

PROF. SERGUEI ALEX. OUSHAKINE

RUSSIA TODAY

SLA 216/ANT 216

Seminar: 1:30 pm - 4:20 pm T (SA)

The course provides an introduction into contemporary Russia. Through fiction, film, and academic studies, we will analyze how Russia is being transformed today. First, we explore changes of individual and collective identities ("generation" or "class") after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Then we look at the role of market relations in defining new cultural practices ("consumption" and "criminality"). Finally, we examine ways in which Russian people reestablish their relations with the Soviet past and envision their future ("nostalgia").



Knowledge of Russian is not required.

Requirements:

Class participation (discussion, weekly position papers) – 35 %

One in-class presentation – 10%

Midterm paper (5-page film review) – 20 %

Final paper – 35 %

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Steven Lovell. *Destination in Doubt: Russia since 1989.* London: Zed Books, 2006.

Serguei Alex. Oushakine. *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, Loss, and War.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009

Viktor Pelevin. *Homo Zapiens. A Novel.* Trans. Andrew Broomfield. New York: Viking, 2000.

Dale Pesmen. *Russia and Soul. An Exploration.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.

Olga Shevchenko. *Crisis and the Everyday in Post-socialist Moscow.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

September 21, 2010. Week 1.

INTRODUCTION

FILM: *Spinning Boris.* (Dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 2003)

Optional reading:

Steven Lovell. Introduction; What Was Soviet Socialism? Chronology. In: Steven Lovell. *Destination in Doubt: Russia since 1989.* London: Zed Books, 2006, pp. 1-16; 163-165.

September 28, 2010. Week 2.

THE PARTY IS OVER: Collapse

Steven Lovell. The State: Death and Rebirth?. Birth of a Nation? In: Steven Lovell. *Destination in Doubt*, pp.17-39; 66-88.

Olga Shevchenko. How the Crisis of Socialism Became a Postsocialist Crisis. In: Olga Shevchenko. *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp.15-34.

Serguei Alex. Oushakine. “We Have No Motherland”; Ch.1. Repatriating Capitalism: Fragmented Society and Global Connections. In: Serguei Alex. Oushakine. *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, Loss, and War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009, pp. 1-79.

Alexei Plutser-Sarno. Chaos and Collapse: Order Your Prescription at the Handbag Shop. In: Alexei Plutser-Sarno. *Notes from Russia*. London: Fuel, 2007, pp.70-89.

FILM: *Gagarin's Pioneers* (Dir. Vitaly Mansky, 2005).

Optional reading:

Steven Lovell. Democratization? In: Steven Lovell. *Destination in Doubt*, pp.40-66.

October 5, 2010. Week 3.

THE RITE OF PASSAGE: Transition

Victor Turner. Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*. In: Turner, V. *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 93-111.

Katherine Verdery. A Transition from Socialism to Feudalism? Thoughts on the Post-socialist State. In: Verdery, K. *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 204–228.

Dale Pesmen. In Public Transportation and in the Soul; A Channel between Two Worlds. In: D. Pesmen, *Russia and Soul: An Exploration*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, pp.37-59; 60-79.

Olga Shevchenko. A State of Emergency: The Lived Experience of Post-socialist Decline. In: Shevchenko, *Crisis and the Everyday*, pp. 35-61.

October 12, 2010. Week 4.

MAKING SENSE: Ideology

Clifford Geertz. Ideology as a Cultural System. In: C. Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 193-233.

Serguei Alex. Oushakine. The Russian Tragedy: From Ethnic Trauma to Ethnic Vitality. In: Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair*, pp.79-129.

Olga Shevchenko. The Routinization of Crisis, or On the Permanence of Temporary Conditions.. In: Shevchenko, *Crisis and the Everyday*, pp. 62-87.

Vlad Strukov. Possessive and Superlative: On the Simulation of Democracy and Nationhood in Russia. In: *Russian Cyberspace*, Vol. 1, No.1 (2009), pp. 31-39.

Optional reading:

Arnold van Gennep. Other Types of Passage; Conclusion. 189- 194 In: van Gennep, A. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 166-188; 189-194.

Olga Shevchenko. What Changes When Life Stands Still. In: Shevchenko, *Crisis and the Everyday*, pp.144-171.

October 19, 2010. Week 5.

NEW RICH, NEW POOR: Class

Olga Shevchenko. Permanent Crisis, Durable Goods; Building Autonomy in Everyday Life. In: Shevchenko. *Crisis and the Everyday*, pp. 88-112; 113-143.

