The University of Pittsburgh  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Russian 2453: Thaw and Perestroika            Vladimir Padunov  
Spring Semester 2010                    CL 427  
Mondays 2:30 — 5:25                624-5713  
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Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 — 12:00, Tuesdays 1:00 — 2:00, Wednesdays 12:00 — 1:00, and 
by appointment

I. Course Texts and Library Reserve:

No texts have been ordered through the University Bookstore. Reading assignments will be 
distributed among a large number of primary and secondary texts. At times, assigned texts will 
be distributed as pdf-files; at other times, texts and songs are available online; and still at others, 
students will be using/sharing texts from Hillman Library. Books have not been placed on 
reserve in the library in order to facilitate individual academic work and private-life schedules. 
Students are strongly urged to share library printed materials. The operative mode in the course 
will be “socialist competition,” not individualistic accumulation of cultural capital.

II. Recommended Secondary Texts:

Brown, Edward J. *Russian Literature Since the Revolution.* Rev. and enl. ed. Cambridge: 
Harvard UP, 1982  
Friedberg, Maurice. *Russian Culture in the 1980s.* Washington DC: Center for Strategic and 
Hosking, Geoffrey. *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction Since Ivan Denisovich.* NY: 
Lakshin, Vladimir. *Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky and Novyi mir.* Tr. Michael Glenny. Cambridge: 

III. Absence, Attendance, and Grades:

Students are expected to attend all classes. Excused absences due to personal illness, as well as illness or death in the family, must be documented. Absent students are required to obtain all in-class handouts and class notes for the missed session from another student; all missed assignments must be completed. In addition, students are allowed two unexcused absences (“mental health days”) during the semester. The combined total of excused and unexcused absences cannot exceed three class meetings (that is, three weeks of the semester).

Students will receive a letter grade for participation in each session of the course, two letter grades for each assignment, two for each examination, and one for each class administered. Session grades will be based on participation in discussion, intellectual contribution to the discussion, and the results of in-class activities/assignments. Students can review their grades with the instructor as frequently as they wish.

IV. Disability:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both the instructor and the office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

V. Quizzes:

At any point in the semester if the instructor suspects that students are not or any one student is not keeping up with the reading assignments, there will be an unannounced quiz. No quizzes will be re-scheduled and no make-up quizzes will be given.

VI. Examinations:

There will be two collective/individual examinations in the course (see the Schedule of Assignments). Students will be divided into two groups, each of which must develop a graduate-level syllabus for a fifteen-week course on the Soviet culture industry of the Thaw (examination one) and Stagnation (examination two). The syllabus must contain specific reading (and/or screening and listening) assignments, course work assignments, examinations, and final paper assignments. The syllabi submitted to the instructor must be the result of a collaborative effort on the part of all members of the group and the entire group will share the grade for the syllabus.

In addition to the collective syllabus, each student must submit (a) a rationale for the specific selections of materials in the syllabus, (b) a critique of the specific selections and/or omissions in the syllabus, and (c) a modified version of the syllabus that will resolve the issues that were raised in (a) and (b). Each student will receive a separate grade for this part of the examination.
VII. Writing Assignments:

There are four writing assignments that must be submitted to every member of the course: a translation of an unknown poem of the Thaw, an internal review of a play for an oversight committee, an outline of the contents of a publication you are editing, and your official resignation from the Party. Each student (and the instructor) must comment upon and grade each of the submissions. Students will receive separate grades for their assignment and for their commentaries.

VIII. Classroom Instruction:

Each meeting of the course (except for the first two) will be “taught” by one of the students. The “teacher” is responsible for: (a) locating copies of each of the assigned texts (online or hard copy); (b) if hard copy, having pdf-files made and distributed to all members of the course; and (c) prepare and run a two-hour graduate-level meeting of the course. The meeting cannot be run in its entirety as either an extended lecture or as a discussion of the assigned texts; each “teacher” will have to strike a balance. Supplementary material (historical, cultural, political, etc.) must be introduced by the “teacher.” Handouts are mandatory.

IX. Evaluation and Grades:

Grades will be calculated using the following percentages: daily grades (10%), writing assignments (40%—that is, 10% each), examinations (30%—that is, 15% each), and “teaching” (20%). Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor periodically to review their grades and progress in the course.

