Prof. Greta Matzner-Gore SLL 110g (60200R)

Email: [matzner@usc.edu](mailto:matzner@usc.edu) Tues./Thurs. 3:30-4:50 PM

Office: 255B Taper Hall Location: WPH B27

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5 PM

(and by appt.)

Russia in the Modern Era

**Course Description**

In the twentieth century alone Russia experienced two political upheavals that radically redefined what it meant to be Russian (the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990). But cultural redefinition turns out to be a part of Russia’s history. This course explores how Russians came to understand themselves and their place in the world, especially in response to: Peter the Great’s reforms in the 18th century, the revolutions of the early 20th, and Putin’s rise to power in the 21st. Throughout, we will focus on works of art (literature, film, and philosophy) that grapple with these historical ruptures and their competing visions of Russian identity.

**Learning Goals**

This course is designed not only to introduce students to major Russian works of literature, film, and art, but also to help students develop their close reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. By the end of this course, students who complete all assignments in a satisfactory manner (with an average grade of B or higher) will be able to:

* Identify significant events and personalities in Russian history, from the 18th century up to the present day.
* Discuss the impact of the policies of specific rulers (such as Peter I and Alexander II) on Russian culture.
* Discuss major works of Russian literature and film in their historical context.
* Construct compelling arguments about the works we read/watch/see and present those arguments both orally and in writing.
* Independently develop and pose their own critical questions about the works we read/watch/see and explore potential answers to them, both in writing and in class discussion.

**Assignments and Course Breakdown**

**Class Participation** (15%)

To understand works of art, you must engage with them actively (think about them, talk about them, and sometimes even argue with them). To that end, attendance and active participation in discussion are essential components of this course. Students will be expected to **attend every class and discussion section (having completed the assigned reading for the day)**, and **participate** thoughtfully and respectfully in classroom discussions and in-class group work.

* + Any student who accrues **more than** **2 unexcused absences** will receive a reduced participation grade. A student with 3 unexcused absences will receive a 10% grade reduction; a student with 4 unexcused absences will receive a 20% grade reduction, and so on. If you need to be excused from class for a religious observance, family emergency, or documented illness, please let me know as soon as you can.
  + When you arrive to class late you miss important material and disrupt your peers. For that reason, students who regularly arrive late for class or discussion section will receive a reduced participation grade, calculated in the following way: **3 late arrivals to class = 1 unexcused absence**. If you are finding it difficult to get to class on time because of a scheduling conflict, please speak to me.

**Reading Quizzes** (10%)

To encourage you to keep up with the course readings, frequent **pop** reading quizzes will be administered throughout the semester.

* + You may **not** make up missed quizzes (unless you have **already** been officially excused from class for the day).
  + **Your lowest reading quiz score will be dropped**.

**Short Essays** (Each 10% x 4 = 40%)

You will be required to write four short (3- to 4-page) essays over the course of the semester.

* + **Late papers:** Late paperswill be marked down **1/3 of a letter grade for every day they are late,** including weekends.For example, a paper that, had it been handed in on time, would have received an A-, will receive a B+ if it is handed in one day late, a B if it is two days late, and so on.
  + **Appointments:** I encourage you to drop by office hours or make an appointment to discuss a draft in progress, either with me or with your TA. If you choose to make an appointment, you must do so at least **3 days** before the paper is due.

**Midterm** (15%)and **Final** (20%)

* + The midterm for the course will be held on **Tuesday, October 15th**, during class.
  + The final will be held on **Tuesday, December 17th**, from **2-4 PM**.
  + Neither the midterm nor the final may be rescheduled. There are only two exceptions to this this rule: if you have a conflict due to religious observance or another final exam (which is scheduled at the same time).

**Grading Rubric**

Assignment % of Course Grade

Class Participation (attendance, discussion, in-class group work) 15

Short Papers (4) 40

Quizzes 10

Midterm 15

Final 20

**TOTAL 100**

94-100% = A, 90-93% = A-, 88-89% = B+, 83-87% = B, 80-82% = B-, 78-79% = C+, 73-77% = C, 70-72% = C-, 68-69% = D+, 63-67% = D, 60-62 = D-, under 60% = F.

**Required Texts**

Some of the required readings for the course will be uploaded onto Blackboard. Others (listed below) are available for purchase and/or rent at the University Bookstore. They are also available on Amazon, from used bookstores, or from libraries. (**NOTE:** If you would like to borrow copies of our books, but they are already checked out of the university libraries, you can order them through ILL).

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. and Mark D. Steinberg. *A History of Russia*. **Ninth Edition**. Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-0190645588; ISBN-10: 019064558X.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Notes from Underground*.Translated by Michael R. Katz. Second Norton Critical Edition, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-393-97612-0.