Nancy Ries. Potato Ontology: Surviving Postsocialism in Russia. In: *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2009), pp. 181–212.

Olga Mesropova. “The Discreet Charm of the Russian Bourgeoisie”: OKsana Robski and Glamour in Russian Popular Literature. In: *The Russian Review* 68 (2009), pp. 89–101.

Alexei Plutser-Sarno. Employees and Wages. In: Plutser-Sarno, *Notes from Russia*, pp. 12-25.

Jakob Fruchtmann, ed. The Triumph of Money. *Kultura*, July 2009.

FILM: Tycoon: New Russian (Dir. Pavel Lungin, 2002) .

Optional reading:

Djurdja Bartlett. In Russia, At Last and Forever: The First Seven Years of Russian *Vogue*. *Fashion Theory*, 2006, Vol.10, No.1/2, pp.175-204.

Stephen Lovell. A Free Market? In: Lovell, *Destination in Doubt*, pp. 89-113.

October 26, 2010. Week 6.

LEARNING A NEW WORD: Biznes

Galina Lindquist. Spirits and souls of business: New Russians, magic and the esthetics of kitsch. *Journal of Material Culture*, 2002. Vol. 7, No 3, pp. 329-343.

Dale Pesmen. If You Want To Live, You’ve Got to Krutit’sia: Crooked and Straight. In: Pesmen. *Russia and Soul*, pp.189–207.

Viktor Pelevin. *Homo Zapiens. A Novel*. Trans. Andrew Broomfield. New York: Viking, 2000.

Wow! (Generation P). Website <http://www.russianwriters.eu/en/pelevin/pelevinfilmpi.html>

Optional reading:

Sofya Khagi. From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Zapiens: Viktor Pelevin’s Consumer Dystopia. In: *The Russian Review* 67 (2008), pp.559–79.

Bruce Grant. The Return of the Repressed: Conversations with Three Russian Entrepreneurs. In: Marcus G., ed. *Paranoia Within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 241–267.

FALL RECESS

November 9, 2010. Week 7.

SITES OF TRANSFORMATION: *Space*

- Elena Hellberg-Hirn.** Ambivalent Space: Expressions of Russian Identity. In: Jeremy Smith, ed. *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura. 1999, pp. 49-70.
- Heather DeHaan.** Finding The Soviet in Post-Soviet Space: An Excavation of the Post-Soviet City in Nizhnii Novgorod. In: Thomas Lahusen, Peter H. Solomon, eds. *What is Soviet Now? Identities, Legacies, Memories*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008, pp. 277-307.
- Dale Pesmen.** The Baths: A Celebration for Soul and Body; Depth, Openings, and Closings. In: Pesmen, *Russia and Soul*, pp.95-112; 211-229.
- Tova Höjdestrand.** Perilous Places. The Use and Abuse of Space and Bodies. In: Tova Höjdestrand. *Needed by Nobody: Homelessness and Humanness in Post-socialist Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009, pp.77-112.
- Diana Zhdanowa,** ed. The New Moscow: Between Neo-Classicism and High-Tech. In: *Kultura*, Vol.3. (2008).

FILM: *Oxygen* (Dir. Ivan Vyrypaev, 2009).

Optional reading:

- Anne Nivat.** *The View From Vysotka: A Portrait of Russia Today Through One of Moscow's Famous Addresses*. Trans. Frances Forte. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Preface,; Chaps.4; 16; 18; 21-22.
- David Remnick.** Moscow, Open City. In: David Remnick. *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998, pp.158-163.

November 16, 2010. Week 8.

A NEW AGE: *Generation P*

- Joachim Otto Habeck.** «Does Life Make More Sense Now? Young People's Life Projects and the New Feeling of Stability in Russia» In: *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. Issue: 41, 2009, pp. 189-206.
- Julie Hemment.** Soviet-Style Neoliberalism? Nashi, Youth Voluntarism, and the Restructuring of Social Welfare in Russia. In: *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 56, no. 6, November-December 2009, pp. 36–50.
- Hilary Pilkington.** No Longer “On Parade”: Style and the Performance of Skinhead in the Russian Far North. *The Russian Review* 69 (April 2010): 187–209
- Dana Heller.** t.A.T.u. You! Russia, the Global Politics of Eurovision, and Lesbian Pop. *Popular Music* (2007) Volume 26/2, pp. 195–210
- Florian M. Stammer.** Mobile Phone Revolution in the Tundra? Technological Change among Russian Reindeer Nomads. In: *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. No 41, 2009, pp.47-78.

November 23, 2010. Week 9.

