

CDIPS Final Project
2022-2023 Cohort
Molly Godwin-Jones

An Introduction to the Culture of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia: Everything you wanted to know, but were afraid to ask

Course Number: SLAV 140
Course Meets: T/Th 1:00-2:15
Instructor: Molly Godwin-Jones
Office: Wescoe 2137
E-Mail: megojones@ku.edu
Office Hours: M/W 10:00-11:00
and by appointment



Course Description

Since the war in Ukraine intensified in 2022, the field of Russian studies has faced an identity crisis. This course attempts to articulate and examine questions surrounding the past, present, and future of Russia and its place in Eastern Europe and relationship with Eurasia. To achieve this, the course is broken down into themes based on broad questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how). Students will be introduced to the main players in Russian history and culture; significant artifacts from Russian literature, film, music, and art; key theories for understanding Russia's past and present; and contemporary voices in light of the war in Ukraine. Using a variety of texts and other types of media, students will become familiar with the historical and cultural developments that shaped Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify key figures in Russian history and Russophone cultures;
- Discuss the importance of key cultural artifacts from Russian and Russophone literature, film, art, and music;
- Retell the major moments in history that have shaped contemporary Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia;
- Locate key cities and countries in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia on a map;
- Apply theories (from feminism, subaltern studies, etc.) to the analysis of current events in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia;
- Situate the war in Ukraine within Russia's foreign policy approaches and cultural mythologies;
- Answer the question of why it is so complicated to understand Russia today.

Required Readings

Students need to purchase:

- [*Putin's Russia*](#) a graphic novel by Darryl Cunningham
- [*The Ukrainian and Russian Notebooks: Life and Death Under Soviet Rule*](#) a graphic novel by Igort, translated by Jamie Richards
- [*Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the New Abroad*](#) by David Laitin

Available publicly or via Canvas:

- Other articles made available through Canvas or newspaper's website
- Video clips from YouTube and other sources
- Audio from podcasts including NPR and Radio Free Liberty

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation	25%
Mini-Presentations and Fact Sheets	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Presentation	10%
Final Paper	25%

- **Attendance and Participation (25%):** You are expected to attend class every session. Excused absences must be communicated to me in advance, and three or more unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final grade. In addition to attending class, you are expected to actively participate in discussions by being prepared (doing the assigned reading) and being attentive to classmates' presentations (which will be potential material for the midterm exam and final paper). This means technological devices should be put away unless they are being used to take notes (e.g., laptop).
- **Mini-Presentations and Fact Sheets (15%):** For each theme, you will do one mini-presentation of 3-5 minutes, which will be based on a [fact sheet](#) you complete about the topic. You will be provided with a template for the fact sheet for each mini-presentation, as well as a list of [potential topics](#) to choose from with an internet site to use as a starting point for conducting research. The internet sites are intended as a starting point, and you are expected to complete 30 minutes of additional research using the original site as a springboard. You will be asked to cite at least three sources for each fact sheet, and the sources cannot include Wikipedia. Please use APA format for citing references. In order to ensure that the sources you use are not propaganda, you will need to email me your source list by 5pm the day before your mini-presentation. We will also discuss media literacy on the first day of class and as it comes up throughout the semester. Some mini-presentations and fact sheets will be completed individually (first four themes) and some will be with a small group (final two themes). The mini-presentations do not require any visuals, but you are welcome to provide some if you wish. The fact sheet will be distributed to your classmates to use as study material for the midterm and final paper. The specific topics possible for each theme will be made available online on the first day of class for sign-up on a first come, first serve basis.

