

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
RUSS 2642. Russian Cinema: Perestroika and Beyond

Instructor: Prof. N. Condee
Classroom CL 1228
Class time: Wednesdays 2.30-5.15

Office hours: Wed. 12.30-2.30; by appt. (CL 1417)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the last quarter century (1985-2010), Russo-Soviet cinema has undergone radical disruptions in several overlapping environments (infrastructure, finances, ideology). The seminar will cover three historical segments: perestroika (the late 1980s), cine-anemia (the 1990s), and consolidation (the last decade). The course will include readings on the state of the industry, contemporary film criticism, film history, and 35-40 films, chosen in consultation with the instructor. Core themes for the seminar include the memory practices of Marxism-Leninism, the emergent coordinates of second-world postmodernity, and the revival of the imperial imagination. Film theory texts will focus on genre, auteur theory, and melodrama.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Film Studies students should be able to analyze a film in terms of its formal elements, themes, and structural discourses.
2. Film Studies students should be able to place media texts within their social, political, cultural and historical contexts.
3. Film Studies students should have an understanding of the selected concepts of film theory.
4. Film Studies students should be able to write clearly, coherently and skillfully about the cinema as well as deliver oral presentations about the subject.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all classes. More than two unexcused absences will affect the final grade. **More than three** will result in failure, regardless of the student's prior standing. Excused absences, such as illness or death in the immediate family, must be documented. *Absent students are responsible for acquiring relevant class notes and handouts from fellow students* (I will confirm this by a short, in-class written assignment). Work assigned in a student's absence is not to be given a later deadline without prior agreement with the instructor.

EVALUATION

Participants are graded on the basis of seminar contribution (50%) and written work (50%), which may include quizzes or in-class writing assignments, given without notice.

Writing assignments. A short essay is due at the end of each class segment (three total). Essays will be three complete pages, single-spaced with accompanying citations and a clear research question. Due dates at noon by electronic submission are these:

- 9 February
- 16 March
- 27 April

You may not submit essays retroactively. Unfulfilled assignments receive a failing grade.

Oral presentation. Each student will give a short (ten-minute) oral presentation at the end of the course (see schedule).

INTEGRITY POLICY

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves thoroughly with the university policy of academic integrity and for adhering to it. The rules can be found on the University's Academic Integrity *Policies* site (Policy 02-03-02, <http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html>). Academic dishonesty will result in course failure.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

Class time. During seminar time itself, the basis of the class time is devoted to the reading assignments, instructor's lecture, and film discussion. The course structure is organized around three historical stages; each segment is assigned a film-studies focus that may help to organize the selected films (genre, auteur cinema, melodrama). The course moves from fairly rigid assignments to greater flexibility. *Early in the semester*, seminar participants complete specific readings and viewings, as designated in the syllabus. *By the middle of the semester*, the assignments allow greater flexibility. *Towards the semester's end*, participants will be encouraged to contribute to an individual agenda for the week.

Outside of class. Seminar participants will buy a slim notebook to be used exclusively for their own screening notes for each film. Screening notes will provide at least one page of notes for each film, leading with the film title, director, and the date of the screening. The instructor reserves the right to collect these notebooks during the semester to examine the screening practices. As a general rule, however, this notebook is for the individual participant's use alone as a log of the films watched during the semester; as a resource for future writing; and potentially as the beginning of a good habit to adopt for future research in film.

DISABILITY POLICY

If a student has a disability that requires special teaching, testing accommodations, or other classroom modifications, he or she is encouraged to notify the instructor and 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.

