

# Russian 440: Contemporary Russian Life and Culture

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appointment

Fall 2016 / MWF  
12:40-1:30: A-130 Wells Hall  
3:00-3:50: A-120 Wells Hall

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS.** This course is an advanced Russian language course that aims to place the language learning in a Russian cultural context. We will examine social and cultural developments in Russia since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Our approach will be thematic; after an overview of Russia today, we will examine themes relevant to an understanding of today's Russia, such as Putin and the structure of the Russian government, the conflict in Ukraine and Western sanctions, the former Soviet republics, and Russian attitudes toward the United States. Emphasis will be given to those topics currently in the news. Much of the class work will involve the internet and Russian cinema. We will also review selected grammar topics.

**COURSE MATERIALS.** This semester we will work mostly from course materials developed by the instructor. Instead of purchasing textbooks, you agree to bring copies of all relevant materials to each class meeting. In addition, you should own a good Russian dictionary. I recommend Katzner or Oxford.

## YOUR GRADE.

1. Attendance	10%	4. Twitter Assign:	5%
2. Weekly quizzes	20%	5. Midterm Exam	15%
3. Homework	30%	6. Final Exam	20%

## GRADING SCALE:

92-100 = 4.0	76-81 = 2.5	60-64 = 1.0
87-91 = 3.5	70-75 = 2.0	00-59 = 0.0
82-86 = 3.0	65-69 = 1.5	

## GRADING CRITERIA

1. ATTENDANCE (10%). Please come to class on time and prepared to participate. If you are not prepared, come anyway. Telling me after the fact does not excuse an absence. Here is how this portion of your grade will be determined:

### Absences:

0-2	4.0	6	2.5
3	3.5	7-8	2.0
4-5	3.0	9+	0.0

2. WEEKLY QUIZZES (20%). Almost every week there will be a quiz on a defined set of material (a list of words, a grammatical construction). Exactly what will be on the quiz will be announced in class.

3. HOMEWORK (30%). As in any class, completing the homework is an essential part of making progress. Homework will be assigned for every class. Homework that is one (class) day late will receive half credit; after that, no credit (but I will still gladly look at them, as homework material tends to repeat on tests). This portion of your grade includes the listening assignments. Reading

all texts before class and coming to class with questions answered is another important part of this grade.

4. TWITTER ASSIGNMENTS (5%). See the separate Twitter sheet on D2L. Please note these are not part of your homework grade, so overall homework makes up 30% of your grade!

5. MIDTERM EXAM (15%). There will be one hour-long test, after we complete the film «Осенний марафон». I will announce in class exactly what will be on the tests.

6. FINAL EXAM (20%). The final exam will have a written and oral component. The final exam will be a take-home exam due by Thursday, December 15 at 12:00.

**CLASS COMMUNICATION:** Any messages that need to be sent to you outside of class will be by email; please check the address you have registered with MSU regularly. If you do not check your MSU email please give me an address that you do use.

**RUSSIAN CLUB:** We encourage you to participate in Russian Club activities. They will give you a chance to meet other students of Russian, learn more about Russian culture, and practice your Russian! Announcements will be made in class.

**RUSSIA FILM SERIES:** Every semester the Russian program hosts a series of Russian films, which are shown approximately every other week. Attendance at a film will erase one class absence; **in order to receive** this credit you must hand me a short essay about the film, which must include a brief (3-4 sentences ok) plot summary of the film and your opinion of the film: did you like it or not and why? Films will be announced in class.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.** If you have any disability that may prevent you from completing the course requirements, please contact me as soon as possible so we can make proper arrangements.

**Google translate / academic honesty / Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with as such in this course. Using Google Translate or any such program to produce Russian that you then turn in as your own work is plagiarism! Familiarize yourself with the MSU Ombudsman's resources on plagiarism:  
<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html>

**Spartan Honor Code:** As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor in ownership is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.