

College of William and Mary
Spring 2007

Russian 380/Film 351-02 Russian Cinema: "The Most Important Art"

Instructor: Alexander Prokhorov

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Office Hours: M 2:00-3:00, T 3:00-4:00 or by appt

Class: W 4:30-7:10, Wash 305

Screening T 4:00-7:00, Wash 301



Course Description:

This course will introduce students to Russo-Soviet cinema from its beginnings through the present. Films will be considered within socio-political, aesthetic, and theoretical contexts. The course is designed to acquaint students with major cultural periods of the twentieth-century Russia (pre-1917, NEP, Stalinism, Thaw, Stagnation, Perestroika, and the post-Soviet period) and to position cinema as an intersection of political and aesthetic ideas of the time.

The course fulfills the **General Education Requirement in Literature and the History of Arts (GER 5)**. GER 5 courses are expected to introduce students to at least two major forms, genres, cultures, or movements, and at least two methods of analysis; provide the basic vocabulary of a discipline; and teach students to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis.

Required and Recommended Texts:

- Gillespie, David. *Russian Cinema*. NY: Longman, 2002. (RC in the Schedule of Assignments)
- Stites, Richard. *Russian popular culture: Entertainment and society since 1900*. London: Cambridge UP, 1992. (RPC in the Schedule of Assignments)
- Photocopies of articles (available on Blackboard)

Recommended Texts:

- Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. Fifth edition. NY: Pearson/Longman, 2004.

Additional Secondary Materials (available on reserve at Swem Library)

- Beumers, Birgit, ed. *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*. NY: I.B.Tauris, 1999.
- Horton, Andrew and Michael Brashinsky. *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet Cinema in Transition*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Kenez, Peter. *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953*. NY: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Lawton, Anna. *Kinoglasnost: Soviet cinema in our time*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Leyda, Jay. *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.
- Liehm, Mira and Antonín Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film after 1945*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1977.
- McReynolds, Louise and Joan Neuberber, eds. *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia*. Durham & London: Duke UP, 2002.
- Taylor, Richard and Ian Christie, eds. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*. NY: Routledge, 1994.
- Tsivian, Yuri. *Early cinema in Russia and its cultural reception*. London/NY: Routledge, 1994.

- Gillespie's book contains a bibliography of works on Russian cinema. In addition, each chapter is followed by a list of films on the topic.

Additional bibliographic information on the history of Russo-Soviet cinema, including works on specific film directors, actors, etc., can be located on the web at http://www.pitt.edu/~slavic/video/cinema_biblio.html

Additional information on Russian culture you can find on Swem Russian Studies Guide at <http://swem.wm.edu/resources/subject-guides/russian-studies.cfm>

If you would like to see the posters for the films we will be watching, check the site <http://eng.plakaty.ru/posters>

Course goals and Methodology:

- You have to watch the film prior to the discussion of the film on Wednesday. Each film will be screened on Tuesday 4:00 till 7:00 pm. If for some reason you have to miss the screening, please watch the film on your own. All films are available on reserve in Swem Library. Films are not available for individual viewing at the time of screening.
- Wednesday classes will consist of a combination of the following (1) a review (question-and-answer) of assigned readings and/or material covered during earlier meetings; (2) a mini-lecture by the instructor to provide additional information and a context for the discussion; (3) a discussion of the "film-of-the-week"; (4) screening and discussion of relevant clips.

The course will

- provide an overview of Russian cultural history in the 20th century
- introduce students to major Russian film genres and movements
- provide students with the basic vocabulary of film studies;
- teach students to apply the appropriate method for critical analysis.

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during scheduled office hours to discuss their work in the course.

Policies:

Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to attend all classes and be on time. The discussion of specific films and part of the material covered in mini-lectures will not be available outside of class. Attendance will be taken at each meeting. Excused absences due to illness must be documented and the document must be presented to the instructor on the day the students show up for class.

I view discussion as a key learning tool and expect you to participate actively in our weekly debates about the assigned films. Participation is 15% of your grade and students will receive a daily grade for their participation

Reading Assignments:

All reading assignments must be completed prior to the date indicated in the schedule of assignments. Students are expected to be able to discuss the information contained in the readings. Students are also responsible for the information contained in handouts. Absent students are responsible for obtaining handouts distributed in class from the Blackboard or from their classmates.