TEXTS

As indicated below *for each segment of the course*, assigned texts are available either on JSTOR or on 2-hour and overnight reserve at Hillman Library. *In addition to the specific assignments*, please consult these texts on individual directors and films:

Beumers, Birgit. *A History of Russian Cinema*. Oxford, Berg, 2009. First complete history of Russian cinema through 2009. PN1993.5.R9 B48 2009

Beumers, Birgit, ed. *The Cinema of Russia and the Former Soviet Union*. London: Wallflower, 2007. Chapters on Balabanov, Bodrov, German, Konchalovskii, Mikhalkov, Nugmanov, Sokurov. PN1993.5.R8 C564 2007

---. *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1999. Chapters on Mikhalkov, Muratova, Sokurov. Thematic chapters, as well as overviews of the film industry in the 1990s. PN1993.5.R9 R87 1999

Condee, Nancy. *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Chapters on Abdrashitov, Balabanov, German, Mikhalkov, Muratova, and Sokurov.

Extensive chapter on the Soviet and Russian film industry (1985-2009) and on empire theory. PN1993.5.R9 C66 2009
 Gillespie, David. *Russian Cinema*. Edinburgh: Pearson, 2003. Chapters on film genres (war, comedy, historical film). PN1993.5.R9 G48 2003

SCHEDULE

Wed., 5 Jan. Introduction; terms of the course

Segment I: Perestroika Cinema (1985-1991)

Texts: Genre 110 + Altman

- Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Cinema Journal*. Vol. 23, no. 3, 1984. 6-18. See also *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 26-40. (14) PN1995 F45792 1995
 ---. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 1999. PN1995 .A48 1999
 ---. "Genre." *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 276-285. (9) PN1993.5.A1 O96 1995
 Buscombe, Edward. "The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema." *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 11-25. (14) PN1995 F45792 1995
 Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 7; No. 1 (Autumn, 1980). 55-81. (26)
 Neale, Stephen. "Questions of Genre." *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 159-83. (24) PN1995 F45792 1995
 Seckler, Dawn. "What Does 'Zhanr' Mean in Russian?" *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. Ed. Birgit Beumers. Bristol: Intellect, 2010. 28-33. [PDF](#) (5)
 White, Hayden. "Anomalies of Genre: The Utility of Theory and History for the Study of Literary Genres." *New Literary History*. Vol. 34; No. 3 (Summer 2003). 597-615. (18)

Wed., 12 Jan.: 1984-1985

- Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Cinema Journal*. Vol. 23, no. 3, 1984. 6-18. See also *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 26-40. (14) PN1995 F45792 1995
 Seckler, Dawn. "What Does 'Zhanr' Mean in Russian?" *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. Ed. Birgit Beumers. Bristol: Intellect, 2010. 28-33. [PDF](#) (5)

Repentance [Мо́нание/Покая́ние]. Tengiz Abuladze (1984) [Stalin](#)/drama, 153'; DVD-1545
My Friend Ivan Lapshin [Мой друг Иван Лапшин]. Aleksei German, Sr. (1984) [art-house](#), 100'; DVD-5252 PAL
Parade of the Planets [Парад планет]. Vadim Abdrashitov (1984) [art-house](#)/fantasy, 97'; DVD-6958 PAL ([no subtitles](#))
Come and See [Иди и смотри]. Elem Klimov (1985) [war](#), 136'; DVD-0614

Wed., 19 Jan.: 1986-1987

- Altman, Rick. "Genre." *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 276-285. (9) PN1993.5.A1 O96 1995
 Buscombe, Edward. "The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema." *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 11-25. (14) PN1995 F45792 1995
 Neale, Stephen. "Questions of Genre." *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 159-83. (24) PN1995 F45792 1995

- Trial on the Road* [Проверка на дорогах]. Aleksei German (1971/1986) **war**, 96'; DVD-5568 (**no subtitles**)
- A Man from the Boulevard des Capuchines* [Человек с бульвара Капуцинов]. Alla Surikova (1987) Western, 98'; DVD-1263 (**no subtitles**)
- Is It Easy to be Young?* [Легко ли быть молодым?/Vai viegli but jaunam?]. Iurii Podnieks (1987) documentary 83'; V-1035
- Cold Summer of '53* [Холодное лето 53-го]. Aleksandr Proshkin (1987) action/Western, 101'; DVD-1563