- **Midterm Exam (25%):** The midterm exam will take place after the fourth theme, so it is more of a two-thirds exam than a traditional midterm. It will be cumulative and will ask you to identify (short answer) key terms, events, locations, and figures in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. We will review in class before the midterm, and you will have access to your classmates' fact sheets from their mini-presentations to review as well. The midterm will be completed in class.
- **Final Presentation (10%):** This is your opportunity to explore your own interests as they relate to Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. You will be asked to do a 7–10-minute presentation on any aspect of Russian or Russophone cultures that is not covered in class. This could be a famous figure, a historical event, or a cultural artifact, among other possibilities. You will have a short consultation with me about your topic before beginning to work on it. You must have a unique topic that is different from your classmates; therefore, you will be asked to complete a sign-up sheet to indicate your topic after your consultation with me. As this is a longer presentation than the mini-presentations, it is recommended that you have some type of visual material to share (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Canva, etc.). You will be provided with a grading rubric that details how the presentation will be assessed. Presentations will take place in the final two weeks of class; a sign-up sheet for the specific dates will be made available after the midterm.
- **Final Paper (25%):** The inspiration for the final paper is: “Why is it so complicated to understand Russian and Russophone culture today?” The way you interpret this prompt is up to you. You can focus on one specific question from our discussions, you can use a theory we discussed to approach your response, or you can try something different (feel free to meet with me if you are unsure which approach you would like to focus on). Your paper should be 5-7 pages not including your works cited, double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. You must cite at least 10 sources, of which 5 can be materials from class and 5 must be sources you find that are not used in class (including the fact sheets). Please use APA citation format. You will be provided with a grading rubric that details how the paper will be assessed. The final paper is due at 11:59pm on the day of the final exam.

Grades are calculated using the percentage system, as outlined below:

A+ = 98-100 %	B = 83-87	C- = 70-72	Less than 60 = F
A = 93-97	B- = 80-82	D+ = 68-69	
A- = 90-92	C+ = 78-79	D = 63-67	
B+ = 88-89	C = 73-77	D- = 60-62	

Academic Integrity and Misconduct

You are expected to complete the assigned work on your own. Any work determined to have been plagiarized will receive a zero and will be reported to the university's academic misconduct board. You must cite sources if you are using someone else's ideas or a direct quote. Please familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity policy [here](#). KU's Writing Center also has a good [resource](#) for better understanding plagiarism. Turning in AI-generated work is unacceptable and will result in a zero grade and the need to redo the assignment.

Schedule

****Note:** subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and posted to Canvas

Theme 1: Who?

Week 1	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	The "Russians": who do we think they are?	Who are some Russians on the periphery?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	NA	1. Read excerpts from the introduction to <i>Russia's People of Empire</i> (on Canvas) 2. Choose one biography from those posted on Canvas to read. Feel free to select more than one! 3. Read Chapter 2 from Laitin's book Identity in Formation (Why the Peripheral Peoples Did Not Become Russian)
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Review the syllabus; introduction to media literacy; discuss the demographics of Russia based on census data and investigate the situation of Russians abroad; an introduction to the myth of Russia as a monolith	Discuss less commonly known peoples of the Russian Empire

Week 2	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	Who are some famous Russians in history and culture?	Who were "the Soviets"?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	1. Prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min) on a famous historical person that you selected from the list; email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 2. Read Chapter 10 from Laitin's book (The Russian-Speaking Nationality in Formation)	1. Read Chapter 41 on Soviet Society and Culture (pg. 588-616) from Riasanovsky and Steinberg, A History of Russia (on Canvas) 2. Read Zoshchenko's " Nervous People " and " Poverty " 3. Read the first two chapters of <i>Envy</i> by Yuri Olesha (on Canvas) 4.) Read Kollontai's The Soviet Woman
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Go through mini-presentations; discuss the impact of famous figures in Russian and Russophone cultures	Discuss the impact of the Soviet period on Russia in history and today

Theme 2: What?

