

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Instructor: Trevor Wilson
Class Hours: M/W/F 12:00-12:50, CL G13
Spring 2019

Office Hours: M/Tu 1:00-2:00 + appt.
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RUSS1430: *Sovremennost'*: The Politics of Contemporary Russian Culture

This fourth-year Russian language course is devoted to an introduction and analysis of contemporary Russian cultural politics. We will examine several major cultural mediums (film, literature, music, art) and their respective reception in Russian-language media. Beyond a familiarization with current trends in Russian culture, the objective of the course is to improve our capacity for critique and evaluation in Russian at an advanced level, as well as to develop long-term strategies for engaging with contemporary Russian media and society.

Recommended Materials:

Terrence Wade, *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

The vast majority of course assignments are online, with links provided in the schedule below. The instructor will occasionally provide supplemental readings and homework assignments as PDFs. Students are encouraged when possible to print out the materials and bring them to class. Assigned films are on reserve at the Hillman Library's Stark Media Services.

Evaluation and Breakdown of Assignments:

Participation/Preparation	15 %
Quizzes	10 %
Homework/Responses	15 %
"Debates"	10 %
Mid-Term Presentation	25 %
Final paper	25 %

Participation/Preparation: Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read/watched the given assignment and completed any home assignments. They should be able to answer the major questions (who? what? where? when? why?) of the assigned topic for that class session.

Active participation is essential to a productive classroom discussion. Students are therefore obligated to participate regularly, ask questions, and respond to student and instructor comments as much as possible.

Quizzes: Minor vocabulary and grammar quizzes will be given **each Friday** in order to encourage students to learn new material from class assignments. Larger quizzes are also possible but will be announced well in advance by the instructor.

Homework/Responses: In addition to smaller, infrequent homework assignments, students will complete **4 written responses** to various topics over the span of the course. The written responses should be approximately **2 pages, double-spaced**, printed in Russian, and submitted in physical form at the

beginning of class. There is no defined topic for the responses, so long as they are reflective and engage critically with the course material.

“Debates”: In groups of 4-5, students will engage in mock debates surrounding the controversial films discussed at the beginning of the semester. The students should choose a debate topic and plan a discussion between two sides which will last **approximately 15 minutes**, to be followed by questions and comments from the rest of the class. In addition, **students should provide a very brief list of vocabulary** from their discussion for the classroom. Students will be evaluated both on their debate discussions as well as their contribution to discussion in other groups’ debates. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor regarding topics for their debates.

Mid-Term Presentations: For the mid-term, students must present on one topic of contemporary Russian culture not included in the syllabus. The presentation should be **less than 10 minutes**, should include a brief vocabulary list for the classroom, and should include **at least one Russian-language citation with information about the topic**. The presentations will be followed by class discussion, and students will be evaluated on both their presentation as well as their contribution to discussion. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor on ideas for the presentations.

Final paper: Students are required to complete a final paper on an aspect of contemporary Russian culture. The paper should be approximately **8-10 pages, double-spaced**, and must **cite at least three Russian-language sources**. The instructor is open to diverse topics for the final paper and welcomes particular topics which reflect the student’s own interests and fields. The topic, however, should be separate from the topic of the mid-term presentation, unless explicitly approved by the instructor. **Students must receive approval of their topic by April 15th.**

Students must submit their final papers by **April 26 at 5pm**, submitted electronically to trevortwilson@pitt.edu.

Language Policy:

This course is conducted exclusively in Russian. At this level, students are expected to use Russian regardless of lapses in vocabulary, since one of the hallmarks of an advanced language user is the ability to circumlocute. **Circumlocution** means using your existing grammatical knowledge and vocabulary to describe what you mean when you don’t know the exact word or construction needed to express an idea or name an object.

