

The New Russians: Post-Soviet Literature, Art, and Film

Spring 2012 Russian 358
Tues/Thurs 1:20-2:35 pm 201 Lawrence Hall

Instructor: Marijeta Bozovic
Office hours: Tues/Thurs 12:10-1:20 and by appt.
202 Lawrence Hall
mbozovic@colgate.edu

Website: <http://moodle.colgate.edu/>

Course Description:

Two decades after the fall of communism, Russian culture has shape-shifted once more, both internally and in the eyes of the world. The New Russians seem to suggest a range of extremes, from a raw capitalism without limitations, a darkly “demonic” or horror-inflected strain of postmodernism, to a new spiritualism and a fascination with earlier epochs of Russian history. This course will explore a range of genres and media: we will read novels, short stories, and poems by Boris Akunin, Viktor Pelevin, Dmitri Prigov, Vladimir Sorokin, and Tatiana Tolstaya, and look at a selection of films and works of visual and performing arts by Boris Eifman, Ilya Kabakov, Sergei Loznitsa, Nikita Mikhalkov, and Aleksandr Sokurov. This course will raise questions of cultural continuity and rupture, as well as about transculture and influence across national traditions in a rapidly changing world. The course is offered without prerequisites. All works will be read in translation, but a FLAC section of the course may be offered for advanced Russian language students, with an emphasis on the development of advanced language skills.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Class Participation | 25% |
| • Moodle Discussion Questions | 15% |
| • First Paper (5-6 pages) | 10% |
| • Second Paper (5-6 pages) | 10% |
| • Third Paper (5-6 pages, GE Assignment) | 10% |
| • Poster (GE Assignment) | 10% |
| • Oral Presentation (10 minutes, GE Assignment) | 10% |
| • Take-home Final Exam | 10% |

You will be expected to post one discussion question/brief response (4-8 sentences) to the readings through our moodle forum before each class. A good discussion question might propose an interpretation; address something that you found difficult; stage an intervention from a different perspective; or offer a reading of a short passage. Please remember to direct your readers to the text you are discussing (quote short passages, provide page or line numbers). All responses must be posted by midnight the evening before class, giving you the opportunity to read each other’s postings before we meet. These assignments are intended to help all of us prepare for class discussion—I will bring up your questions frequently during class.

The third paper of the semester, the poster, and the oral presentation will all build on the same topic, chosen by you and in consultation with me and your peers. Together they will constitute the GE assignment for the course, and will make up 30% of your grade. In keeping with the goals of this course—to explore transculture and influence across national traditions and rapidly changing cultural praxes, and through the mediation of different media—you will develop and present your ideas in written, oral, and visual forms. Plenty of critical feedback on the two prior papers will help sharpen your analytical skills prior to embarking on the final GE assignments. The take-home final exam will consist of short passage analyses.

Required Materials:

- Ilya Kabakov: images, video, and selections from Boris Groys's *Ilya Kabakov: The Man who Flew into Space from his Apartment* (all available on moodle)
- Dmitri Prigov: selected poems
- Viktor Pelevin: *Homo Zapiens* and selected short stories
- Tatiana Tolstaya: *The Slynx* and selected short stories
- Vladimir Sorokin: *Day of the Oprichnik* and selected short stories
- Boris Eifman: the ballets *Russian Hamlet* and *Tchaikovsky: The Mysteries of Life and Death* (on moodle or screening)
- Nikita Mikhalkov: *Barber of Siberia* (1998 film)
- Timur Bekmabetov, *Night Watch* (2004 film)
- Aleksandr Sokurov: *Russian Ark* (2002 film)
- Boris Akunin: *The Winter Queen*
- Sergei Loznitsa: *Northern Light* (2008 film) and selected documentary shorts

The underlined titles are available at the Colgate Bookstore, on reserve at the library, or through Amazon. All additional materials will be posted on moodle under each week's assignments.

