

LL250D: Introduction to Russian Cinema

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Spring 2016
306 Bessey Hall
MW 12:40-2:30, F 12:40-1:30
Off hours: M 10-11 / W 11:15-
12:15 or by appointment

COURSE GOALS: This course aims to introduce students to the main developments, trends, and innovations in Russian cinema. The course takes a theme-based approach, focusing on the major topics of the last 100 years and how they are developed in Russian cinema. Themes to be examined include “Women, Men, and Families,” “Stalin and the Legacy of Stalinism,” “The Great Patriotic War,” “Russian Popular Cinema,” and “Russia and Others.” Students will find, however, that most films we view will touch on several of these themes. Students will study Russian history to see how cinema has served as an important mirror of political and cultural developments and at the same time influenced other cinema traditions. Attention will be paid to film theory, and students will be asked to complete their own interpretations of key Russian films. Some films will be viewed in class, others outside as homework. No knowledge of Russian is required for this course, all films are shown with subtitles.

By the end of this course, students will:

- have been exposed to basic concepts in film interpretation;
- have experience applying that knowledge in their own interpretations of films;
- have a better understanding of the Russian experience of the last century and how it is reflected in Russian cinema.

REQUIRED COURSE BOOKS:

Beumers, Birgit. *A History of Russian Cinema*. Berg Publishers. ISBN: 978-1845202156

Boggs, Joseph M., and Dennis W. Petrie. *The Art of Watching Films*. (McGraw Hill), Seventh or Eighth Edition. ISBN 978-0-07-338617-1

Service, Robert. *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* (Harvard UP), ISBN 067401801X

RECOMMENDED BOOK:

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. (Pearson), ISBN 0-321-08114-5

BOOKS ON RESERVE:

Edmonson, Linda, ed. *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge UP, 1992). HQ 1662 .W566 1992

- Gleason, Abbott, et. al., eds. *Bolshevik Culture*. (Indiana UP, 1985). DK 266.4 .B65 1985
- Ilič, Melanie, et. al., eds. *Women in the Khrushchev Era*. (Palgrave, 2004). HQ 1662 .W575 2004
- Lawton, Anna, ed. *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*. (Routledge, 1992). PN 1993.5 .R9 R4 1992b
- Mamonova, Tatiana, ed. *Women and Russia*. (Beacon Press, 1984). HQ 1663 .W63 1984
- Taylor, Richard, and Derek Spring, eds. *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*. (Routledge 1993). PN 1993.5 .R9 S73 1993

SELECTED ARTICLES:

- Bridger, Sue. "Young Women and Perestroika." In Edmonson, 178-201.
- Buckley, Mary. "Glasnost and the Woman Question." In Edmonson, 202-226.
- Clements, Barbara Evans. "The Birth of the New Soviet Woman." In Gleason, 220-237.
- Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." *Movie 24* (Spring 1977), 2-13.
- Fedina, Olga. Chapters on *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* and *White Sun of the Desert* from *What Every Russian Knows (and You Don't)*.
- Grigoryeva, Galina, and Svetlana Sonova. "Interview with a Career Woman." In Mamonova, 11-19.
- Haynes, John. "Reconstruction or Reproduction? Mothers and the Great Soviet Family in Cinema after Stalin." In Ilič, 114-130.
- Ilič, Melanie. "Women in the Khrushchev Era: An Overview." In Ilič, 5-28.
- Kenez, Peter. "Films of the Second World War." In Lawton, 148-171.
- Mankoff, Jeffrey. "Russia and the West: Taking the Longer View." *The Washington Quarterly* 30.2: 123-138. Available at: http://www.twq.com/07spring/docs/07spring_mankoff.pdf
- Mendelson, Sarah E., and Theodore P. Gerber. "Failing the Stalin Test: Russians and Their Dictator." *Foreign Affairs* 85.1 (Jan/Feb 2006): 2-8. Available through library.
- Shlapentokh, Vladimir. "Russian Attitudes toward America: A Split between the Ruling Class and the Masses." *World Affairs* 164.1 (Summer 2001): 17-23.
- Spring, Derek. "Stalinism – The Historical Debate." In Taylor, 1-14.
- Taylor, Richard. "The Birth of the Soviet Cinema." In Gleason, 190-202.
- Turovskaya, Maya. "Hollywood in Moscow, or Soviet and American Cinema in the Thirties and Forties." *KinoKultura* 46 (2014): <http://www.kinokultura.com/2014/46-turovskaya.shtml>
- "United States Relations with Russia" (US State Dept.): <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/85739.htm>

Other articles and reviews will be handed out in class.

