, Habsburg domination and Ottoman rule. Labeled Central Europe, or *Mitteleuropa* by the German statesman and publicist Friedrich Naumann in his influential book *Mitteleuropa* (1915), this space fell under the Soviet sphere of influence after WWII and came to be known as the Soviet bloc.

Course syllabus in the order of our class discussions and movie watching:

Weeks 1 and 2

Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest (film, 2002)

Tom Stoppard, Travesties (bookstore)

Tristan Tzara, The Dadaist Manifesto (Blackboard)

Discussion questions for Travesties: Identify Lenin/Joyce/Tzara; What are their contributions to the 20th century? Why does Stoppard use Wilde's dramatic format?

Weeks 3 and 4

Yevgheny Schwartz, The Dragon in Three Soviet Plays (USSR) (Blackboard)

Stalin: About Stalinism (in-class lecture)

Yevgheny Zamyatin, We (Soviet society) (bookstore)

Weeks 5 and 6

Mikhail Bulgakov, Heart of a Dog (USSR) (bookstore)

Consider: "And strength and youth and glory/ He gave us for eternal time/ He kindled bright spring sunrises/ Over our homesteads./ Comrades, we sing a song/ To that most trusted man_/ Of the sun, the truth of peoples,/ Of Stalin we sing a song." M. Isakovski, "Song of Stalin," 1936)

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, We Never Make Mistakes (USSR) (bookstore)

MIDTERM

Weeks 7 and 8

WWII : Grigory Chukhrai, Ballad of the Soldier (film) (Discusses WWII and exemplifies the issue of propaganda movies)

Boris Pasternak, Doctor Zhivago (Russia/USSR Civil War and subsequent Stalinism) (film and book) (bookstore)

Weeks 9 and 10

Bohumil Hrabal, Closely Watched Trains (occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Nazi during WWII) (film and book) (bookstore)

Collectivization and Staline's crimes: Burnt by the Sun (Mikhalkov, 1994, film)

Weeks 11 and 12

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (life in the Siberian Gulag) (bookstore)

Matei Visniec, A History of Communism Told to Mental Patients (Romanian film)

Weeks 13 and 14

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Matryona's House (elderly woman's life in rural USSR) (bookstore)

Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (1987, film)

Herta Muller, The Appointment (woman's life in Ceausescu's Romania) (bookstore)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*

Tristan Tzara, *The Dadaist Manifesto* (Blackboard)

Yevgheny Schwartz, *The Dragon* (Blackboard)

Yevgheny Zamyatin, *We*

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*

Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *We Never Make Mistakes*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Matryona's House*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Herta Muller, *The Appointment*

FILMS:

The Importance of Being Earnest

Ballad of a Soldier

Closely Watched Trains

Burnt by the Sun

Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears

A History of Communism Told to Mental Patients

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grading: Your grade in this class will be based on the following:

1. **midterm exam** (short essay answers) 30%

2. **final exam** (short essay answers) 30%
3. **term paper** (six to eight pages for undergraduates; ten to twelve pages for graduate students) 30% Your paper will focus on a work by any Central Eastern European fiction writer whose work appeared during the 1918-present period. Works discussed in class cannot be used for the paper, but you may choose to write on works other than those discussed in this class by the authors included on the syllabus. Early papers are welcome. Late papers will not be accepted. You need to discuss with me your selected topic, so make sure you let me know your selection before you begin writing.

Undergraduate research paper guidelines:

- this paper of approximately six to eight pages in length, should use a bibliography; use 12 point font and 1.5 spacing (see MLA or Chicago Manual for style.)

Graduate research paper guidelines:

- Ten to twelve pages in length and all of the above.

4. **short, one-page essays on 5 of the films**, i.e., all except *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 2% of class grade each, total **10% of class grade**. Due at the beginning of class immediately following movie showing.

Midterm and final exams will cover the duration of class time. Please mark your calendars for those dates as exam times and dates cannot be changed. Please bring blue books for midterm and final exams.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Since we are showing rare and hard-to-find movies and our class material is a collage of materials gathered from many sources, your classroom attendance is mandatory. Missing class means missing classroom participation and engagement in classroom discussions. Missing such activities will result in a drop of one letter grade after three unexcused absences. In case of an emergency or unavoidable situation, please contact me so that we can make alternate arrangements. It is very important that you arrive to class on time. Because of time constraints, movie screenings will start immediately at the beginning of the class session for which they are scheduled.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, including plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration or cheating, is not tolerated!

In the Student Academic Integrity Policy manual, ASU defines Plagiarism [as] using another's words, ideas, materials or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately. You can find this definition at:

http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/judicial/academic_integrity.htm#definitions

There are severe sanctions for cheating, plagiarizing and any other form of dishonesty. Please see the Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures. All work must be yours and it must be original to this class. If you have questions about this, please ask me.