Week 3	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	What are some important cultural artefacts from Russophone literature?	What are some important cultural artefacts from Russophone film?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman (Introduction and Part I; Part II optional); Gogol's "Petersburg Notes of 1836" (on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" and excerpt from "Taking Pushkin off his pedestal" (on Canvas) 3. If you signed up for a literary work: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: watch clips from <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> and <i>Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears</i> (on Canvas) 2. If you signed up for a work from film: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday 3. Optional: Attend the film screening of <i>Solaris</i> on Friday evening
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentations on famous Russophone literary works; discuss the importance of literature in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia and backlash against it	Hear mini-presentations on famous Russophone films; discuss the impact of famous Russophone films and directors on the film industry; tropes in famous films

Week 4	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	What are some important visual art artefacts from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?	What are some important performance art artefacts from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read 10 Paintings every Russian knows 2. Everyone: read this article about traditional Russian folk art 3. If you signed up for an artistic work: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Listen to excerpt from Tchaikovsky's opera, "The Queen of Spades" 2. Everyone: Read this short article on the history of Russian folk music 3. Everyone: Explore the website "What Makes Russian Music Russian?" Read the main page and select two other subpages to listen to/read (be sure you listen to the music!) 4. If you signed up for a musical work: prepare the fact sheet and a

		mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Bring your device to class today! Hear mini-presentations on famous art from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. We will work in groups to explore famous artists (Rublev, Rokotov, Repin, Malevich, and Salakhova) and share information with the class.	Bring your device to class today—make sure to also bring headphones! Hear mini-presentations on famous music from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. We will work in groups to explore famous musicians (Vedel, Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Kino) and share information with the class.

Theme 3: Where?

Week 5	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	Where are some central metropolitan areas important to Russia?	Where are some non-metropolitan areas within Russia?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read Moscow and St. Petersburg, a sequence of capitals, a tale of two cities (on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read or listen to St. Petersburg: A Glimpse of What Russia is Not 3. Everyone: Read Moscow seeks a 'sense of normal' amid Ukraine conflict 4. If you signed up for Moscow or St. Petersburg: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read the second half of the graphic novel The Russian Notebooks (the entire section on Russia, pgs. 265-367) 2. If you signed up for the Caucasus or the Far East: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentations on Moscow and St. Petersburg; discuss the importance of Moscow and St. Petersburg as hubs of Russian culture and politics	Hear mini-presentations on the Caucasus regions and the Far East; discuss the wars in Chechnya and journalism, displacement, genocide, and gendered violence

Week 6	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	Where is Russian still spoken in Eastern Europe and why?	Where is Russian still spoken in Central Asia and why?

<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<p>1. Everyone: Read Chapters 5 and 7 in Laitin's book (Three Patterns of Peripheral Incorporation and Assimilation: Survey Results)</p> <p>2. Everyone: Read The Russification of Eastern Europe</p> <p>3. If you signed up for an Eastern European country: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday</p>	<p>1. Everyone: Read Chapter 11 in Laitin's book (Russian Nationalism in Russia and the Near Abroad)</p> <p>2. Everyone: Read Is the Russian Language Losing its Dominance in Central Asia? (or listen to the whole podcast)</p> <p>3. Everyone: Read Is Russian Cultural Hegemony in Central Asia Finally Over?</p> <p>4. If you signed up for a country in Central Asia: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday</p>
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentations on the countries of Eastern Europe; discuss the role of the Russian language in different Eastern European countries	Hear mini-presentations on the countries of Central Asia; discuss the role of the Russian language in different Central Asian countries

Theme 4: When?

Week 7	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	When did some important events in the early history of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia take place?	When was the Russian Revolution and what led up to it?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<p>1. Everyone: Watch from the beginning to 9:05 in Rurik to the Revolution (take notes)</p> <p>2. Everyone: Read Russia and Ukraine are Trapped in Medieval Myths</p> <p>3. Everyone: Read Fact-Checking Putin's Claim that Russia and Ukraine are 'one people'</p> <p>4. If you signed up for an event from the early history: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday</p>	<p>1. Everyone: Watch from 9:05 to the end in Rurik to the Revolution (take notes)</p> <p>2. If you signed up for an event in medieval or the tsarist times: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday</p>
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentations; discuss the formation of Russia and other	Hear mini-presentations; discuss the socio-economic situation and

	states in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the problematic Kyivan Rus legacy of modern Russia, and the Mongol yoke	reforms in nineteenth-century Russia (decline of the gentry) and what led to the Russian Revolutions
--	---	--

