

## **Reimagining Russia: Place, Identity, and Environment in Contemporary Russian/Russophone Literature**

*This course is intended as an upper-division undergraduate seminar in Russian/Russophone Literature. Its primary aim is to help students understand the role Russian literature has played in the construction of empire and to examine the ways in which contemporary Russophone literature can help provide alternative ways of seeing and understanding Russian/Post-Soviet space and place. In the process, it seeks to decolonize the typical contemporary Russian literature syllabus by demonstrating the variety of geographic, gendered, ethnic, and national perspectives that Russophone literature since the 1970s encompasses and providing a solid theoretical background through which students can interrogate dominant discourse on Russian literature.*

### **I. Peopling the Periphery – Siberian Regionalism and the Soviet Anthropocene (Weeks 1-3)**

#### **Week 1:**

Introduction – What is Russia? What is space/place?

Chekhov, “In Exile” (1892); Boris Pilnyak, “The Cheshire Cheese” [In *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon and Other Stories* (Washington Square Press, 1967).]

Secondary Reading: Slezkine, Yuri and Galya Diment, “Introduction.” In *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

#### **Week 2:**

Evtushenko, Evgenii - *Bratsk Station* (excerpts)

Secondary Reading: Rozhanskii, Mikhail, “Trial by Siberia: The Real Person on the Great Construction Projects and in the Films of 1959” (*Russian Studies in History*, vol. 58, nos. 2-3, 2019, pp. 120-157).

Rasputin, Valentin – *Farewell to Maryora* (tr. Antonina W. Bouis, Northwestern University Press, 1995)

#### **Week 3:**

Rasputin, Valentin – *Farewell to Maryora* (continued); “Siberia without the Romance” (short excerpt) [In *Siberia, Siberia* (Northwestern University Press, 1996).]

Secondary Reading: Tuan, Yi-Fu, “Intimate Experiences of Place.” From *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (University of Minnesota Press, 1977, pp. 136-148).

## II. The Empire Writes Back – The Decolonial Gaze in Indigenous “National” Literatures of the 1970s-80s

### Week 4:

Vertov, Dziga, *Three Songs about Lenin* (Mosfilm, 1934).

Secondary Reading: Slezkine, Yuri, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism (*Slavic Review*, vol. 53, no. 2, summer 1994, pp. 414-452).

Aitmatov, Chingiz, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* (tr. F. J. French, Indiana University Press, 1988).

### Week 5:

Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* (continued)

Secondary Reading: Banerjee, Anindita, “The Atom, the Alien and Cosmographies of the Anthropocene” (*Russian Literature*, vols. 114-115, June-July 2020, pp. 127-150).

### Week 6:

Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* (conclusion)

Bogoraz, Vladimir, *Chukchee Mythology* (excerpts) [published as Waldemar Bogoras, E. J. Brill Limited, 1913].

Secondary Reading: Hirsch, Francine, “Transforming ‘The Peoples of the USSR:’ Ethnographic Exhibits and the Evolutionary Timeline.” [In *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Cornell University Press, 2014, ch. 5].

### Week 7:

Rytkeu, Yuri, *When the Whales Leave* (tr. Ilona Yazhbin Chavasse, Milkweed Editions, 2019).

Secondary Reading: Rifkin, Mark, “Indigenous Orientations.” From *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Duke University Press 2014, pp. 1-47).

## III. The Border(land)s of War – Ukraine and the Caucasus in the Putin Era

### Week 8:

Pushkin, “The Prisoner of the Caucasus”; Lermontov, “Demon”

Secondary Reading: Ram, Harsha, “Pushkin, Lermontov, and the Elegaic Sublime” in *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

Ganieva, Alisa, *The Mountain and the Wall* (tr. Carol Apollonio, Deep Vellum Publishing, 2015)

**Week 9:**

Ganieva, Alisa, *The Mountain and the Wall* (continued)

Secondary Reading: Politkovskaya, Anna, *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya* [University of Chicago Press, 2007] (excerpts).

**Week 10:**

Ganieva, *The Mountain and the Wall* (continued)

Secondary Reading: Lappela, Anni Irmeli, “The dialogic nature of dystopia in Alisa Ganieva’s *The Mountain and the Wall*.” (*Nordlit*, vol. 39, 2017, pp. 102-115).

Gogol, Nikolai, “Preface” and “The Fair at Sorochintsy.” In *Evenings on a Farm in Dikanka*, Book I.

Secondary Reading: Koropeckyj, Roman and Robert Romanchuk, “Ukraine in Blackface: Performance and Representation in Gogol’s *Dikan’ka Tales*, Book 1” (*Slavic Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, autumn 2003, 525-547).

**Week 11:**

Kurkov, Andrei, *Grey Bees* (tr. Boris Dralyuk, Deep Vellum Publishing, 2022).

Secondary Reading: Von Hagen, Mark, “Does Ukraine Have a History?” (*Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3, fall 1995, pp. 658-673.)

**Week 12:**

Kurkov, *Grey Bees* (continued)

Secondary Reading: Zaharchenko, Tanya, “Frontiers of Identity.” In *Where Currents Meet: Frontiers of Memory in Post-Soviet Fiction of Kharkiv, Ukraine*

**IV. The New Russian City**

**Week 13:**

Zvyagintsev, Andrei, *Elena* (Zeitgeist Films, 2011).

Secondary Reading: Gerber, Theodore, “Stalled Social Mobility in Post-Soviet Russia.” (*Current History*, vol. 117, no. 801, October 2018, pp. 258-263).

Ismailov, Hamid, “The Stone Guest” (tr. From Uzbek by Shelley Fairweather-Vega, *Words without Borders*, 1 September 2014,

<https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2014-09/the-stone-guest/>)

Sangin, Manizha, selected songs (eg. “Russian Woman” (2021), “Недославянка” (2019) “Сейчас дважды не случится” (2019)).

Lomasko, Victoria, “Invisible.” In *Other Russias* (tr. Thomas Campbell, n+1 Foundation, 2017).

Secondary Reading: DeCerteau, Michel, “Walking in the City.” [In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, University of California Press, 1988.]

**Week 14:**

Rymbu, Galina. *Life in Space* [tr. Joan Brooks, et al. After Hours Editions, 2020]  
(selected poems).

Secondary Reading: Strange, Clayton, “Urban Dreams, Brutal Imperatives.” In  
*Monotown: Urban Dreams, Brutal Imperatives* (Applied Research and Design,  
2019).

Student Research Presentations