FILMS. THE FILMS ASSIGNED OUTSIDE CLASS ARE ON RESERVE IN THE LIBRARY (4TH FLOOR WEST):

The Dying Swan (Умирающий лебедь, 1917; 49 min) – in class;

Bed and Sofa (Третья мещанская, 1927; 95 min) – in class;
Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears (Москва слезам не верит, 1980; 142 min) – by January 25;
Little Vera (Маленькая Вера, 1988; 128 min) – by January 27 (Y);
Adam's Rib (Ребро Адама, 1990; 79 min) – by February 1;
The Return (Возвращение, 2003; 105 min) – by February 1;
Volga, Volga (Волга, Волга, 1938; 108 min) – in class;
The Village Teacher (Сельская учительница, 1947; 100 min) – by February 12
Burnt by the Sun (Утомлённые солнцем, 1994; 135 min) – by February 15;
Clear Skies (Чистое небо, 1961; 110 min) – in class;
Repentance (Покаяние, 1984; 153 min) – in class;
The Thief (Вор, 1997; 96 min) – by February 24 (Y);
Aleksandr Nevsky (Александр Невский, 1938; 112 min) – in class;
The Fall of Berlin (Падение Берлина, 1949; 167 min) – in class;
Ballad of a Soldier (Баллада о солдате, 1959; 88 min) – by March 21 (Y);
The Cranes are Flying (Летят журавли, 1957; 94 min) – in class;
The Ascent (Восхождение, 1976; 111 min) – by March 28 (Y);
Prisoner of the Mountains (Кавказский пленник, 1996; 99 min) – by March 30;
The Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks (Необычайные приключения Мистера Веста в стране большевиков, 1924; 94 min) – in class (library has streaming);
Window to Paris (Окно в Париж, 1994; 96 min) – in class.
American Daughter (Американская дочь, 1995; 98 min) – by April 13 (Y);
Brother (Брат, 1997; 99 min) – by April 13 (Y);
Female Captive of the Caucasus (Кавказская пленница, 1965; 82 min) – by April 15;
White Sun of the Desert (Белое солнце пустыни, 1969; 85 min) – by April 18 (Y).

These films are all available with English subtitles in the MSU Library's Media Center (4th Floor West). I have marked with a Y those films that, as of January 4, were available on Youtube with good English subtitles.

YOUR GRADE:

Attendance and participation (15%)

Oral reports (10%)

Journals (25%)

Midterm Paper (20%)

Final (Group) Project (30%)

1. Attendance (7.5%) and participation (7.5%). Attendance means being physically present in the room **for the entire class period**. You will not succeed academically if you do not come to class. Even if you have not done the assignment for a given day, come to class – skipping only compounds the problem. Calling me after you missed class and telling me you were sick does not excuse your absence. Being absent does not excuse you from doing the assigned work. Leaving during class will be considered an absence. It is up to you to keep track of work you may have missed while absent. Participation means coming to class awake, prepared, and ready to contribute, no matter what the format of the day's class happens to be. The more you actively participate, the more you will get out of the class.

2. Oral reports (10%). Each student will complete 3 oral reports on topics to be selected in class such as directors' biographies, important historical events, reviews of films, and key concepts in cinema theory. Feel free to make handouts or Powerpoints that will aid classmates.

3. Journals (25%). For every film we watch (in or outside class), **and** for every reading not from the books (i.e. all articles), students are expected to complete a journal entry. Journals may be done on separate sheets of paper. Try for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page, or more if you have small pages or large handwriting. Each entry should do (at least) two things: convince the reader that you did the viewing or reading, and convince the reader that you thought about it. What does this film mean? What repeating symbols, if any, did I see? Why is this film important for Russian culture, and what does it say? Journals are a good opportunity to work on your interpretive skills informally. They are also a good place to ask questions that you didn't ask in class. Journals will be collected each class. Journals not in my hand by the end of class will be considered late; if I receive them before the next class you will receive $\frac{1}{2}$ credit for them.

4. Midterm paper (20%). The mid-term paper is a detailed 6-8 page analysis of one film of the student's choice (subject to instructor approval). The interpretation should talk about the formal aspects of the film as well as its relevance to Russian culture. The week before the paper is due students will present their preliminary findings orally to the class in a 15 minute presentation. Feedback should be incorporated into the paper. Paper due the Friday before spring break. As you are reading Beumers and our other critics, be looking for films you might like to analyze.