Week 8	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	When was the Soviet era?	When did Putin come to power?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read an overview of Soviet history 2. Everyone: Read Akhmatova's "Requiem" 3. Everyone: Read the first half of The Ukrainian Notebooks (pgs. 1-93) 4. Everyone: Read Yevtushenko's poem Babi Yar 5. Everyone: Read excerpts from Solzhenitsyn's <i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i> (on Canvas) 6. If you signed up for an event in the Soviet era: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read the first half of Cunningham's graphic novel Putin's Russia 2. Everyone: Read Overview of Russia: sections on political and social changes and ethnic relations (feel free to read more if you like!) 3. If you signed up for an event in modern Russia: prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentations; discuss key events in the Soviet period and their impact on modern Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia	Hear mini-presentations; discuss the situation in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia since the collapse of the Soviet Union

Midterm Review and Completion

Week 9	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	What are some key takeaways from the first four themes?	What are some key takeaways from the first four themes?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	Review your notes, including fact sheets	Review your notes, including fact sheets
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Review for the midterm exam	Take the midterm exam

Theme 5: Why?

Week 10	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	Why has Russia traditionally been considered a monolith, and why is that inaccurate?	Why is Russia classified as either east or west?

<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read the introduction and conclusion of The Crimean Nexus (on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read How the World Forgot about Russian Imperialism 3. Everyone: Read the introduction to Beyond the Monolith (on Canvas) 4. If you signed up for Russian imperialism: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read the introduction to Wolff's Inventing Eastern Europe (on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read excerpt from <i>Notes from the Underground</i> (on Canvas) 3. Everyone: Read Dostoevsky, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the Crystal Palace (on Canvas) 4. Everyone: Read Russia between East and West (on Canvas) 5. If you signed up for Slavophiles or Westerners: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentation on Russian imperialism; discuss Russian imperialism historically and today, Euromaidan	Hear mini-presentation on the Slavophile vs. Westerner debate; discuss Russia's difficulty in identifying as east or west throughout history

Week 11	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	Why is feminism a dirty word in Russia?	Why is Putin's propaganda so effective?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read "Bug Inspectors and Beauty Queens: the Problems of Translating Feminism into Russian" (Holmgren, on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read Tolstaya's <i>The Poet and the Muse</i> and Ulitskaya's <i>Dauntless Women of the Russian Steppe</i> (on Canvas) 3. Everyone: Read Kollontai's The Loves of Three Generations 4. If you signed up for Russian feminism: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read 'It's all a lie': Russians are trapped in Putin's parallel universe. But some want out 2. Everyone: Watch How Russian propaganda has been forced to evolve 3. Everyone: Read or listen to A scrappy newscast in Kyiv aimed at Russians counters Putin's propaganda machine 4. If you signed up for the history of Russian propaganda: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear mini-presentation about feminism in Russia; discuss key terms from the text; compare texts	Hear mini-presentation about the history of propaganda in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia;

	from the Soviet and modern period	discuss what propaganda is and how it is used by the Putin regime today
--	-----------------------------------	---

Theme 6: How?

