**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

**Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures**

**Russian 1780 and 2780. Stalinist Culture of the 1930’s**

Spring 2014

CL 253 TuTh 2.30-3.45

Jonathan Platt

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Office: CL 1421A, phone: 412-624-5714

Hours: Tu 12.30-1.30, Th 11.00-12.00 or by appointment

**Credits, Prerequisites, and Format**

The course carries three credits and satisfies the Arts & Sciences General Education Requirement for Historical Change, a Second Course in Literature, the Arts, or Creative Expression, and Non-Western Culture. It is intended for upper-level undergraduates with basic writing abilities. The course meets twice a week and combines lecture and discussion.

**Course Description and Goals**

This course will introduce students to topics in the aesthetics, politics, thought, and everyday life of the Soviet 1930s. More than a historical survey of Stalin’s “revolution from above,” the course will explore and question the basic conceptual foundations of Stalinist culture. We will examine major shifts in the ruling ideology, stylistic nuances of the period’s art, literature, film, and journalism, and the driving motifs behind Stalinist society’s frenzied, often contradictory construction of cultural identity. A primary goal of the course will be to reconcile official discourse with the everyday realities of Soviet life in the 1930s. Rather than simply look for misalignments between propaganda and reality, we will attempt to understand how representations of the utopian project of building socialism were interconnected with Soviet citizens’ actual experience.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

* analyze different artifacts of 1930s Stalinist culture in a range of media and genres;
* discuss the underlying conceptual framework of Stalinism as a worldview and a form of daily social practice;
* relate the tragic case of the Soviet 1930s to broader trends and problems in modern life and politics

**Required Readings**

Readings and other course materials will be made available electronically via Dropbox.

**Undergraduate Requirements**

* **20%** *Participation* – Attendance (more than 7 absences after the first week is grounds for automatic failure); preparedness and participation in discussions both in class and on the CourseWeb discussion forum (minimum of 6 posts over the course of the semester; threads open the Tuesday before each new section of the syllabus and close on Thursday the following week).
* **50%** *Examinations –* The midterm and final will include a short answer (identification) section and an essay. The final examination will be held on the official exam date. Students are advised to plan ahead and avoid scheduling conflicts. No individual examinations will be given except in the case of a family or medical emergency.
* **30%** *Essay* – 7-10 pages on a topic of your choice. Suggested topics will be provided. Students are required to submit a paper proposal (either an abstract or an outline) before beginning writing. Papers may be submitted at any time before **April 21**. Paper proposals will not be accepted after **April 7**, and points may be deducted for failure to complete this requirement.

**Graduate Requirements**

* **30%** *Analytical essay –* 7-10 page close reading of any primary text (verbal, visual, or cinematic) from the period. Due **February 21.**
* **70%** *Research paper* – 15-20 pages on a topic of your choice. Due **April 27.**

\*Graduate students are invited to participate on the CourseWeb discussion forum, but it is not required.

**Schedule of Assignments**

Jan 6 (Tu): Introduction

**The Paradoxes of Stalinism**

Jan 8 (Th): Friedrich Schiller, “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry” (excerpt); Valery Kirpotin, memoirs (the genesis of *Pushkin’s Legacy and Communism*); Film clip (**in class**): *The Goalie* (Semen Timoshenko, 1936)

Jan 13 (Tu): *The White Sea Canal*, engineer Magnitov episode; *A Short Course in the History of the USSR*, introduction; Film clips (**in class**): *Valery Chkalov* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1941), *Lenin in 1918* (Mikhail Romm, 1939)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel* (excerpts)

**Reality**

Jan 15 (Th): Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, ch. 2 (“Hard Times”); “A Worker’s Letter to Molotov” (1936); Anne Appelbaum, *Gulag*, ch. 4 (“The White Sea Canal”); Valery Kirpotin, memoirs (Stalin’s meeting with Soviet writers in October 1932)

Jan 20 (Tu): Helena Goscilo, “Luxuriating in Lack” (from *Petrified Utopia*, ed. Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko); Evgeny Dobrenko, *Socialism as Will and Representation* (excerpts); Film clip (**dropbox**): *The Thirteen* (Mikhail Romm, 1936)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Petre Petrov, “The Industry of Truing: Socialist Realism, Reality, Realization,” *Slavic Review* 70.4 (2011).

**Dreams**

Jan 22 (Th): *The Architecture of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibit*, 1939; Vladimir Papernyi, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture 2*, ch. 8 (“Good and Evil”); Images from the book, *The Reconstruction of Moscow*, 1937 (**in class**); Images from the popular magazine *USSR in Construction,* 1930, 1934, 1937 (**in class**)

Jan 27 (Tu): Lazar Kaganovich, “The Victory of the Metro is the Victory of Socialism,” speech from May 1935; Mikhail Ryklin, “The Best in the World” (from *The Landscape of Stalinism*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman); Images of the Moscow Metro (**in class**); Film clip (**dropbox**): *The Bright Path* (Grigory Aleksandrov, 1940)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Katerina Clark, *Moscow, or The Fourth Rome* (excerpts); Mikhail Ryklin, “Bodies of Terror: Theses toward a Logic of Violence,” *New Literary History* 24.1 (1993).