SPIRITS OF FRIENDSHIP: Alcohol

Dale Pesmen. Do not Have a Hundred Rubles, Have Instead a Hundred Friends Standing Bottles, Washing Deals, and Drinking for the Soul. In: Pesmen, *Russia and Soul*, pp. 126-145; 170-188.

Anthony Audi, Rob Madole, John Nelson, Tim Nunan, and Ross Kenneth Urken. The Dacha Experience: A glance at Russia Today and its Traditions. *Nassau Weekly*, October 18, 2007 (http://www.nassauweekly.com/view_article.php?id=787)

Douglas Rogers. Moonshine, Money, and the Politics of Liquidity in Rural Russia. In: *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 63 – 81.

Alexander Nemtsov. Suicides and alcohol consumption in Russia, 1965-1999. In: *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Vol. 71 (2003), pp. 161-168.

Film: The Wedding (Dir. Pavel Lungin, 2000).

Optional reading:

Kirill Galetski. Review of *The Wedding* by Pavel Lungin. *The St. Petersburg Times*, November 10, 2000. http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=13205

November 30, 2010. Week 10.

DEPLOYMENT OF FORCE: Violence

Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky. Violence in Soviet and post-Soviet Culture.

In: Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky. *Performing Violence: Literary and Theatrical Experiments of New Russian Drama*. Bristol: Intellect, 2009, pp. 27-44.

Vadim Volkov. *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Forces in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002 (excerpts).

Serguei Alex. Oushakine. Mothers, Objects, and Relations: Organized by Death. In: Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair*, pp. 202-259.

Eliot Borenstein. Overkill: Bespedel and Gratuitous Violence; Conclusion. In: Eliot Borenstein. *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, pp. 195-224; 225-239.

Optional reading:

FILM: *Dead Man's Bluffing* (Dir. A. Balabanov, 2005).

Dawn Seckler. Review of *Dead Man's Bluff* by Aleksei Balabanov. *Kinokultura*. Issue 10 (October 2005) <http://www.kinokultura.com/reviews/R10-05zhmurki.html>

December 7, 2010. Week 11.

WAR CAUSULTIES: Chechnya

Serguei Alex. Oushakine. Exchange of Sacrifices: State, Soldiers, and War. In: Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair*, pp.130-202.

- Anna Pyasetskaya and Heidi Brander.** The Lost Boys. In: *Granta*, 1998, vol.64, pp.113-118.
- Arkady Babchenko.** *One Soldier's War*. New York: Grove Press, 2006 (excerpts). Preface; Special Cargo (pp. 156-172); The Storming Operation (pp. 256-272); Traitors (pp. 374-396).
- Alexei Malashenko.** Islam in Russia. In: *Russia Today*. A special issue of *Social Research*, Vol.76, No.1. (2009), pp.321-358.

FILM: *War* (Dir. A. Balabanov, 2002).

Optional reading:

Stephen Lovell: Russia's War on Terror. In: Lovell, *Destinations in Doubt*, pp.136-160.

December 14, 2010. Week 12.

A NEW PAST: *Nostalgia*

- Olga Shevchenko and Maya Nadkarni.** The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Postsocialist Practices. *Ab Imperio*, Vol. 2 (2004), pp.487-519.
- Serguei Oushakine.** We're Nostalgic But We're Not Crazy': Retrofitting The Past In Russia. In: *The Russian Review*. Vol. 66 No. 3 (2007), pp. 451-482.
- Alexei Yurchak.** Post-post-Communist Sincerity: Pioneers, Cosmonauts, and Other Soviet Heroes Born Today. In: Thomas Lahusen, Peter H. Solomon, eds. *What is Soviet Now? Identities, Legacies, Memories*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008, pp. 257-276.
- Kevin M. F. Platt.** The Post-Soviet is Over: On Reading the Ruins. In: *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* Vol.1, No. 1 (2009).
- Fyodor Lukyanov.** Putin's Russia: The Quest for a New Place. In: *Russia Today*. A special issue of *Social Research*, Vol.76, No.1. (2009), pp.117-150.

FILM: *Russian Ark*. (Dir. Alexander Sokurov, 2002).

Optional reading:

Oleg Gazmanov. *I was born in the USSR*.

Erin E. Arvedlund. Celebrating the U.S.S.R. in Song, Uncle Joe and All. *The New York Times*, May 7, 2005

Dale Pesmen. The Language of Music and the Russian Language. In: Pesmen, *Russia and Soul*, pp.80-94.

Dragan Kujundžić. After "After": The Arkive Fever of Alexander Sokurov. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Vol. 21 (2004), pp. 219-239.