Week 12	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	How do we understand Russia today in terms of decolonization theories?	How do we understand Putin and his era?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read Chapter 1 in Laitin (A Theory on Political Identities) 2. Everyone: Read the introduction and conclusion to Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World (on Canvas) 3. If you signed up for subaltern theory: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Finish reading Cunningham's graphic novel Putin's Russia 2. Everyone: Read Understanding Putin, the man who fooled the world 3. Everyone: Read Russia's Local Activists Find Room for Protest—Just Don't Mention the War 4. If you signed up for Russian foreign policy: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear a mini-presentation about subaltern theory; discuss how decolonization theory applies to Russia	Hear a mini-presentation about Russia's current foreign policy; discuss Putin's dictatorship and history of aggression; discuss Russia's use (or lack) of protesting under Putin

Week 13	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	How do we understand contemporary Russophone literary voices?	How do we understand the war in Ukraine?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read excerpts from Pelevin's "Omon Ra" (on Canvas) 2. Everyone: Read Petrushevskaya's "Hallelujah, Family!" and "Tamara's Baby" 3. Everyone: Read the introduction and choose at least two poems to read from The 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone: Read Fact-Checking the Kremlin's Version of Ukrainian History 2. Everyone: Read part 1 of The Crimean Nexus (on Canvas) 3. Everyone: Read the introduction and Chapter 27 (The Price of Freedom) from Plokhy's

	Russophone Literature of Resistance 4. If you signed up for contemporary Russophone literature: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Monday	The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine (on Canvas) 4. If you signed up for reviewing the war in Ukraine: as a group, prepare the fact sheet and a mini-presentation (3-5 min); email me your sources by 5pm on Wednesday
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Examine themes in contemporary literature	Discuss the genocide in Ukraine and how the world has responded

Final Presentations

Week 14	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	What else interests you about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?	What else interests you about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	Work on your final presentation and paper	Work on your final presentation and paper
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear student presentations	Hear student presentations

Week 15	Tuesday	Thursday
<i>Today's Question:</i>	What else interests you about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?	What else interests you about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia?
<i>Before class, do this:</i>	Work on your final presentation and paper	Work on your final presentation and paper
<i>In class, we will:</i>	Hear student presentations	Hear student presentations

Final paper due electronically by 11:59 pm on the day the final exam is scheduled (no exam, just a paper due on that day instead).

CDIPS Final Project
2022-2023 Cohort
Molly Godwin-Jones

An Introduction to the Culture of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia:
Everything you wanted to know, but were afraid to ask
*Introducing Students to the Culture of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia in a
Decolonialized Manner*

Executive Summary

Even before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the field of Russian studies has been facing an identity crisis. The escalation of the war in Ukraine only heightened this issue. A wide-spread concern now in the teaching of Russian language and culture is how to approach the subject with equity and inclusion at the core, while deconstructing the colonialized approach of centering Russia and its culture at the forefront. My project seeks to understand the broad contributions of the Russophone world by introducing students not just to Russian culture, but also including key elements from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Therefore, this syllabus seeks to deconstruct the remnants of the Russian Empire by delving into artifacts and history across locations formerly understudied when it comes to the influence of the Russophone world.

Reference List

- Chavez, Felicia Rose. *The anti-racist writing workshop: How to decolonize the creative classroom*. Haymarket Books, 2021.
- Laitin, David D. *Identity in formation: The Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Norris, Stephen M., and Willard Sunderland. *Russia's People of the Empire: Life stories from Eurasia 1500 to the Present*. Indiana University Press, 2012.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, 2012.
- Swalwell, Katy and Daniel Spikes, editors. *Anti-Oppressive Education in "Elite" Schools: Promising Practices and Cautionary Tales from the Field*. Teachers College Press, 2021.

Analysis

Many institutions that offer degrees in Russian language require that students also know about Russian culture. This has historically been achieved through a combination of a Russian culture course (in English) and study abroad in Russia. Now, however, studying abroad in Russia is not feasible given the political climate and potential dangers, which means that students are heading to other parts of the world to learn Russian for study abroad experiences. A major issue, however, is the treatment of culture surrounding other parts of the world where Russian is spoken: namely, their lack of inclusion in the curriculum of culture courses that focus primarily on Russia itself. Therefore, this course aims to address the first part of how students learn about culture in the Russophone world by expanding a traditional "Russian culture" course into one that includes contributions from Eastern Europe and Eurasia in terms of history, literature, music, film, art, and worldviews. Overall, this course asks questions about the Russophone world and

encourages students to do their own investigating to help understand the dynamics of the regions where Russian is one of the languages spoken.