Writing Assignments:

Papers

In the course of the semester students will have to write 2 analytical papers. Each paper should be 5-6 pages long, plus a separate page of works cited. Suggested topics for each of the papers will be distributed in class on the dates indicated in the schedule of assignments. Students wishing to write on a topic of their own choice may do so after a consultation with the instructor.

Secondary sources must be used in each of the essays, and all secondary sources must be credited in the body of the text and in the list of works cited. All citations must conform to the MLA format as describe in Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. NY: MLA, 2003. Lack of secondary sources will result in automatic "F"

for the paper. Failure to credit sources (whether print or electronic) accurately constitutes plagiarism and will result in an automatic "F" grade in the course and in administrative action against the student.

Plagiarism is described in *MLA Handbook* and on the College of William and Mary web site. If you are not sure whether what you are doing is plagiarism or not, please consult with me.

Film Analysis

Twice during the semester you will be asked to provide a detailed formal analysis of a clip and write an argument about how the formal elements support the themes of the film. We will practice that kind of analysis in class during the semester. We will do these assignments in class on February 21 and March 27.

Quizzes and Examinations:

Short unannounced quizzes (covering readings and information contained in handouts) will be given throughout the course. There will be 5 quizzes, and I will count 4 best of them. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, so please arrive on time. The course also includes an in-class final examination, the date for which is indicated on the schedule of assignments. The final examination will consist of:

- Identification (names, dates, films, terms, etc.)
- Two essay questions

Presentation:

During the last class session you will make team presentations about a Russian film chosen from the list provided by the instructor. Students in teams of five will give oral presentations on the chosen film during the last class session. Your presentation should explain the significance of the filmmaker, contextualize the film in Russo-Soviet culture, discuss the formal properties of the film. The presentation will last 15 minutes including a clip illustrating the formal properties of the film. Your clip should not exceed 3 minutes. Be frugal with your time. I will evaluate your presentation based on the quality of your delivery in class and the handout that you will prepare for the rest of the students. The bottom line is: your listener should walk away from your presentation being able to come up with at least three points why this film is significant stylistically and/or politically. I will include questions about these films in the ID part of the final exam.

Additional Film Screenings

During the semester several guest scholars and the filmmaker will visit our campus. I expect you to attend professor Scott Palmer's talk and screening, professor and filmmaker Marina Goldovskaia's talk and screening, and Professor Arthur Knight's talk and screening. For the details see schedule of screenings and assignments. These screenings are 5% percent of your grade.

Russian Language Component

The course has an optional Russian language component. Students interested in the component need to register for 1 cr. Course Rusn 393-01 in addition to Rusn 380.

Grading Policy:

Your final grades will be determined by the following work

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| • Class Participation (including online) | 15% |
| • 4 Quizzes | 10% |
| • Film Analysis | 10% |
| • Papers | 30% |
| • Presentation | 10% |
| • Additional Film Screenings | 05% |
| • Final Examination | 20% |

College Scoring Guide:

A = 93 - 100	C+ = 77 - 79
A- = 90 - 92	C = 73 - 76
B+ = 87 - 89	C- = 70 - 72
B = 83 - 86	D+ = 68 - 69
B- = 80 - 82	

Campus Resources:

- SWEM LIBRARY Media Center Viewing Lab.
- SWEM LIBRARY Reserve

Schedule of Assignments:

Jan 24 Intro, Terms, Early Cinema
Read for this class: RC 1-11

Jan 30 Screening: *Slave of Love* (Mikhalkov 1976)

Jan 31 Russian Silent Commercial Cinema: Bauer and Melodrama (1908-1919)
Read for this class: RPC 1-36

Topics for Paper #1 distributed

Feb 6 Screening: *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein 1925)

Feb 7 Soviet Avant-garde: Eisenstein and Soviet Expressive Realism of the 1920s
Read for this class: RPC 37-63, RC 103-113