X. Schedule of Assignments:

week 2: Monday, 11 January: [In]Variants of Soviet Culture of Late Stalinism

assignment:
Владимир Померанцев: «Об искренности в литературе» (1953)
Эренбург, Илья: Оттепель I (1954)

week 3: Monday, 18 January: NO CLASSES

week 4: Monday, 25 January: Dismantling the Inherited Cultural Values of Late Stalinism

assignment:
Владимир Дудинцев: Не хлебом единым (1956)
week 5: Monday, 1 February: Thaw Fiction I

assignment:

Guitar Lyrics:

Writing Assignment 1 (for Monday 8 February):
Write an English translation of an unknown stikhotvorenie by a Thaw poet.

week 6: Monday, 8 February: Thaw Poetry

assignment:
Леонид Зорин: Гости (1954)
Виктор Розов; В поисках радости (1957)

week 7: Monday, 15 February: Thaw Theater

assignment:
Василий Аксёнов: «Звёздный билет» (1962)
Александр Яшин: «Рычаги» (1956)
Юрий Казаков: «Адам и Эва» (1962)
Андрей Синявский: «Пхенц» (1957)
Александр Солженицын: «Матренин двор» (1963)

Writing Assignment 2 (for Monday 22 February):
You work for the Ministry of Culture and sympathize with a young playwright, whose recent play is a critique of entrenched interests and generational conflicts in a factory.
Write a small internal review (250 words) saving the play for production. Keep in mind that you have to satisfy both conservatives (Stalinists) and liberals (Neo-Leninists). You have only 250 words to save the stage production!
week 8: Monday, 22 February: Thaw Fiction II

assignment:
Андрей Битов: «Инфантьев» (1965)
Фазиль Искандер: «Пиры Балтасара» (1973)
Валентин Распутин: «Деньги для Марии» (1967)
Василий Шукшин: «Калина красная» (1973)
Юрий Трифонов: «Обмен» (1969)

Examination 1 Due on Monday 1 March: Committees One and Two must submit a collective syllabus for a fifteen-week graduate seminar on Soviet culture of the Thaw period. In addition, each student must submit a rationale for and critique of the syllabus, together with an amended and individualized syllabus that addresses the issues raised in the critique. Copies of both documents must be submitted to all members of the seminar.

week 9: Monday, 1 March: Stagnation Prose I

assignment:
Чингиз Айтматов: И дольше века длится день (1980)

week 10: Monday 8 March: SPRING BREAK

week 11: Monday, 15 March: Stagnation Prose II

assignment:

Writing Assignment 3 (for Monday, 22 March):
It is 1974 and you are editor-in-chief of a major Soviet newspaper (Pravda, Izvestiia, Literaturnaia gazeta, take your pick). In English or in Russian: prepare an outline of one issue (4 pages, 10 articles—titles and 1-2 sentence summary). You might want to peruse some issues of actual newspapers of the period on microforms.

Criteria of assessment:
a. “news-worthiness”
b. variety (covering both domestic and international news)
c. layout (what, where, how much, why)
d. discourse (titles should be identifiable as belonging to the culture of Stagnation)
e. a combination of “real” and “fictional” (optional) news
week 12: Monday, 22 March: Stagnation Media

assignment:
Юлий Ким (TBA)
Юрий Визбор (TBA)
Владимир Высоцкий (TBA)

week 13: Monday, 29 March: Magnitizdat and Identity as Schizophrenia

assignment:
Александр Гельман; Скамейка (1983)
Людмила Петрушевская: Три девушки в голубом (1984)
Михаил Шатров: Брестский мир (1962/1987)

Examination 2 Due on Monday 5 April: Committees Three and Four must submit a collective syllabus for a fifteen-week graduate seminar on Soviet culture of the Stagnation period. In addition, each student must submit a rationale for and critique of the syllabus, together with an amended and individualized syllabus that addresses the issues raised in the critique. Copies of both documents must be submitted to all members of the seminar.

week 14: Monday, 5 April: Stagnation/Perestroika on Stage

assignment:

recommended:

week 15: Monday, 12 April: The Paradox of Russian Postmodernism

assignment:
Валерия Нарбикова: «Видимость нас»
Виктор Пелевин: «Девятый сон Веры Павловны»
Евгений Попов: «Как съели Петуха», «Сила печатного слова», «Два сушеные пальца из пяти бывших», «Веселие Руси» (stories from Веселие Руси); «Водоем», «Темный лес»
Владимир Сорокин: «Открытие сезона», «Сергей Андреевич»
Татьяна Толстая: «Сонечка»
assignment:
Жанна Агузарова—Браво
Борис Гребенщиков—Аквариум
Костя Кинчев—Алиса
Пётр Мамонов—Звуки му
Гарик Сухачёв—Бригада C
Виктор Цой—Кино

Writing Assignment 4 (for Monday, 25 April):
Resign from the Communist Party in protest over the Party’s lack of diligence in monitoring and controlling the explosion of youth subcultures in the Soviet Union, many of which are openly modeled on cultural movements in the West. Your letter of resignation must address matters historical, as well as cultural and ethical.