The learners for this course are envisioned as new to the study of Russian language and culture—most likely first-year college students or upperclassmen who have decided to major in Russian language. I assume that students will have no knowledge of Russia, Eastern Europe, or Eurasia, other than perhaps an interest in the region or the language. I also take as a starting point that students in this course may not be experienced in research methodologies or critically examining sources for potential bias, which is why some introduction to media literacy is included and student sources are verified. In order to give students the opportunity to explore their specific interests as they pertain to this region, there is also a final research paper and a final presentation. This course can be taught at any type of institution, from private small liberal arts colleges to large public research universities. The course is discussion-based and in a seminar format, with potentially at most 20 students per section in order to foster a safe space to express thoughts and questions.

The content of this course focuses on culture from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. The course is broken into six themes based on driving questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. Each day has a prompt question that will guide discussion. Students are expected to complete readings or short audio/visual assignments before class to prepare for discussion. For each unit, students will complete one mini-presentation—individually for the first four themes and in a small group for the final two themes. The mini-presentations will serve as a way for students to take agency over the material by presenting it to their classmates in a 3–5-minute oral presentation, as well as in written format using a template fact sheet that will be provided to them. The first four themes focus more on concrete facts about history, literature, art, music, film, and geography. The final two themes ask students to think more critically now that they have a base understanding of some of the concerns in the region. For assessment, there will be a midterm exam during class time two-thirds of the way into the course (after the fourth theme). The midterm will consist of short-answer questions based on the first four themes, including the mini-presentations from other classmates. Towards the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to explore their own interests more deeply with a final presentation on a topic of their choosing (which must be approved through a consultation with the instructor). The final assessment is a paper of 5-7 pages answering the prompt “Why is it so complicated to understand Russian and Russophone culture today?”. Students are encouraged to interpret the prompt as they see fit using material from class or outside sources.

The main instructional goals of this course are:

- To introduce students to contributions in Russophone cultures from key figures in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia in terms of art, literature, music, and film;
- To help students engage in critical thinking by applying frameworks (from feminism, subaltern studies, etc.) to the analysis of current events in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia;
- To develop research skills and media literacy.

Design

Performance objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify contributions from key figures in Russophone history and cultures;
- Locate key cities and countries in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia on a map;
- Apply theories (from feminism, subaltern studies, etc.) to the analysis of current events in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia;
- Situate the war in Ukraine within Russia’s foreign policy approaches and cultural mythologies.

Learning Assessments

- Mini-presentations: students will be assessed on their 3-5-minute mini-presentations (four individually and two with a group) and the fact sheet they provide their classmates
- Midterm exam: to be taken in class after a review day; cumulative from the first four themes; short-answer questions
- Final presentation: on a topic selected by the student after a consultation with the instructor; 7-10 minutes; topic must not be one covered in class already
- Final paper: students respond to the prompt “Why is it so complicated to understand Russian and Russophone culture today?”; 5-7 pages plus bibliography (of at least 10 sources, only 5 of which can be from class resources)

Strategies, Activities, Methods

- Since this is a discussion-based course and participation is assessed, it will be important that all students feel safe and secure enough to voice their thoughts and opinions. In this regard, I will pay attention to who is frequently speaking up and who is staying silent during class in an effort to facilitate new voices joining the conversation. If students are consistently not participating, I will reach out to them individually after class to encourage them to participate more. If they reveal that they are not comfortable with speaking in front of a group, I will create an alternative, written platform for them to participate in, such as an online discussion board via Canvas.
- In addition to ensuring that all student voices are heard, I will give the opportunity for smaller group discussions before engaging with the whole class. For example, think-pair-share sessions will be utilized, in which students first reflect individually on a topic, then discuss their thoughts with a partner, then with a small group before finally rejoining the entire class.
- Assessments will be evaluated using rubrics that will be provided to students in advance. In addition, we will review the rubrics together as a class to ensure that students understand what the desired outcome is.