Wed., 26 Jan.: 1988-1989

Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 7; No. 1 (Autumn, 1980). 55-81. (26)

White, Hayden. "Anomalies of Genre: The Utility of Theory and History for the Study of Literary Genres." *New Literary History*. Vol. 34; No. 3 (Summer 2003). 597-615. (18)

- The Story of Asia Kliachina* [История Аси Клячиной, которая любила, да не вышла замуж]. Andrei Konchalovskii (1966/1988) **melodrama**, 99'; DVD-5242 PAL
- Days of the Eclipse* [Дни затмения]. Aleksandr Sokurov (1988) **art-house**, 139'; V-3751 (**no subtitles**) OR
- *Asthenic Syndrome* [Астенический синдром]. Kira Muratova (1989) **art-house** 136'; V-3475 (**no subtitles**)
- Little Vera* [Маленькая Вера]. Vasilii Pichul (1988) **youth/melodrama**, 110'; DVD-0617 OR
- *Needle* [Игла]. Rashid Nugmanov (1988) **youth/thriller**, 81'; V-6509 OR
- Black Rose Is an Emblem of Sorrow, Red Rose Is an Emblem of Love* [Чёрная роза — эмблема печали, красная роза — эмблема любви]. Sergei Solov'ev (1989) **comedy/romance**, 139'; V-3474 (**no subtitles**)

→Wed., 2 Feb.

No class (Columbia Slavic review)

Wed., 9 Feb.: 1990-1991

Three-page essay due (# 1)

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 1999. PN1995 F45792 1995

- Comrade Chkalov Crosses the North Pole* [Переход товарища Чкалова через северный полюс]. Maksim Pezhemskii (1990) **art-house/comedy**, 24'; V-2732 (no subtitles)
- Taxi Blues* [Такси-блюз]. Pavel Lungin (1990) **melodrama**, 110'; DVD-7620
- This is No Way to Live* [Так жить нельзя]. Stanislav Govorukhin (1990) documentary 115'; V-3430 (no subtitles)
- Anna Karamazoff*. Rustam Khamdamov (1991) drama 125'; V-4474 (no subtitles)

Segment II: Cine-anemia (1992-1999)

Texts: Auteur cinema (44)

- Bazin, André. "On the Auteur Theory." *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 70 (1957). See also "De la politique des auteurs." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 19-28. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008
- Buscombe, Edward. "Ideas of Authorship." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 76-83. (7) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008

- Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 35-45. PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008. Unreadable version: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/AandL/english/courses/eng201d/sarris.html> (10)
- Truffaut, François. "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français."¹ *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 31 (1954). See also "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 9-18. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008
- Wollen, Peter. "The Auteur Theory"(excerpt: *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*). *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 55-64. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008

Wed., 16 Feb.: 1992-1993

- Truffaut, François. "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français." *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 31 (1954). See also "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 9-18. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008
- Bazin, André. "On the Auteur Theory." *Cahiers du Cinéma*. No. 70 (1957). See also "De la politique des auteurs." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 19-28. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008

The Chekist [Чекист]. Aleksandr Rogozhkin (1992) drama, 93'; V-3572
Moscow Parade [Парада]. Ivan Dykhovichnyi (1992) **Stalin/melodrama**, 108'; V-2331
Dyuba-Dyuba. Aleksandr Khvan (1993) drama/romance, 140'; V-3674 (**no subtitles**)
Hammer and Sickle [Серп и молот]. Sergei Livnev (1993) **melodrama/mockumentary**, 93'; DVD-5183 (PAL)

Wed., 23 Feb.: 1994-1995

- Buscombe, Edward. "Ideas of Authorship." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 76-83. (7) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008
- Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 35-45. PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008 Unreadable version: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/AandL/english/courses/eng201d/sarris.html> (10)

