



CIEE Study Center – St. Petersburg

Course name:	Agitation for Happiness: The Mass Culture of the Soviet Period in Tales, Poems, Songs and Movies
Course number:	RUSI 3040 RLPR
Programs offering course:	Russian Language Program
Language of instruction:	Russian
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2019

Course Description

In this course, Soviet mass culture is presented as the embodiment of the unspoken assumptions underlying the Soviet system. This course analyzes the ability of the Soviet mass culture to describe the whole of reality, to legitimize the need of a uniform culture, and the necessity to entertain and to edify, to inspire and to mold. The specific Soviet technique to infuse the old genres (such as serial adventure novels, detective stories, movie melodramas, and street ballads) with revolutionary ideals is observed through broad variations of Soviet Propaganda Art. Being focused on unrelenting optimism of the Soviet mass culture, the course does not ignore the cultural intolerance, hate-filling nature and aggressive working-class promotion of the Soviet Art. Particular attention is given to the “smaller genres” (posters, poems, stories, newspaper reports, poetic couplets, guitar songs, short movies) and “big forms” (the novel, feature films) as well.

Learning Objectives

Students will familiarize themselves with such concepts/phenomena as Soviet Avant-guard art; Soviet Empire style, and socialist realism; the personification of the Soviet leaders as Lenin and Stalin; the revolution and Soviet patriotism; Soviet childhood and physical culture movement; Soviet attitude to God and death.

Methods of Instruction

Class meetings consist of lectures, question-and-answer sessions, class discussions, and screenings.

Assessment and Final Grade

Students will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- in-class participation 15%
- tests 40% (20% each)
- essay 20%
- Final exam 25%

TOTAL: 100%



Course Requirements

Class participation. Students are required to participate actively, intelligently and regularly in class discussions. They are expected to have prepared course readings for the assigned date and having viewed the assigned films.

Tests. Two tests will be given during the semester, which will assess your knowledge of course concepts, theories and facts, and they will be a combination of multiple-choice questions and several open questions.

Essay. The objective of the essay is to analyze one of the works of art from the period under study: the Soviet art of the 1930s – 1950s. This could be a film, a musical piece, a literary or a visual text. Please, discuss your choice of the topic with the instructor before the Midterm. Your essay should be written in Russian and be two-page long, double-spaced between lines along with 1" margin on all sides and it should use 12-point Times New Roman font.

The **final exam** is given in class, and it is expected to last for one full session, i.e. 90 minutes. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions, which would gauge students' knowledge of basic facts about the course topic. It will also comprise two open questions, which would ask you to express your informed opinion about the key ideas and categories discussed in this class, such as Soviet mythology, Soviet patriotism, Culture One and Culture Two, etc.

Class Attendance

Attendance is crucial for successful completion of the class. Students are allowed to have two unexcused absences for each course for the whole semester program. These allowed unexcused absences should be used for situations such as minor illnesses without a doctor's note or personal situations that prevent the student from attending the class. Allowed unexcused absences should not be used in a planned way for travel or other activities. Unexcused absences beyond the limit of two will lower a student's grade by 2 points on the 100-point scale each. For example, if your overall score in the class is 90 (an equivalent of A-) and you have had three unexcused absences, your final score will be 88 (B+).

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class 1. Introduction to the course. Syllabus, practical matters

Class 2. Visions of Happiness in Stalin Russia: constructing Soviet cultural policy in the 1930s

Week 2.

Class 1. The Idea of Communist Transformation

Readings: Vladimir Mayakovsky "Left March"

Leon Trotsky "Vodka, Church and Cinema"

Class 2. The Idea and practices of building the Soviet New World



Please, watch:

Odinnadtsati (dir. Dziga Vertov, 1928, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zUBLxHW9HU>, accessed June 1, 2018)

Baryshnya and hooligan (dir. Evgenii Slavinsky, 1918)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz25sFggR-E>, accessed June 1, 2018)

Week 3.

Class 1. Soviet Culture: two patterns. Culture One and Culture Two (Vladimir Paperny)

Readings:

Vladimir Paperny, *Kultura Dva*, pp. 3-30

Class 2. The concept of socialist realism.

Andrey Sinyavsky "Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realizm"

Please, watch:

Oblomok Imperii (dir. F. Ermler, 1929), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUdUp0ryB2U>, accessed June 1, 2018)

Week 4.

Class 1 and Class 2. Mythologies of the Soviet time. The iron messiah: image of the leader

Readings:

Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Vladimir Ilich Lenin: a poem*

Ilich Skoro Prosnetsa: A Fairy-tale

Boris Polevoi, "Pis'mo Stalinu"

Please, watch :

Lenin in 1918 (dir. M. Romm, 1939), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9DuoJ6Tcrk>, accessed on June 1, 2018)

Tri Pesni o Lenine (dir. Dvertov, 1934), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l3JwURXpJA>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Week 5.

