



**RUSS 327 / FILM 360 /
HUMS 204 / LITR 301 / * WR ***

**PUTIN'S RUSSIA
AND PROTEST CULTURE**

**SPRING 2014; TR 11:35 – 12:50
WHC / YALE ART GALLERY**

**PROF. MARIJETA BOZOVIC
OFFICE: 2708 HGS
marijeta.bozovic@yale.edu**

DESCRIPTION:

Two and a half decades after the fall of communism, Russian culture has shape-shifted once more, both internally and in the eyes of the world. This WR seminar will trace a narrative from the chaos of the lawless “wild 1990s” through the solidification of power in Putin’s Russia, to the rise of the protest culture that has dominated media attention in the last few years. The material discussed will include works by Pelevin, Sorokin, Limonov, Bykov, Kabakov, Prigov, Rubinshtein, Tolstaya, Akunin, Medvedev; films by Mikhalkov, Balabanov, Sokurov, Lotznitsa, Ginzburg; and performances by the art collectives *Voyna*, *Pussy Riot*, *Femen*, *Chto delat’?* and others. The final part of the course will be devoted to the most contemporary materials coming from today’s Russian protest culture. We will contextualize our post-Soviet materials through comparisons to historical avant-gardes and international traditions of protest culture: to this end, half of our courses will take place in the Yale Art Gallery or Beinecke Archive. Readings and discussion in English, with Russian originals available for interested students.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and participation	20%
Regular reading responses (Classesv2 forum/Facebook)	20%
Two 5-page close-reading papers	25%
Final term paper (10-12 pages)	35%

- You will be asked to post a short response, question, or intervention (1–2 paragraphs; other media welcome) based on the readings prior to each session. We will experiment with social media platforms as part of our ongoing collaborative attempt to enhance and extend discussion beyond the classroom—and to think about media and technology even as we try to find creative ways to use them in our academic work.
- All writing assignments for this WR seminar are designed to help you grow significantly as a writer. The first two papers will focus on close readings of works of your choice; you will be asked to dwell on details and interpret words or images in a creative, analytical, informed fashion. We will meet individually to discuss each of these papers, giving you plenty of feedback before you embark on the final paper, an original and well-argued thesis.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Our seminar will meet in the Yale University Art Gallery or Beinecke once each week. Discussions will be accompanied by curated presentations of Russian and Soviet-era artworks and materials linked to international protest culture.
- The Whitney Humanities Center will screen a near-complete retrospective of Aleksei Balabanov’s films this spring, on alternating Wednesday nights. Two screenings will be incorporated in the course; others encouraged.
- In April 2015, the Yale Slavic Department will host an international, interdisciplinary conference on the topic of *Political Violence and Militant Aesthetics After Socialism*. Leading Russian, Polish and Ukrainian visual artists, poets and scholars will present creative and academic work. All students in the seminar will be encouraged to attend and actively participate in all conference events.

COURSE MATERIALS:

- Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*
- Ginzburg, *Generation P* (2012 film)
- Balabanov, *Brother* (1997 film)
- Balabanov, *Of Freaks and Men* (2008 film)
- Loznitsa, *My Joy* (2010 film)
- Sokurov, *Russian Ark* (2002)
- Akunin, *The Winter Queen*
- Mikhalkov, *Barber of Siberia* (2008 film)
- Tolstaya, *The Slynx*
- Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*
- Limonov, *Memoir of a Russian Punk*
- Kirill Medvedev, *It's No Good*
- Video clips of poetry, visual and performance art, television programs and websites
-
- The underlined titles are waiting for you at the Yale Bookstore, library, or through Amazon used books; we also often have extra copies on hand. All other materials will be available via screenings, ClassesV2 or USB stick.

SYLLABUS:

Unit One: Chaos

- Tues. Jan 13** Introduction: post-Soviet? Collapse, chaos, and new identities
Thur. Jan 15 Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* [Yale Art Gallery: Avant-garde]
- Tues. Jan 20** Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*
Weds. Jan 21 WHC Balabanov Retrospective Screening: *Brother*
Thur. Jan 22 Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* [YAG: Avant-garde]
• from Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*
- Tues. Jan 27** Ginzburg, *Generation P* (2012 film)
• from Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*
Thur. Jan 29 Balabanov, *Brother* (1997 film) [YAG: Soviet posters + Viva Mexico exhibit]
- Tues. Feb 3** Loznitsa, *My Joy* (2010 film) [YAG: WWII Photography]
Weds. Feb 4 WHC Balabanov Retrospective Screening: *Of Freaks and Men*
Thur. Feb 5 Balabanov, *Of Freaks and Men* (2008 film)
- Tues. Feb 10** Sots-Art: Kabakov, Monastyrsky (visual art and performance)
Thur. Feb 12 Moscow Conceptualism: Prigov, Rubinshtein, Kabakov (poetry and performance)
[YAG: Conceptualism]
- * **Fri. Feb 13** first papers due via email by 3pm *

Unit Two: Putin's Russia

- Tues. Feb 17** Sokurov, *Russian Ark* (2002) [vs. Eisenstein clips]
Thur. Feb 19 Akunin, *The Winter Queen* [YAG: Early 20th Russian materials]
- Tues. Feb 22** Akunin, *The Winter Queen*
Thur. Feb 26 Mikhalkov, *Barber of Siberia* (2008 film) [YAG: Early 20th Russian materials]

- Tues. Mar 3 Tolstaya, *The Slynx*
 Thur. Mar 5 Tolstaya, *The Slynx* [YAG: Dystopia]
- Tues. Mar 24 Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*
 Thur. Mar 26 Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik* [YAG: Dystopia in Romanticism exhibit]
 * Fri. Mar 27 **second papers due via email by 6pm ***

Unit Three: Protest Culture

- Tues. Mar 31 Limonov, *Memoir of a Russian Punk*
 Thur. Apr 2 Limonov, *Memoir of a Russian Punk* [Beinecke: Punk Culture]
- Tues. Apr 7 Bykov, selections from *Citizen Poet* (poems and television program)
 Thur. Apr 9 Chto delat?/What is to be Done? collective (clips, texts, website) [YAG: Civil Rights]
- Tues. Apr 14 Actionist collective *Voina* (video clips and images)
 Thur. Apr 16 Pussy Riot (video clips and images) + Femen [YAG: Guerilla Girls]
 • from Masha Gessen, *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*

Friday, April 17 – Sunday, April 19: Political Violence and Militant Aesthetics After Socialism conference

- Tues. Apr. 22 Kirill Medvedev, *It's No Good*; and selections from the journal *Translit*
 Thur. Apr. 23 Manifesta 10: St. Petersburg art scandal [YAG: Protest Art Now]
 * Fri. May 1 **final papers due via email by 6pm ***