Alignment

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Assessments</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
Identify contributions from key figures in Russophone history and cultures	Mini-presentations Midterm exam	Class discussions, readings, multimedia preparatory assignments, fact sheets
Locate key cities and countries in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia on a map	Mini-presentations Midterm exam	Class discussions, readings, multimedia preparatory assignments, fact sheets

Apply theories (from feminism, subaltern studies, etc.) to the analysis of current events in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia	Mini-presentations Final presentation Final paper	Class discussions, readings, multimedia preparatory assignments, fact sheets, consultation with instructor, media literacy mini-lectures
Situate the war in Ukraine within Russia's foreign policy approaches and cultural mythologies	Final presentation Final paper	Class discussions, readings, multimedia preparatory assignments, fact sheets consultation with instructor, media literacy mini-lectures

Grading

- Mini-presentations will be graded on the presentation itself and the fact sheet accompanying it. Factual accuracy will be taken into account, as well as depth of scope (e.g., does the student only scratch the surface of the topic, or is there clear evidence of more critical thinking and examination).
- The midterm exam will be graded based on factual accuracy (short-answer identification questions).
- The final presentation will have a similar rubric as the mini-presentations, but with more weight given the longer nature of this presentation.
- The final paper will be graded based on adherence to guidelines (e.g., page length, formatting), use of appropriate sources (minimum 10, only 5 of which can be from class material), and critical thinking approach (whether the question is thoroughly addressed or the paper merely presents facts one after the other).

Development

- For a detailed view of assigned readings and understandings, please see the weekly course schedule in the syllabus.
- Important resources for the instructor are Laitin's book *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the New Abroad* and news on current events about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia from trusted news sources (e.g., the Moscow Times, BBC Russian). Laitin's book is relevant for understanding the changes that are occurring in the post-Soviet space in terms of language use and culture. News about current events is important given the changing landscape of this region in terms of politics and foreign policy given the war in Ukraine.
- As I am not currently teaching, I do not have an administrative unit to gather support from. However, I believe that this course would find enthusiastic support from any Slavic department that is seeking to embrace the questions surrounding Russia and its place within the rest of the world.
- It is possible that some students will be of Russian, Eastern European, or Eurasian heritage. These students may have engrained opinions about certain aspects of culture from the region, which may or may not reflect the current realities of this area. To address these potential biases, I will use two approaches: first, I will use facts from news and academic sources to discuss with the class what the current view on the topic is. Then I will also have an individual conversation with the student in question after class or during office hours.

Implementation

- Students are expected to follow the institution's policies and procedures, such as code of conduct and plagiarism guidelines. These are included in the syllabus.
- In order to make the readings and preparatory work clearer to students, the syllabus is visually designed in such a way that assignments before class are marked with "before class, do this" for each week.
- I hope to encourage students to come to office hours by describing them during the first two weeks of class in every session. In addition, students will be required to meet with me before deciding on a paper topic, which will be a good way to check in individually with students as the course progresses. I also encourage students to meet with me about their final paper.
- Late work will be accepted, as long as the term is still in session. Extensions will be provided when possible (for instance, mini-presentations cannot receive extensions, as the topic will have changed by the next class period).

Evaluation

- Students will complete an online reflection and evaluation after the midterm exam. The results of this evaluation will help in future iterations of the course. In addition, it will ask about students experiences in the discussion sessions, so that changes can be made if needed. The survey will be anonymous.
- At the end of the course, student evaluations are usually distributed by the university. These can be modified to add specific information about the course, which will include how manageable the workload was and how the discussion process went.
- I use printed out lesson plans when I teach. I plan on reflecting on each class period after it is done by writing my thoughts about what went well or didn't on the back of the lesson plan paper. This way, I will be able to adapt discussion prompts as needed for future iterations of the course.