

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
Russian 0860: Modern Russian Culture
Spring 2008

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Office Hours: Cathedral of Learning 1433
Office Hours: M W 11:00-11:40am, T 3-3:40 PM
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T and Th 4:00–5:15
CL 208A

This course is an examination of Russian culture from the beginning of the reign of Nicholas I to the present. Literature, cinema, music, art, and philosophy will be examined in its native context and in its relationship to broader trends in world cultural development.

Required Texts

MacKenzie, David and Michael W. Curran. *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond*. 6th ed.

Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002.

Rzhevsky, Nicholas, ed. *An Anthology of Russian Literature from Earliest Writings to Modern Fiction*.

Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

Rzhevsky, Nicholas, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*.

Cambridge: Cambridge

UP, 1998.

various handouts provided by the instructor in xerox or digital (pdf) format.

Expectations, Examinations, and Requirements

1. Attendance is required at all class meetings. Credit is given for participation in class discussions. Students absent for any class meeting receive a 0 [zero] for that class meeting. Any student missing **six or more** class sessions in the course of the semester will receive a grade of **F for the course**.
2. Students are to complete all reading assignments before the class meeting for which they are listed in the Meeting Schedule below. Students **must bring the Rzhevsky Anthology and any class handouts to class with them on days when those readings are due**. The MacKenzie/Curran history text and the *Cambridge Companion* need not be brought to class, but students are responsible for the material in those readings when assigned and there will be frequent quizzes on this material.
3. There will be three tests given over the course of the semester on the dates given in the Meeting Schedule. They will cover the content of the course up to that point and since the preceding test. In other words, they are not cumulative. There is no midterm or final examination. Students who miss any test due to absence will receive a zero on that test. No test can be made up (but see Paper Option below).
4. Each student will present the discussion material for **one** class session. A schedule of student discussion presentations will be drawn up during the third week of the semester. Students should consult with the instructor if they have any doubts or questions regarding the form or content of

these presentations.

Grading

Grades will be calculated according to the following schema:

Tests: 60% (3 x 20%)

Classroom discussion: 30% (25% + 5% for presentation)

Quizzes: 10%

Paper Option

Students who wish to write a paper have the option of doing so. If this option is taken, the grade received for the paper project will replace the student's **lowest test score**. The paper project will involve the writing of a draft and final version. A detailed written description of the writing project, including requirements, guidelines, possible topics, and due dates, will be distributed during the third week of the course. Students wishing to exercise this option must commit to it **in writing** during the fifth week of the course (note that this is before the first test).

Meeting Schedule with Assignments and Test Dates

8 January: Introduction

10 January: Political Philosophy: Decembrists, Chaadaev, Slavophiles and Westernizers
Pushkin, "Bronze Horseman" in *Rzhevsky Anthology* 118–130
Chaadaev, excerpts from philosophical writings (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 23.

15 January: The Golden Age. Pushkin/Lermontov
Pushkin, "Queen of Spades" in *Anthology* 236–258
Lermontov, "Taman" in *Anthology* 136–145

17 January: The Golden Age. Gogol
Gogol, "The Overcoat" in *Anthology* 259–283
Belinsky, "Letter to Gogol" (handout)
Cambridge Companion: "Literature" 161–181

22 January: Music, Painting, Architecture
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 22 (273–end of chapter)
Cambridge Companion: "Music" 236–244

24 January: Political Philosophy
excerpts from Chernyshevsky (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 24

29 January: Music: The Mighty Five, Painting: The Itinerants
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 27
Cambridge Companion Music 244–54; Art 205–208; Theatre 264–269

31 January: Literature: Realism
Turgenev, "Bezhin Meadow" in *Anthology* 285–302

MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 29
Cambridge Companion Literature 182–186

5 February: Literature: Dostoevsky, Ostrovsky
Dostoevsky, “A Meek Woman” in *Anthology* 303–337

7 February: Literature: End of Realism
Chekhov, “Lady with a Lapdog” in *Anthology* 407–421

12 February: **TEST 1**

14 February: The Silver Age
Alexander Blok, “A Puppet Show” in *Anthology* 438–439
Anna Akhmatova, “The Gray-Eyed King” in *Anthology* 441
Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Listen!” in *Anthology* 443
Osip Mandel'shtam “Hagia Sophia,” “Sleeplessness. Homer. Taut sails...” (handout)
Marina Tsvetaeva, “This thing called homesickness! A fable...” (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 28
Cambridge Companion Literature 187–196; Theatre 269–274; Film 299–302; Art 208–18; Music 254–58

19 February: The Avant Garde
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 30

21 February: “October”
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 31

26 February: Revolutionary Cinema
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 32
excerpts from D. Vertov (handout)

28 February: NEP Culture
Babel, “The King” in *Anthology* 466–471
Lenin, “Party Organization and Party Literature” (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran Chapter 33
Cambridge Companion, Theatre 274–286; Film 302–318

4 March: Stalinism and Stalin Culture
Zhdanov, “Speech to the First Congress of Soviet Writers” (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 36
Cambridge Companion Art 221–226; Music 258–63

6 March: Great Patriotic War
Mandel'shtam, “We Live Without Feeling” in *Anthology* 504
Mikhail Zoshchenko, “Crime and Punishment: A Comedy in One Act.” in *Anthology* 490–502
Anna Akhmatova, “The Last Toast” in *Anthology* 506
Daniil Kharms, “Makarov and Peterson. No. 3” in *Anthology* 507–508.
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 34 and 35
Cambridge Companion, Theatre 286–92

18 March: Late Stalin Culture

Zhdanov, "On Zvezda and Leningrad" (handout)
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Zhdanov, "On Soviet Music" (handout)
Eisenstein, "My Worthless and Vicious Film" (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 38
Cambridge Companion, Film 318–23

20 March: Thaw Culture
Pasternak, "Hamlet" in *Anthology*
Evtushenko, "Babii Yar" (handout)
Voznesensky, "Goya" (handout)
Okudzhava, "The Roman Empire in its period of decline..." (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 39
Cambridge Companion, Literature 199–204; Art 226–35; Theatre 292–93; Film 323–327

25 March: **TEST 2**

27 March: From Thaw to Stagnation
MacKenzie/Curran Chapter 43 (beginning)

1 April: Stagnation Culture
Abramov, "Wooden Horses"
excerpts from Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 40

3 April: Late Stagnation
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 43 (middle)
Cambridge Companion, Theatre 294–295
excerpts from D.A. Prigov (handout)

8 April: From Stagnation to Perestroika
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 42
Cambridge Companion, Film 327–329

10 April: Perestroika Culture
Erofeev, "Soviet Culture: In Memoriam" (handout)
Sorokin, "A Business Proposition" (handout)
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 43 (end); Chapter 44.
Cambridge Companion, Theatre 295–298

15 April: Yeltsin
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 45
Epshtein, "Origins and Meaning of Russian Postmodernism" (handout)
Putin and Post-Soviet Culture
MacKenzie/Curran, Chapter 46

17 April: **TEST 3**