Recommended Reference Books:

- Balina, Condee, and Dobrenko: *Endquote: Sots-Art Literature and Soviet Grand Style*
- Adele Barker: *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and Society since Gorbachev*
- Mikhail Epstein: *After the Future: Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*
- Masha Gessen: *Dead Again: The Russian Intelligentsia After Communism*
- Boris Groys: *History Becomes Form*
- Boris Groys: *The Communist Postscript*
- David Hoffman: *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*
- Stephen Hutchings: *Russia and its Other(s) on Film*
- Mark Lipovetsky: *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*
- David Remnick: *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia*
- Tatyana Tolstaya: *Pushkin's Children: Writing on Russia and Russians*

TOPICS AND READINGS:

Week 1: Introduction

- Mon. Jan. 23** -Syllabus and assignments
- Tues. Jan. 24** -Historical overview of the immediate post-Soviet years: identity, chaos, and new intellectual leaders
- from Remnick: *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia*
 - from Tolstaya: *Pushkin's Children*
- Thurs.** **No class!**

Week 2: Post-Soviet, Part I

- Tues. Jan. 31** -already Post-Soviet: the Moscow Conceptualist school
- Prigov, selected poems
 - writings on the Moscow Conceptualists

- Thurs. Feb. 2 -collecting trash and the realia of Soviet life
• Kabakov, selected works
• from Groys's *Kabakov: The Man who Flew into Space from his Apartment*

Week 3: Post-Soviet, Part II

- Tues. Feb. 7 -Pelevin's prose as post-Soviet remix
• Pelevin, selected short stories
- Thurs. Feb. 9 • Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* [pp. 1 – 91]

Week 4: Pelevin and Generation Pepsi

- Tues. Feb. 14 • Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* [pp. 92 – 156]
- Thurs. Feb. 16 • Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* [pp. 157 – 250]
• screening: new film adaptation of *Generation II* by Viktor Ginzburg
- Fri. Feb. 17 **Friday Night Film Series! Sergey Loznitsa, *My Joy* (2010) in Golden Auditorium, Little Hall, 7 pm**

Week 5: Women's Voices: Tatiana Tolstaya

- Tues. Feb. 21 -Tolstaya and the new dystopia
• Tolstaya, selected short stories
- Thurs. Feb. 23 • Tolstaya, *The Slynx* [pp. 3 – 114]
- Fri. Feb. 24 **First paper due via email by 6pm**

Week 6: Tolstaya's Slynx

- Tues. Feb. 28 • Tolstaya, *The Slynx* [pp. 115 – 201]
- Thurs. March 1 • Tolstaya, *The Slynx* [pp. 202 – 297]

Week 7: Sorokin and High-Brow Horror

- Tues. March 6 • Sorokin, selected short stories
- Thurs. March 8 • Sorokin, selected short stories

Spring Break! No classes March 10-18!

Week 8: The New Dark Ages

- Tues. March 20 • Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik* [pp. 3-102]
- Thurs. March 22 • Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik* [pp. 103-191]

Week 9: Filmed Chaos

- Tues. March 27**
- Ilya Khrzhanovsky, *Four* (2004, screenplay by Sorokin)
 - Vadim Volkov, “Violent Entrepreneurship,” from *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*
- Thurs. March 29**
- Timur Bekmabetov, *Night Watch* (2004, vampires rule the Moscow underworld!)
 - clips from Igor Voloshin, *Nirvana* (2008, Petersburg as drug-fueled Wonderland)
- Fri. March 30** **Second paper due via email by 6pm**

Week 10: Romance with the Russian Past I

- Tues. April 3**
- Nikita Mihkalkov, *Barber of Siberia* (2008)
- Thurs. April 5**
- Boris Eifman, *Russian Hamlet* (2001 premiere)
 - from Groys, *History becomes Form*

Week 11: Romance with the Russian Past II

- Tues. April 10**
- Eifman, *Tchaikovsky: The Mysteries of Life and Death* (2004 premiere)
- Thurs. April 12**
- Sokurov, *Russian Ark* (2002)
 - from Groys, *History becomes Form*

Week 12: The Past is Science Fiction

- Tues. April 17**
- Boris Akunin, *The Winter Queen* [pp. 3-121]
- Thurs. April 19**
- Akunin, *The Winter Queen* [pp. 122-242]
- Sun. April 22** **Field Trip to New York: Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* at BAM**

Week 13: Documenting New States

- Tues. April 24**
- Sergei Loznitsa, selected short documentary films
 - from Epstein, *After the Future*
- Thurs. April 26**
- Loznitsa, *Northern Light* (2008)
- Fri. April 27** **Third paper due via email by 6pm**

Week 14: Conclusions

- Tues. May 1**
- Final Presentations
- Thurs. May 3**
- Final Presentations and Conclusions
- Mon. May 7** **Take-home final exam (unless waived) due via email by 6pm**