5. Final Project (30%). For the final project, students will address a theme not covered in class as expressed in two films. Suggested themes and films are listed below, but others may be considered with instructor approval. The end result will be an 8-10 page paper interpreting and comparing the films and discussing how each film contributes to their theme and how their theme fits into Russian culture. Toward the end of the semester each student will make an oral presentation to the class about their findings; this oral report is part of the project grade. The presentation will last 20-25 minutes and should include background information, analysis of the films and the theme, and short clips from the films. Feedback from the reports should be incorporated into the final paper. Written paper due last day of classes.

NOTE ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS: All assignments are due in class on the day specified on the syllabus (please note all days NOW). Late assignments will lose two points (i.e. 86 to 84) for each **day** (24-hour period) they are late. If there is a problem that will prevent you from handing in an assignment on time, arrangements must be made before the due date.

Honors Option: If you are in the Honors College and are interested in completing an honors option, speak to me now, because there are new deadlines in place and paperwork must be completed early.

Grade Scale:

90-100 = 4.0

79-75 = 2.5

60-64 = 1.0

85-89 = 3.5

70-74 = 2.0

00-59 = 0.0

80-84 = 3.0

65-69 = 1.5

Original Work / Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with as such in this course. We will discuss plagiarism before writing our first paper. Before then, familiarize yourself with the MSU Ombudsman's resources on plagiarism:

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html>

SCHEDULE

Note on our schedule: I have placed assignments for each section together. Please read ahead and note when assignments are due.

----- Women, Men, and Families in Russian Cinema -----
(January 11-February 5)

Assignments for January 11-February 5:

1. Oral reports:

- Abram Room (Jan 25),
- Leonid Brezhnev (Jan 27)
- «The time of stagnation / время застоя» (Jan 27),
- Mikhail Gorbachev (Jan 27)
- Perestroika (Jan 27).

2. Outside Viewing:

- *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* (by January 25);
- *Little Vera* (by January 27);
- *Adam's Rib* (by January 27),
- *The Return* (by February 1).

3. Reading:

- Boggs and Petrie, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-73) (by January 20);
- Service xi-100 and 397-411 (by January 20);
- Beumers, Chapters 1 and 6 (by January 22).

4. Articles:

- Clements, "The Birth of the New Soviet Woman" (by January 20);
- Fedina, "Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears" (by January 25);
- Ilić, "Women in the Khrushchev Era" (by January 27);
- Grigoyeva, "Interview with a Career Woman" (January 27);
- Bridger, "Young Women and Perestroika" (by February 1);
- Buckley, "Glasnost' and the Woman Question" (by February 1).

MONDAY, JANUARY 11: Introduction to the course. What do we know about Russia and Russian cinema? How do we interpret films?

HW for Wednesday, Jan 13: Read the syllabus carefully and note all assignment dates NOW, buy all books and materials, look over our course D2L page, and locate films on reserve.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13: Overview of Russian history and film to the present. The development of the Russian film industry. The first Russian films. Evgenii Bauer and Russian silent film. View and discuss *The Dying Swan* (Умирающий лебедь, 1917)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15: Bauer / Russian silent film

MONDAY, JANUARY 18: No Classes – Martin Luther King Day. Нет занятий – День Мартина Лютера Кинга

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20: Russian Film and the Revolution. Women, men, and families in the new order. Montage. How to watch films. Themes and dramatics elements (Boggs and Petrie).

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22: Revolutionary film / Dziga Vertov and *Stride, Soviet!*

MONDAY, JANUARY 25: View and discuss *Bed and Sofa* (Третья мещанская, Room, 1927). The Era of Stagnation.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27: Women and the “Double Burden.” Discuss *Moscow Doesn’t Believe in Tears*. Perestroika. Discuss *Little Vera*.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29: No class

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1: Discuss *Adam’s Rib*. Discuss *The Return*. Women, Men, and Families in Russian Film. Summary discussion.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3: TBA

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5: NO CLASS

----- Stalin and the Legacy of Stalinism -----
(February 8-March 4)

Assignments for February 8-March 4:

1. Oral reports:

- Stalin biography (Feb 8)
- “Stalinism,” (Feb 8)
- Socialist Realism (Feb 8),

- Liubov' Orlova (Feb 8),
 - Grigorii Aleksandrov (Feb 8),
 - Moscow Canal (Moscow-Volga Canal) (Feb 8)
 - Italian NeoRealism (Feb 12),
 - Stalin's Purges (Feb 15),
 - Nikita Mikhalkov (Feb 15),
 - Nikita Khrushchev (Feb 15),
 - De-Stalinization (Feb 15),
 - Gorbachev's *glasnost'* (Feb 19),
 - Tenghiz Abuladze (Feb 19).
2. Outside Viewing:
- *The Village Teacher* (by February 12);
 - *Burnt by the Sun* (by February 15);
 - *The Thief* (by February 24)
3. Reading:
- Beumers, Chapters 2-4 (by February 10);
 - Boggs and Petrie, Chapter 12 (by February 12),
 - Service 101-253 and 314-355 (by February 15).
 - Boggs and Petrie, Chapters 4-6 (by February 17)
4. Articles:
- Spring, "Stalinism – The Historical Debate" (by February 8);
 - Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia." (by February 10);
 - Turovskaya, "Hollywood in Moscow" (by February 12);
 - Mendelson, "Failing the Stalin Test" (by February 22).
5. Paper: Midterm Paper due March 4.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8: Who is Stalin? Stalinism. Socialist Realism. The Socialist Vision. View *Volga, Volga*.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10: Discuss *Volga Volga*. Stalinism in Film.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12: Discuss *The Village Teacher*. Analyzing an entire film (Boggs and Petrie).

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15: The Purges and *Burnt by the Sun*. The Thaw and De-Stalinization. View *Clear Skies*

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17: Boggs and Petrie: Design, Cinematography and Editing. Midterm Paper and Presentations.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19: TBA

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22: Stalin during Glasnost'. View *Repentance*.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24: Stalin after the USSR. Discuss *The Thief*.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26: No class.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29: Summary discussion of Stalin in Russian culture. Stalin today.
Start MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2: MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY, MARCH 4: No class, paper due.

March 7-11: SPRING BREAK

----- The Great Patriotic War -----
(March 14-April 1)

Assignments for March 14-April 1

1. Oral reports:

- Sergei Eisenstein (March 14),
- The historical Aleksandr Nevsky (March 14),
- Sergei Prokof'ev (March 14),
- The Thaw (Оттепель) (March 21),
- Larisa Shepitko (March 25),
- the partisan movement in WWII (March 25),
- Sergei Bodrov Jr. (March 28),
- What is Chechnya? (March 28),
- the war in Chechnya (March 28).

2. Outside viewing:

- *Ballad of a Soldier* (by March 21);
- *The Ascent* (by March 28);
- *Prisoner of the Mountains* (by March 30).

3. Reading:

- Beumers, Chapter 5 (by March 14);
- Service 254-313 (by March 16);
- Boggs and Petrie, Chapters 7 and 11 (by March 21).

4. Articles:

- "Statement on Sound" (by March 14);
- Kenez, "Films of the Second World War" (by March 14);
- Haynes, "Reconstruction or Reproduction?" (by March 21).

5. Final Projects: Select topics and begin work. On March 21 we will talk about your progress.

MONDAY, MARCH 14: The coming war. Eisenstein. Sound in Cinema. View *Aleksandr Nevsky* (1938).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16: Discuss *Aleksandr Nevsky*. Animated war propaganda.

FRIDAY, MARCH 18: What is a cult of personality? The official version of the war.
View selections from *The Fall of Berlin*.

MONDAY, MARCH 21: Boggs and Petrie: Color and Style. Your Final Projects.
Discuss *Ballad of a Soldier*.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23: The War during the Thaw. View and discuss *The Cranes are Flying*

FRIDAY, MARCH 25: Finish *The Cranes are Flying*. The war during the thaw and later.

MONDAY, MARCH 28: Discuss *The Ascent*. Discussion.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30: Discuss *Prisoner of the Mountains*. Summary discussion of the image of the Great Patriotic War

FRIDAY, APRIL 1: TBA

----- Russians and Others -----
(April 4-April 29)

Assignments for April 4-April 29:

1. Oral reports:

- Lev Kuleshov (April 4),
- The Caucasus (April 15)
- Central Asia (April 18),

2. Viewing:

- *American Daughter* (by April 13);
- *Brother* (by April 13),
- *Female Captive of the Caucasus* (by April 15),
- *White Sun of the Desert* (by April 18)

3. Reading:

- Boggs and Petrie, Chapter 15, “Film and Society” (by April 6);
- Beumers, Chapters 7-8 (by April 8);
- Service 356-END (by April 11).