Feb 8 Screening: *Ceiling Zero* (Hawks 1936)
Fliers (Raizman 1935)

Feb 13 Screening: *Circus* (Alexandrov 1936)

Feb 14 Soviet Hollywood: Sound Film and Alexandrov
Read for this class: RPC 64-97, RC 34-45

Feb 16 Screening: *Solovki Power* (Goldovskaia 1988)

Feb 20 Screening: *Alexander Nevskii* (Eisenstein 1938)

Feb 21 Cinematic Legitimation of Stalinism
Film Analysis Assignment #1 (in class)
Read for this class: RPC 98-122, RC 59-68

Feb 23 **Paper #1 Due in my mail box by 4 pm.**

Feb 27 Screening: *Cranes are Flying* (Kalatozov 1957)

Feb 28 Destalinization and Melodrama
Read for this class: RPC 123-147, Prokhorov (on Blackboard)

Mar 2 Screening: *Les Invasions Barbares* (Arcand 2003), Tucker 120, 6:30 pm.

Mar 6 Screening: *Ivan's Childhood* (Tarkovsky 1962)

Mar 7 The Myth of *Auteur* in Soviet Cinema
Read for this class: RC 167-184

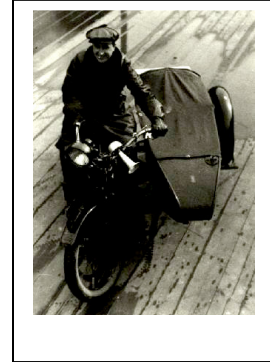
Mar 20 Screening: *Diamond Arm* (Gaidai 1969) *White Sun of a Desert* (Motyl' 1969)

Mar 21 Soviet Genre Cinema of the 1960s: Comedy and Eastern
Read for this class: RC 34-51, 123-28

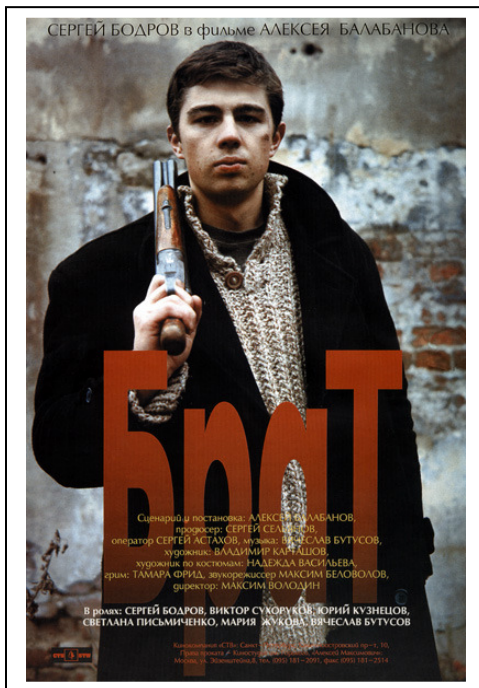
Topics for Paper #2 distributed

Mar 27 Screening: *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (Men'shov 1979)

Mar 28 Genre Cinema and Ideology in the 1970s
Film Analysis Assignment #2 (in class)
Read for this class: RPC 148-177



- Apr 3 Screening: *Little Vera* (Pichul 1988)
Apr 4 Perestroika Cinema: Youth and Society
Read for this class: RPC 178-209, RC 157-166
- Apr 10 Screening: *Sideburns* (Mamin 1990)
Apr 11 Perestroika Cinema: Dystopia and Satire
Read for this class: RC 113-123
- Apr 17 Screening: *Prisoner of the Mountains* (Bodrov Sr. 1996)
Apr 18 Post-Soviet Cinema: Between Empire and Nation
Read for this class: RC 12-33, 128-145, Barret (Blackboard)
- Apr 24 Screening: *Brother* (Balabanov 2000)
Apr 25 Post-Soviet commercial cinema and media
Read for this class: Larsen (Blackboard)
- Apr 27 **Paper #2 due in my mail box by 4 pm.**
- May 1 Screening: no screening
May 2 Student Presentations



May 8 (Tue)
**Final Exam,
from 6:30 till 9:30 pm.
in Washington 305**