When preparing for class, you should actively learn those words and constructions that you will need to participate fully and express your opinion: **you should not expect the instructor to translate words or phrases from English to Russian in class, nor will the instructor respond to questions or comments in English.**

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes. **More than five unexcused absences** will affect the final grade. **More than six** will result in automatic failure of the course, regardless of the student's prior standing. Excused absences such as illness or death in the immediate family must be documented. Airline reservations and other travel plans do not constitute excused absences.

Absent students are responsible for acquiring relevant class notes and handouts **from fellow students**. Work assigned in a student's absence will not be given a later deadline without prior agreement with the instructor.

Technology Policy:

Given that most of the course assignments are online, students are permitted to bring technology (laptops, iPads, etc.) to class. However, students found inappropriately using technology will receive a zero for class participation that day. Students will not receive notification of the zero but are instead encouraged consult with the instructor with concerns about their participation and general progress in class. Cell phones are not permitted in class.

Disability Policy:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>

Academic Integrity Policy:

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed. View the complete policy at www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html

Non-Discrimination Policy:

As an educational institution and as an employer, Pitt values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. For more information, visit <http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy07-01-03web.pdf>.

E-Mail 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., Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail). 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>, 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.)

Schedule of Course Assignments:

Week 1. Introduction

M (1/7): Introductions. Discussion of syllabus. List of news sites.

W (1/9): What is the “Пятая колонна”?

Сноб.ru [18.12.2014], «Путин объяснил разницу между оппозицией и пятой колонной»:
<https://snob.ru/selected/entry/85435>

F (1/11): “Political alignment chart” exercise (submit).

Week 2. Кино: Кирилл Серебренников

M (1/14): What is the “дело Серебренникова”? “Гоголь-центр”? “Седьмая студия”?

Медуза [17.10.2018], «Начинается суд по Седьмой студии»:
<https://meduza.io/paragraph/2018/10/17/nachinaetsya-sud-po-delu-sedmoy-studii-my-korotko-napominaem-kak-ono-razvalos>

W (1/16): First half of *Ученик* (Серебренников, 2016).

F (1/18): Film discussion. Grammar exercises (handout).

Week 3. Серебренников, cont’d.

M (1/21): **MLK Day, NO CLASS.**

W (1/23): Second half of *Ученик*.

F (1/25): Who is Антон Долин? What is Кинотавр?

Афиша [6.6.2016]: Серебренников с Антоном Долиным: «Это не я всех бешу. Они сами себя бешут.»
<https://daily.afisha.ru/cinema/1782-my-vse-zhivem-v-odnoy-zhope/>

Response #1 to film due.

Week 4. Кино: «Матильда».

M (1/28): What is the controversy surrounding «Матильда»?

Медуза [04.08.2017]: <https://meduza.io/feature/2017/08/04/film-matilda-o-romane-nikolaya-ii-pytayutsya-zapretit-bolshe-goda-no-bezuspeshno-tseepochka-sobytiy>

W (1/30): First half of «Матильда» (Учитель, 2017)

F (2/1): Коммерсантъ [30.10.17], «Матильда выступила без аншлага»:
<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3454180>

Week 5. «Матильда», cont’d.

M (2/4): Second half of «Матильда».

W (2/6): Антон Долин о фильме «Матильда»:
<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/09/25/matilda-alekseya-uchitelya-o-chem-na-samom-dele-etot-film>

F (2/8): **Response #2 to film due.**

Week 6. Critics’ debates.

M (2/11): Debates, groups #1 and #2.

W (2/13): Debates, groups #3 and #4.

F (2/15): What is the «Русская весна»?

Медуза [05.11.2015]: «Война в Донбассе. Итоги. Павел Каныгин рассказывает, чем кончилась ‘Русская весна.’»

<https://meduza.io/feature/2015/11/05/voyna-v-donbasse-itogi>

Week 7. Литература: Захар Прилепин и Юго-Восточная Украина.

M (2/18): Who is Захар Прилепин?