Class 1 and Class 2. Toward a world commune: The revolution and the new regime

Please, watch:

Konets Sankt Peterburga (dir. Pudovkin, 1927),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCxBFrT3EpE> accessed on June 1, 2018>

Octyabr (dir. S. Eisenstein, 1927),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SK3mNGxkdmM&t=2717s>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Week 6

Class 1. Everyone becomes a hero when the motherland commands: Soviet Patriotism

Readings:

Konstantin Simonov, "Zhdi Menya : a poem"

Vasiliy Lebedev-Kumach and Aleksandr Alexandrov, "Sviashchennaia Voina"

Ilya Erenburg, "Opravdanie Nenavisti"

Class 2. Soviet Patriotism.(continued)

Please, watch :



Zhdi Menya (dir. A. Stolper, 1943), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ULwehOYq18>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Traktoristy (dir. I. Pyriev, 1939), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3mljj3JGHY>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

❖ Test 1

Week 7.

Class 1. Cultural anthropology of the Soviet Man

Readings:

Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet*, pp. 3-36.

Class 2. "The Little Red Devils:" Soviet Childhood

Readings:

Sergey Michalkov, "Diadia Stepa"

Please, watch two of the following films:

Malchish-Kibaltchish (dir., E. Sherstobitov, 1964),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2m4XyXAUqU>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Putevka v Zhizn' (dir. N. Ekk, 1931), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vH6ELHJUUmI>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Pervoklassnitsa (dir. Iliia Frez, 1948), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8L_K54qzZ8, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Priklutchenia Buratino, (dir. I. Ivanov-Vano, 1959),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UFVazzZhoo>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Week 8.

Class 1. Topic: The country as a healthy body: Physical culture movement

Readings:

Vasiliy Lebedev-Kumach and Isaac Dunaevsky, "Marsh sportsmenov"

Please, watch:

Tsvetushaya Molodost' (1938), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfNc03TPEp4>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Schastlivaya Yunosht' (dir. Sergey Gurov, 1955),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FguMk4ami1M>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Class 2. Down with Christian Names: Faith and Death in Soviet Mass Culture

Readings:

Puteshestvie Zvena Krasnoi Zvezdy v Stranu Chudes

Grigoriy Bortnik "Dedushka Sevastian Stanovitsa Bezbozhnikom"

Please, watch:

Simphonia Donbassa (dir. D. Vertov, 1930), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70tgGdcSdSk>, accessed on June 1, 2018

Week 9.

Class 1. Us/Them: mentality of the Soviet Mass Culture

Readings:



Samuil Marshak, "Mister Twister"

Class 2. Blood-sucking capitalist meets communist reality

Please, watch:

Aelita, (dir. Ya. Protazanov, 1924) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il-Y5tAXTXQ>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Mister Twister (dir. A. Karanovich, 1963), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WgUzRoY0s0>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

❖ **Test 2**

Week 10.

Class 1. Soviet and anti-Soviet worlds

Readings:

Marietta Shaginyan, "Mess-Mend"

Class 2. Soviet Subversions

Please, watch following:

Mess-Mend (dir. B. Barnet, 1926), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzTZz64DjJk>, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Neveroyatnie priklutcheniya mistera Westa v strane Bolshevikov (dir. L. Kuleshov, 1924), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq1Qx6jOJ0>>

Week 11.

Class 1. Ideologies of Soviet nationalism and internationalism

Please, watch:

Tsirk (dir. G. Aleksandrov, 1936), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia4DyErYhAs>, accessed June 1, 2018>

Class 2. Ideologies of Soviet nationalism and internationalism (continued)

Readings:

Mikhail Isakovsky, "Poezhai za moria-okeany: a poem"

❖ **Your essay is due**

Week 12.

Class 1. Soviet and anti-Soviet worlds: Outsiders and dissidents

Readings: extracts from Soviet periodicals (provided by the instructor)

Please, watch: Shpionskie Strasti (dir. E. Gamburg, 1967)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDSOQCip4tc>, accessed June 1, 2018

Class 2.

❖ **Final exam**



Course materials

Readings:

Geldern, James von and Ricard Stites, eds. *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore, 1917 – 1953*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Erenburg Ilya. "Opravdanie Nenavisti" *Voennaia literatura*.

http://militera.lib.ru/prose/russian/erenburg_ig3/079.html, Accessed 12 January 2018

Mayakovsky, Vladimir. "Left March," "Vladimir Ilich Lenin" in Vladimir Mayakovsky. *Selected Poems*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

Paperny Vladimir. *Kultura Dva*. Moscow: NLO Press, 1996.

Shaginyan Marietta, *Mess-Mend*. E-reading, <https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=64415>, Accessed 12 January 2018

Sinyavsky Andrey. "Chto takoe Sotsialisticheskii Realism," in Andrey Sinyavsky. *The Trial begins and On Socialist Realism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1960.

Trotsky Leon, "Vodka, Church and Cinema" *Magister MSK*,

<http://www.magister.msk.ru/library/trotsky/trotl914.htm>. Accessed 12 January 2018