Burnt by the Sun [Утопленные солнцем]. Nikita Mikhalkov (1994) **melodrama**, 135'; DVD-4171
Peshavar Waltz [Пешеварский вальс]. Timur Bekmambetov (1994) **war**, 87'; DVD-0988
Peculiarities of the National Hunt [Особенности национальной охоты]. Aleksandr Rogozhkin (1995) **comedy**, 93'; DVD-0911
Scorpion's Gardens [Сады скорпиона]. Oleg Kovalov (1995) compilation 96' DVD-5243

Wed., 2 March: 1996-1997

- Wollen, Peter. "The Auteur Theory"(excerpt: *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*). *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. 55-64. (9) PN1995.9.A837 A98 2008

Prisoner of the Mountains [Кавказский пленник]. Sergei Bodrov (1996) **war**, 96'; DVD-1568
Russian Idea [Русская идея]. Sergei Selianov (1996) documentary, 51'; V-8406

¹ "[T]here are no good and bad movies, only good and bad directors."

Brother [Брат]. Aleksei Balabanov (1997) action, 96; DVD-0589
The Thief [Вор]. Pavel Chukhrai (1997) **melodrama**, 100'; DVD-0618

→ **Wed., 9 Mar.**

SPRING BREAK

Segment III: Reconstruction (2000-2007)

Texts: Melodrama

- Bagrov, Petr. "Soviet Melodrama: A Historical Overview." Trans. Vladimir Padunov. *Kinokultura* July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.
- Boele, Otto. "Melodrama." *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. Ed. Birgit Beumers. Bristol: Intellect, 2010.
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. PN1912 .B7 1985
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." *Film Genre Reader II*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 350-80. PN1995 F45792 1995
- Margolit, Evgenii. "Melodrama v sovetskom kino." Ed. Liubov' Arkus. *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino: 1986-2000*. Vol. 6. *Kino i kontekst: 1992-1996*. St. Petersburg: Seans, 2004. 227-237.
http://russiancinema.ru/template.php?dept_id=15&dept_id=6&text_element_id=60
- Savel'ev, Dmitrii. "Out of Ideology: The Post-Soviet Melodrama." Trans. Vladimir Padunov. *Kinokultura* July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.
- Trofimenkov, Mikhail. "Origin of the Species: Post-Soviet Melodrama." Trans. Gerald McCausland. *Kinokultura* July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.

Wed., 16 Mar.: 1998-1999

Three-page essay due (# 2)

- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. PN1912 .B7 1985
- The Barber of Siberia* [Сибирский цирюльник]. Nikita Mikhalkov (1998) **melodrama**, 180'; DVD-1547
- Khrustalev, My Car!* [Хрусталеv, машину!]. Aleksei German, Sr. (1998) **art-house**, 137; DVD-5244 PAL
- Of Freaks and Men* [Про уродов и людей]. Aleksei Balabanov (1998) **art-house**, 93; DVD-0612
- Checkpoint* [Блокпост]. Aleksandr Rogozhkin (1998) **war**, 90'; V-5707

Wed., 23 Mar.: 2000-2002

- Bagrov, Petr. "Soviet Melodrama: A Historical Overview." Trans. Vladimir Padunov. *Kinokultura* July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.
- Boele, Otto. "Melodrama." *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. Ed. Birgit Beumers. Bristol: Intellect, 2010.
- Brother 2* [Брат 2]. Aleksei Balabanov (2000) action, 125'; V-6103
- Taurus* [Телец]. Aleksander Sokurov (2001) **art-house**, 102'; V-6106 (**no subtitles**) OR
- Russian Ark* [Русский ковчег]. Aleksandr Sokurov (2002) **art-house**, 95; DVD-1232
- Star* [Звезда]. Nikolai Lebedev (2002) **war**, 93'; DVD-0940
- War* [Война]. Aleksei Balabanov (2002) **war**, 120'; DVD-0938