Захар Прилепин, «До всего» & «Вступление» from «Не чужая смута» (2015, 19pp., PDF)

W (2/20): Прилепин, «Майдан. Зимние записи.» (excerpted, PDF)

F (2/22): Коммерсантъ [13.02.2017]: Захар Прилепин, «Есть чувство ответственности перед русской историей»

<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3218149>

Week 8. Дмитрий Быков, beginning of mid-term presentations.

M (2/25): Who is Дмитрий Быков? Светлана Алексиевич? «Миротворец»?

Новая Газета [09.08.2018]: Быков, «Остановитесь, вы себе вредите!»:

<https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/08/09/77448-zelenyy-teatr-i-krasnyy-svet>

W (2/27): Catch-up. Presentations.

F (3/1): Presentations.

Week 9. Mid-Term Presentations

M (3/4): Presentations

W (3/6): Presentations

F (3/8): Presentations

Week 10. Spring Break (3/10-17, No Classes)

Week 11. Музыка: Рэп

M (3/18): Who is Хаски? Оххххуmiron?

Хаски, «Поэма о родине» (2018)

<https://youtu.be/TiDZHgzpxTw>

Lyrics here:

<https://www.gl5.ru/h/haski/haski-poema-o-rodine.html>

Memorize vocabulary list (hand-out)

W (3/20): РБК [22.11.2018], «Суд арестовал рэпера Хаски за хулиганство»

<https://www.rbc.ru/society/22/11/2018/5bf6ee529a79477de3928c04>

InterMedia, «Каста и Захар Прилепин заступились за Хаски»:
<https://www.intermedia.ru/news/329864>

F (3/22):

Новая Газета [24.11.2018]: Быков, «Попытка фарисейства» (про Хаски):
<https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/11/25/78694-popytka-fariseystva>

Week 12. Гречка и Монеточка.

M (3/25): Монеточка, «Каждый раз» (2018)
<https://youtu.be/oVUBdmsG-pM>

Коммерсантъ [30.10.2018]: «Гони Монеточку».
<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3785562>

Read lyrics and memorize vocabulary list (hand-out)

W (3/27): Монеточка, «90» (2018)
<https://youtu.be/n4h-WpSsXVw>

Read lyrics and memorize vocabulary list (hand-out)

F (3/29): What is «Вечерний Ургант»?

Гречка, «Люби меня люби» (2018)
<https://youtu.be/oTzirCuvn-E>

Response #3 to music due.

Week 13. Искусство: Война и Pussy Riot.

M (4/1): Who are Pussy Riot? Война? What is significant about Болотная Площадь?

Медуза [17.08.2017]: «Pussy Riot. Пять лет спустя»
<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/08/17/pussy-riot-pyat-let-spustya>

W (4/3): Pussy Riot, «Путин зассал» (2012)
<https://youtu.be/7kVMADLm3js>

Pussy Riot, «Богородица, Путина прогони» (2012)
https://youtu.be/tq25vu7jy_0

F (4/5): Pussy Riot, «Путин научит тебя любить Родину» (2014)
<https://youtu.be/gjI0KYI9gWs>

Week 14. Петр Павленский.

M (4/8): Акция «Шов» (2012)

Комсомольская Правда [23.07.12]. «Художник зашил свой рот суровой ниткой в поддержку Pussy Riot».
<https://www.spb.kp.ru/online/news/1204927/>

W (4/10): Акция «Фиксация» (2013)

Lenta.ru [10.11.13]. «Прибившего себя гвоздем к Красной площади художника госпитализировали.»

<https://lenta.ru/news/2013/11/10/hospital/>

F (4/12): Response #4 to performance artists due.

Week 15. Concluding discussion and summary.

M (4/15): Summary of course.

DEADLINE for approval of final paper topic!

W (4/17): Brief presentation of projects and responses.

F (4/19): Brief presentation of projects and responses.

Week 16. Finals Week (no classes).

Final papers due by April 26 at 5pm, to trevortwilson@pitt.edu
