

Madness and Madmen in Russian Culture (Online)

RUSS 0811 (21829)

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On-campus office hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-2:30, 1417 CL

This is an entirely online course, though I will be holding a film screening later in the term for your convenience's sake. The shape of the course is as follows: each week is a module, running from Saturday to Friday (with one variant before Thanksgiving). Most weeks, there will be a reading quiz that you must complete before Tuesday at midnight. You will be graded on participation on a weekly basis, which means that to earn credit you must post on the discussion boards every week by Friday at midnight. There will also be two essay exams.

In general, you should begin each week by reading my introduction to the module. Then you should proceed to read the assigned material, and take the brief reading quiz. To earn credit for the quizzes, you must take them before Tuesday of each week at midnight, after which they will no longer be available.

Participation is a large component of the course. Most weeks, there will be four or five threads on the module's discussion board. To earn full credit for the week, you must make at least five different posts, *at least three of which must be in response to a fellow student*, not to my prompts. Your posts must be thoughtful and reference the assigned material specifically. I will participate daily in the discussion threads, answering questions and directing the discussions as need be.

There will be two exams, composed of essay questions, one in Week Eight and one at the end of the course. I will post the essay questions on Saturday of that week, you will select three essays to answer, and you will have until midnight Friday to complete them and send them to me by email. Each essay should be 2-3 pages long. You must specifically reference our assigned texts when answering your exam questions, completely citing our authors in MLA format; you may also, if you wish, draw on outside sources, using appropriate citation. The one caveat is that you must do your own work: you may NOT collaborate with your classmates on the exams.

Each exam will be worth 30% of your grade. Participation will be graded each week over our thirteen modules, the total grade for which will make 30% of your final grade in the class. The quizzes will be worth 10% of your final grade. I consider 90% - 92% an A-, 93% - 97% an A, 98% - 100% an A+, and etc. (I do round up over 0.5.)

You must procure for the class:

The custom coursepack

Madness: A Brief History by Roy Porter

The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture by James H. Billington
Buddha's Little Finger by Victor Pelevin

All of the above are available in Pitt's bookstore, though the three books are also available widely online, and are fairly cheap when used. Other required readings are available online so as to save you money, and I will provide links to them in each week's module introduction.

Here is our schedule of readings:

Module One

Monday, August 26 – Friday, August 30

(No reading quiz)

Mikhail Epstein's "Methods of Madness and Madness as Method" from *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack; an excerpt from Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, found online; Chapters One and Two of Porter.

Module Two

Saturday, August 31 – Friday, September 6

Quiz due Tuesday, September 3

Pages 3-43 in Billington; Chapter One of Linda J. Ivanits's *Russian Folk Belief*, "The Pagan Background," found in the coursepack; "Ivan the Fool" by Andrei Sinyavsky, found online; three Russian fairy tales from Alexander Afanas'ev's collection, found in the coursepack.

Module Three

Saturday, September 7 – Friday, September 13

Quiz due Tuesday, September 10

Excerpts from Ewa Thompson's *Understanding Russian Culture: The Holy Fool in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack; excerpts from MacKenzie and Curran's *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union and Beyond* about Ivan IV, found in the coursepack; excerpts from Sergei Ivanov's *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, the full text of which is available through PittCat. Please read the following:

Pages 63 (bottom) to 75 as the ebrary reader pages are numbered, which corresponds to pages 50 (bottom) to 62 in the actual text of the book.

Pages 298 to 312 as the ebrary reader pages are numbered, which corresponds to pages 285 to 299 in the actual text of the book.

Pages 331 to 337 as the ebrary reader pages are numbered, which corresponds to pages 318 to 324 in the actual text of the book.

Pages 412 to 427 as the ebrary reader pages are numbered, which corresponds to pages 399 to 414 in the actual text of the book.

Module Four

Saturday, September 14 – Friday, September 20

Quiz due Tuesday, September 17

Pages 213-242 and 259-268 in Billington (though the skipped portion provides more information on Nicholas Novikov, mentioned by Vinitsky); Ilya Vinitsky's "A Cheerful Empress and Her Gloomy Critics: Catherine the Great and the Eighteenth-Century Melancholy Controversy" from *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack; Chapters Three and Four of Porter.

Module Five

Saturday, September 21 – Friday, September 27

Quiz due Tuesday, September 24

Pages 331-341 (top) in Billington; *The Bronze Horseman* by Alexander Pushkin, found online; *The Diary of a Madman* by Nickolai Gogol, found online.

(The reading for next week's Module Six is very long – I would suggest that, if you get the chance to, you start it early.)

Module Six

Saturday, September 28 – Friday, October 4

Quiz due Tuesday, October 1

Pages 415-433 in Billington; *The Double* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, found online; "Madness as an Act of Defense of Personality in Dostoevsky's *The Double*" by Elena Dryzhakova from *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack.

Module Seven

Saturday, October 5 – Friday, October 11

Quiz due Tuesday, October 8

Chapters Five and Six in Porter; "Ward No. 6" by Anton Chekhov, found online.

Module Eight (EXAM)

Saturday, October 12 – Friday, October 18

Essays due Friday at midnight.

Module Nine

Saturday, October 19 – Friday, October 25

Quiz due Tuesday, October 22

Excerpts from Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*, found in the coursepack; Chapter Seven of Ivanits's *Russian Folk Belief, "Spoiling" and Healing*, found in the coursepack; excerpts from Christine Worobec's *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*, found in the coursepack; Chapter Seven in Porter.

Module Ten

Saturday, October 26 – Friday, November 1

(No reading quiz)

Other than the introduction, there is no assigned material this week other than the film *Giselle's Mania*, directed by Alexei Uchitel. I will hold a screening of the movie on Pitt's campus on Saturday (place and time TBD); it is also available in Hillman Library, and you will be able to watch it there in Stark Media Services if you cannot make the Saturday screening, though you cannot check the film out from the library. As far as I know, the film is not readily available online.

Module Eleven

Saturday, November 2 – Friday, November 8

Quiz due Tuesday, November 5

Pages 519-549 in Billington; excerpts from MacKenzie and Curran's *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond* about Nikita Krushchev, found in the coursepack; Boris Segal's "Involuntary Hospitalization in the USSR" from *Psychiatry and Psychology in the USSR*, found in the coursepack; Chapters Eight and Nine of Porter.

Module Twelve

Saturday, November 9 – **Tuesday**, November 19

Quiz due Tuesday, November 12

Joseph Brodsky's "Gorbunov and Gorchakov" from his *Collected Poems in English*, found in the coursepack; Lev Loseff's "On Hostile Ground: Madness and the Madhouse in Joseph Brodsky's 'Gorbunov and Gorchakov'" from *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack.

Module Thirteen

Saturday, November 23 – Friday, November 29 (Discussion threads will stay open through Friday, December 6)

Quiz due Tuesday, November 26

Excerpts from MacKenzie and Curran's *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union and Beyond* about the fall of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet culture, found in the coursepack; Julie Brown's "Afterward" from *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, found in the coursepack; Chapters One through Four of Pelevin.

Module Fourteen

Saturday, November 30 – Friday, December 6

Quiz due Tuesday, December 3

Finish Pelevin; optional but recommended reading: "The Hero in the Madhouse: The Post-Soviet Novel Confronts the Soviet Past" by Angela Brintlinger, found online.