Chukovskaya, Lydia. *Sofia Petrovna*. Translated by Aline Werth. Northwestern University Press, 1994. ISBN 978-0-8101-1150-9.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Translated by H. T. Willetts. Reprint Edition. FSG Classics, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0374534684; ISBN-10: 0374534683.

Pelevin, Victor. *Homo Zapiens*. Translated by Andrew Bromfield.Penguin Books, 2002. ISBN-10: 9780142001813; ISBN-13: 978-0142001813

**Schedule of Assignments**

* The symbol **<B>** indicates readings that will be uploaded to Blackboard.
* From time to time during the semester it may be necessary to make adjustments to the schedule of assignments.

1. **Introduction**

T Aug. 27 Russia before the Modern Era

R Aug. 29 The Visual Culture of Piety

* **<B>** Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, New Edition (selections).
* **<B>** Alexander Boguslawski, “Understanding Icons.”
* **<B>** Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis* (selections).

1. **Peter the Great and St. Petersburg**

T Sep. 3Peter the Great and Westernization

* Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia. Ninth edition*. Ch. 18 (“Peter the Great”), pp.185-209.
* <**B>** Aleksandr Pushkin, *The Bronze Horseman* + “Explanatory Notes to *The Bronze Horseman*”

R Sep. 5 The Myth of St. Petersburg

* **<B>** Nikolai Gogol, “The Nose” and “The Overcoat.”

1. **Catherine the Great and Enlightenment**

T Sep. 10 The Reign of Catherine the Great

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*.Chs. 19 (“From Peter the Great to Catherine the Great”) and 20 (“Catherine the Great, 1962-96, and Paul, 1796-1801”), pp. 210-241.
* **<B>** Catherine the Great, “Instructions” (excerpts).
* **<B>** Alexander Radishchev, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*.

R Sep. 12 Russian Culture in the Eighteenth Century

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*. Ch. 22 (“Russian Culture in the Eighteenth Century”), pp. 250-64.
* <**B>** Nikolai Karamzin, *Poor Liza.*

**F Sept. 13 Short Essay #1 Due at 5 PM via Blackboard**

1. **The Slavophiles vs. The Westernizers**

T Sept. 17 The Westernizers

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Chs. 24 (“Nicholas I, 1825-55”), 25 (“Economy and Society Before the Great Reforms), and 26 (“Russian Culture in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century”), pp. 285-325.
* **<B>** Petr Chaadaev, *Philosophical Letters*, First letter.

R Sept. 19 The Slavophiles

* **<B>** Ivan Kireevsky, “On the Nature of European Culture and on its Relationship to Russian Culture.”

1. **Serfdom and the Great Reforms**

T Sept. 24 The Reign of Alexander II

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 27 (“Alexander II, 1855-81”) and ch. 30 (“Economy and Society from the Great Reforms to 1917”), pp. 326-47 + 383-99.
* **<B>** Ivan Turgenev, *Sketches from a Hunter’s Album*: “Khor and Kalinych,” “Yermolai and the Miller’s Wife,” “Bezhin Lea”

R Sept. 26 Artistic Responses to Serfdom

* <**B**> Turgenev, *Sketches*: “Two Landowners,” “Living Relic,” “Forest and Steppe”
* <**B**> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary* (February, 1876, part one).

1. **The Radical 1860s**

T Oct. 1 Dostoevsky vs. the Radical Intelligentsia

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 31 (“Russian Culture from the Great Reforms”), pp. 400-22.
* Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (Part One), pp. 3-29 + Selected Letters and Writings, pp. 95-101.
* Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What is to be Done?* (selections)in *Notes from Underground*, pp. 104-122.

R Oct. 3 Dostoevsky vs. the Radical Intelligentsia (Continued)

* Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (Part Two), pp. 29-91.

**F Oct. 4 Short Essay # 2 Due at 5 PM**

1. **Decadence and Decline**

T Oct. 8 Tolstoy on Decadence and Decline

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Chs. 28 (“Alexander III, 1881-94 and Nicholas II to the Revolution of 1905”), 348-62.
* **<B>** Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*.
* **<B>** Leo Tolstoy, “Epilogue to *The Kreutzer Sonata.*”

R Oct. 10 Chekhov on Decadence and Decline

* <**B>** Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard.*

**T Oct. 15** **MIDTERM**

**R Oct. 17 FALL RECESS**

1. **The Revolutions of 1917**

T Oct. 22 The Revolution in Literature and Film

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Chs. 32 (“The Revolutions of 1917”) and 33 (“Revolutionary Russia”), pp. 423-64.
* **<B>** Alexander Blok, *The Twelve*.
* Before class **watch:** Sergei Eisenstein’s *October.* 
  + You can watch *October* online at the Digitalia Film Library (which you can access by logging into USC’s library website): <http://www.digitaliafilmlibrary.com.libproxy2.usc.edu/visor/102>

R Oct. 24 After the Revolution

* **<B>** Vladimir Mayakovsky, *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry* (selections).
* **<B>** Mikhail Zoshchenko, *The Galosh and Other Stories* (selections).