Wed., 30 Mar.: 2003

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." *Film Genre Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: Texas UP, 1995. 350-80. PN1995 F45792 1995

Margolit, Evgenii. "Melodrama v sovetskom kino." Ed. Liubov' Arkus. *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino: 1986-2000*. Vol. 6. *Kino i kontekst: 1992-1996*. St. Petersburg: Seans, 2004. 227-237.

http://russiancinema.ru/template.php?dept_id=15&e_dept_id=6&text_element_id=60

Koktebel'. Boris Khlebnikov and Aleksei Popogrebskii (2003) **melodrama**, 100'; V-7950

Bumer [Бумер]. Petr Buslov (2003) **crime**, 110'; V-8402

The Return [Возвращение]. Andrei Zviagintsev (2003) **art-house**, 105'; DVD-1958

The Last Train [Последний поезд]. Aleksei German, Jr. (2003) **war**, 82'; V-8401

Wed., 6 Apr.: 2004-2005

Savel'ev, Dmitrii. "Out of Ideology: The Post-Soviet Melodrama." Trans. Vladimir Padunov.

Kinokultura July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.

Trofimenkov, Mikhail. "Origin of the Species: Post-Soviet Melodrama." Trans. Gerald

McCausland. *Kinokultura* July 2007 <http://www.kinokultura.com/index.html>.

Mars [Марс]. Anna Melikian (2004) **drama**, 100'; DVD-2850

Night Watch [Ночной дозор]. Timur Bekmambetov (2004) **thriller**, 115'; DVD-1928 & 4172

My Stepbrother Frankenstein [Мой сводный брат Франкенштейн]. Valerii Todorovskii (2004)

melodrama/war, 111'; V-8658

The 9th Company [9 рота]. Fedor Bondarchuk (2005) **war**, 126'; DVD-12005 OR

- *The Turkish Gambit* [Турецкий гамбит]. Dzhanik Faiziev (2005) **crime**, 125'; DVD 3889 PAL (**no subtitles**)

First on the Moon [Первые на Луне]. Aleksey Fedorchenko (2005) **mockumentary**, 75'; V-9306

Wed., 13 Apr.: 2006-2007

Research presentation: Group 1

Alive [Живой]. Aleksandr Veledinskii **Drama** (2006) **war/melodrama**, 98'; DVD-12009

Euphoria [Эйфория]. Ivan Vyrypaev (2006) **melodrama**, 74'; DVD-7929 PAL (**no subtitles**)

Free Floating [Свободное плавание]. Boris Khlebnikov (2006) **comedy**, 105'; DVD-6053

Playing the Victim [Изображая жертву]. Kirill Serebrennikov (2006) **comedy**, 100'; DVD-5200 PAL

Cargo 200 [Груз 200]. Aleksei Balabanov (2007) **thriller**, 89'; DVD-6917 PAL

Simple Things [Простые вещи]. Aleksei Popogrebskii (2007) **melodrama**, 108'; DVD-6973 PAL

Coda: Contemporary Cinema (2008-2011)

Wed., 20 Apr.: 2008-2009

Research presentation: Group 2

The Best Movie [Самый лучший фильм]. Kirill Kuzin (2008) **comedy**, 106'; DVD-5885 PAL (**no subtitles**)

Hipsters [Стимлиги]. Valery Todorovskii (2008), 136'; DVD-7655 PAL (**no subtitles**)

Everybody Will Die, and I Shall Remain [Все умрут, а я останусь]. Valeriia Gai Germanika (2008)
psychological drama, 90'; DVD-7677 PAL (no subtitles)
Tale in the Darkness [Сказка про темноту]. Nikolai Khomeriki (2009) melodrama (subtitles?)

Wed., 27 Apr.: 2010-2011

Research presentation: Group 3

Three-page essay due (# 3)