4. Articles:

- “United States Relations with Russia” (US State Dept.) (by April 4)
- Hughes, “Moscow Movie” (by April 6)
- Chechnya assignment (by April 8)
- Mankoff, “Russia and the West” (by April 11);
- Shlapentokh, “Russian Attitudes toward America” (by April 13);
- Fedina, “White Sun of the Desert” (by April 18).

5. Final project: Final Paper due April 29.

MONDAY, APRIL 4: Russian / Western relations. View and discuss *The Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (Kuleshov, 1924)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6: Films and the societies that make them (Boggs and Petrie). Hughes and the Soviet Union. Soviet short films about the United States.

FRIDAY, APRIL 8: Chechnya assignment / Youtube

MONDAY, APRIL 11: View and discuss *Window to Paris*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13: Discuss *American Daughter* and *Brother*.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15: The Caucasus. Discuss *Female Captive of the Caucasus*.

MONDAY, APRIL 18: Central Asia. Discuss *White Sun of the Desert*.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20: Russian images of self / Youtube

FRIDAY, APRIL 22: Final Presentations

MONDAY, APRIL 25: Final Project presentations

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27: Final Project presentations. Summary

FRIDAY, APRIL 29: TBA

Possible topics for final projects.

These are suggested topics and suggested films (the lists are just for starters); any others should be cleared by the instructor first. It is your responsibility to make sure that you can find the films before taking on a topic

1. Masculinity after the Great Soviet

Hero

Unit 9 / Девятая рота

Alive / Живой

Brother - 2 / Брат - 2

2. The Russian Soul / Русская душа?

Peculiarities of the National Hunt /

Особенности национальной охоты

Autumn Marathon / Осенний марафон

3. The Uses of History in Film

Чапаев / Чапаев

Ivan the Terrible / Иван Грозный

Tsar / Tsar

4. Russians in American Cinema

The Russians are Coming!

Postmark Paradise
Rocky 4
Red Dawn

5. Russia after the USSR: Time of Transition

Sideburns / Бакенбарды
Luna Park / Луна Парк
City Zero / Город Зеро
Tycoon / Олигарх

6. Non-Russian Soviet Directors
Sergei Paradjanov

7. Тарковский

Solaris / Солярис
Andrei Rublev / Андрей Рублёв

Stalker / Сталкер
The Mirror / Зеркало

8. Formal and Political Revolutions

October / Battleship Potemkin
Man with a Movie Camera
Arsenal

9. Women in Russian Film

Country of the Deaf / Страна глухих
Harvest Time / Время жатвы

10. Russian Popular cinema

Diamond Arm / Бриллиантовая рука
Operation Y / Операция Ы

11. Russians and Others: Russia 88

Oral Report Schedule and Sign Up Sheet:

1. Abram Room (Jan 25) _____,
2. Leonid Brezhnev (Jan 27) _____,
3. «The Time of Stagnation / время застоя» (Jan 27) _____,
4. Mikhail Gorbachev (Jan 27) _____,
5. Perestroika (Jan 27) _____,
6. Stalin's biography (Feb 8) _____,
7. "Stalinism," (Feb 8) _____,
8. Socialist Realism (Feb 8) _____,
9. Grigorii Aleksandrov (Feb 8) _____,
10. Liubov' Orlova (Feb 8) _____,
11. The Moscow Canal (Moscow-Volga Canal) (Feb 8) _____,
12. Italian NeoRealism (Feb 12) _____,
13. Stalin's Purges (Feb 15) _____,
14. Nikita Mikhalkov (Feb 15) _____,
15. Nikita Khrushchev (Feb 15) _____,
16. De-Stalinization (Feb 15) _____,
17. Gorbachev's *glasnost'* (Feb 19) _____,
18. Tenghiz Abuladze (Feb 19) _____.
19. Sergei Eisenstein (March 14) _____,
20. The historical Aleksandr Nevsky (March 14) _____,
21. Sergei Prokof'ev (March 14) _____,
22. The Thaw (Оттепель) (March 21) _____,
23. Larisa Shepitko (March 25) _____,
24. The Russian partisan movement in WWII (March 25) _____,
25. Sergei Bodrov, Jr. (March 28): _____,

26. What is Chechnya? (March 28): _____,
27. The war in Chechnya (March 28): _____,
28. Lev Kuleshov (April 4) _____,
29. The Caucasus (April 15) _____,
30. Central Asia (April 18) _____,