1. **Stalinism**

T. Oct. 29 Everyday Life in Stalinist Russia

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, ch. 34 (“The Stalin Revolution”), 465-81.
* **<B>** Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (selections).
* Lydia Chukovaskaya, “Author’s Note” + *Sofia Petrovna*, ch. 1-8, pp. 1-43.

R Oct. 31 Terror

* Chukovskaya, *Sofia Petrovna*, ch. 9-18, pp. 45-109.

**F Nov. 1 Short Essay # 3 Due at 5 PM**

1. **The Thaw**

T Nov. 5 The Death of Stalin

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 37 (“Politics and Economy after Stalin”), pp. 511-34.
* Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 1-101.

R Nov. 7 Life After Stalin

* Solzhenitsyn, *One day in the Life*, 101-182

1. **Stagnation**

T Nov. 12 Domestic Life

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 38 (“Soviet Society”), pp. 535-51.
* **<B>** Natalya Baranskaya, “A Week Like Any Other.”
* **<B>** Yury Trifonov, “The Exchange.”

R Nov. 14 Youth

* Before class **watch:** *The Courier*, directed by Karen Shakhnazarov
  + You can watch *The Courier* in HD, with English subtitles, on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSc3uk8Q5w4&t=181s>

1. **The Collapse of the Soviet Union**

T Nov. 19 Perestroika

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 40 (“Glasnost’, Perestroika, and the End of the Soviet Union, 1985-91”), pp. 566-86.
* Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, chs. 1-11, pp. 1-156.

R Nov. 21 After the Collapse of the Soviet Union

* Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, chs. 12-16, pp. 157-250.

**T Nov. 26 Class Cancelled (Professor Matzner-Gore in San Francisco)**

**R Nov. 28 THANKSGIVING**

1. **Putin’s Russia**

T Dec. 3 The Rise of Putin

* Riasanovsky and Steinberg, *History of Russia*, Ch. 41 (“Politics after Communism: Yeltsin and Putin), 587-625.
* <**B>** Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time* (selections).

R Dec. 5 Russia Today

* **<B>** Michael Gorham, “Taking the Offensive: Language, Culture, and Policy under Putin.”
* Before class **watch:** *Leviathan*, directed by Andrei Zvyagintsev
  + You can watch *Leviathan* on Alexander Street Press Academic Video Online (which you can access by logging into USC’s library website): <https://video-alexanderstreet-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/watch/leviathan>

**F Dec. 6 Short Essay # 4 Due at 5 PM**

**T Dec. 17 Final Exam 2-4PM**

**ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES**

**Instructor Availability**

Office hours: I will hold office hours on **Wednesdays from 3-5 PM in 255B Taper Hall.** You are welcome to drop by to discuss the course, the readings, your written work, or any other academic question you may have. My door is open!

Appointments: If you have a scheduling conflict that will keep you from attending office hours, email me (or come talk to me after class) about setting up another time to meet.

Email: The best way to contact me outside of class is via email ([matzner@usc.edu](mailto:matzner@usc.edu)). I respond to emails between **9:00 AM and** **5:00 PM** **on weekdays**, and will generally get back to you within 48 hours.

**Electronic Devices**

Electronic devices distract you and your classmates from the discussion. **At the beginning of each class, please turn your phones to silent and put them away.** While I permit the use of laptop computers and tablets, I will ask you to **turn off the wifi and/or Bluetooth** function in class.

**ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

**Discrimination and Assault**

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs** <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.htmlprovides> certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [*http://emergency.usc.edu/will*](http://emergency.usc.edu/will) provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**The Writing Center and Other Helpful Resources**

The USC Writing Center is available to help students improve their critical thinking and writing skills. It offers free materials and online resources at <https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/> Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The USC Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity offers free online resources for time management, note taking, paper writing, and goal setting, which can be accessed at <http://kortschakcenter.usc.edu/>

The USC Libraries offers free research guides on 22 subjects at <http://libguides.usc.edu/>

Lynda.com can be accessed from the Blackboard homepage and provides free video tutorials on a wide range of topics and academic skills.