**New Men**

Jan 29 (Th): Nikolai Ostrovsky, *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1932-34, excerpts)

Feb 3 (Tu): Leonid Potemkin, diary excerpt (from *Intimacy and Terror*, ed. Veronique Garros et al.); Film clip (**dropbox**): *A Strict Young Man* (Abram Room, 1935)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates):

Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade*, ch. 2

**Performing**

Feb 5 (Th): Vikenty Veresaev, *Sisters* (1933, excerpts); Film clip (**in class**): *The Teacher* (Sergei Gerasimov, 1939)

Feb 10 (Tu): Nikolai Pogodin*, Aristocrats* (1935, excerpts); Film clips (**dropbox**): *Volga-Volga* (Grigory Aleksandrov, 1938), *Tractor Drivers* (Ivan Pyr’ev, 1939)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*, prologue and ch. 6 (“Forging the Revolutionary Self” and “The Diary of a New Man: Leonid Potemkin”)

**Centers**

Feb 12 (Th): Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, ch. 4 (“The Economy of the Gift”); *Meetings with Stalin*, 1939, (excerpts); Sergei Rozanov, *Thank you!* (children’s activity for the 20th anniversary of the revolution in 1937)

Feb 17 (Tu): Selected socialist realist paintings (**in class**); Jan Plamper, “The Spatial Poetics of the Personality Cult” (from *The Landscape of Stalinism*); Film clip (**in class**): *The Bright Path* (Grigory Aleksandrov, 1940); Osip Mandelstam, “Stalin Ode”

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, ch. 2 (“The Stalinist Art of Living”)

**Midterm**

Feb 19 (Th): REVIEW SESSION

Feb 24 (Tu): MIDTERM

**Peripheries**

Feb 26 (Th): *The Voyage of Chelyuskin*, 1934 (accounts of an arctic exploration mission, shipwreck, and rescue operation); John McCannon, “Tabula Rasa in the North” (from *The Landscape of Stalinism*); Film clip (**in class**): *The Brave Seven* (Sergei Gerasimov, 1936)

Mar 3 (Tu): Semen Kirsanov, *The Five-Year Plan* (1930, excerpts); Film clips (**dropbox**): *Alone* (Grigory Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 1931), *The Swineherdess and the Shepherd* (Ivan Pyr’ev, 1941); Selected socialist realist paintings (**in class**)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Emma Widdis, “To Explore or Conquer” (from *The Landscape of Stalinism*)

**Life and Time (I)**

Mar 5 (Th): Valentin Kataev, *Time Forward!* (1932, excerpts)

SPRING BREAK

Mar 17 (Tu): Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives*, ch.6 (“The Body and the Shrine”); Boris Zbarsky, “The Lenin Mausoleum”; Sona Hoisington, “Ever Higher”; Pavel Lopatin, “Capital of the World”; Film clip (**in class**): *New Moscow* (Aleksandr Medvedkin, 1938)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, ch. 5 (“Dream and Awakening”)

**Life and Time (II)**

Mar 19 (Th): Selected materials from the 1937 centenary of Alexander Pushkin’s death

Mar 24 (Tu): Mandleshtam, *Journey to Armenia* and selected poems; Yaroslav Smelyakov, “The Michurin Garden” (1939)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Boris Gasparov, “Development or Rebuilding: Views of Academician T. D. Lysenko in the Context of the Late Avant-Garde” (in *Laboratory of Dreams*, ed. John Bowlt and Olga Matich)

**Life and Death**

Mar 26 (Th): Boris Pilnyak, “The Birth of a Мan” (1935); Selected socialist realist paintings (**in class**)

Mar 31 (Tu): Vsevolod Vishnevsky, *An Optimistic Tragedy* (1933); Film clip (**in class**): *An Optimistic Tragedy* (1963)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*, ch. 1 (“Portrait of a Young Woman as the Citizen-Soldier”)

**Death and Love**

Apr 2 (Th): Eduard Bagritsky, “Death of a Pioneer Girl” (1932); Semen Kirsanov, “By Kirov’s Coffin” (1934); Nikolai Aseev, “To a Bright Falcon” (1938); Film clip (**in class**): *Shchors* (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1939)

Apr 7 (Tu): Andrei Platonov, “The River Potudan” (1937), \*DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PAPER PROPOSALS\*

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*

**Love and Becoming**

Apr 9 (Th): Arkady Gaidar, “The Blue Cup” (1936); Film clip (**dropbox**): *The Teacher* (Sergei Gerasimov, 1939)

Apr 14 (Tu): Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Youth Restored* (1933, excerpts); Yuri Olesha, speech at the Writers’ Union Congress (1934); Film clip (**dropbox**): *The Great Life* (Leonid Lukov, 1939)

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Zoshchenko, *Youth Restored*  (full text)

**Failing to Become**

Apr 16 (Th): Josef Stalin, “The Results of the First Five-Year Plan” (1932, excerpt); The 1938 Show Trial, excerpts from the stenographic report; Demian Bedny, “We have executed a fearsome counter-attack against the enemy!” (1937); Alexander Bezymensky, “The Law of Millions” (1937)

Apr 21 (Tu): OPTIONAL REVIEW SESSION, \*PAPERS DUE\*

Additional graduate reading (recommended for undergraduates): Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, ch. 3 (“When the Party Commits Suicide”)

##### **Academic Integrity:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](http://www.pitt.edu/%7Eprovost/ai1.html) Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

##### **Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and the [Disability Resources and Services](http://www.drs.pitt.edu/policies.html) no later than the 2nd week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 140 William Pitt Union.

**G-Grade Policy:**

A G grade will be given only when a student who has been attending the course and has been making regular progress is prevented by a (documented) medical or family emergency from completing the requirements.  Students must sign a written agreement to complete all missing requirements (or supplementary work) within one term after receiving the G grade.

**Email Communication Policy:**

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to[*http://accounts.pitt.edu*](http://accounts.pitt.edu/), log into your account, click on***Edit Forwarding Addresses***, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to ([*www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html*](http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html))