Course name: Gender and Sexuality in Russia  
Course number: GEND 3001 RASP  
Programs offering course: Russian Area Studies  
Language of instruction: English  
U.S. semester credits: 3  
Contact hours: 45  
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description
This course gives students an overview of the major issues related to gender and sexuality in Russian society: social constructions of masculinities and femininities, sexual and gender variance, family, reproduction, women’s agency and women’s movements. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the subject, as it employs historic and social analysis, and it also explores different media, through which gender and sexuality in Russian culture are shaped and articulated. The course will follow a chronological order with emphasis on the following time-periods: Russia’s Middle Ages, the Petrine reforms, the post-Petrine, “modern” phase of Russian history, the state socialism, and post-socialist Russia. The course’s readings comprise texts written by historians and social scientists, as well as literary fiction, memoirs, autobiographies and visual texts. Artistic works serve not as illustrations of some historic ‘truths,’ but as ways to contest and complicate the understanding of gender and sexuality constructs under the changing regimes of power.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will be able to:

- differentiate between the constructivist and the essentialists approaches to gender and sexuality
- examine how the configurations of gender and sexuality evolved in Russian culture, from the medieval to modern times
• develop an understanding of gender, queer and transgender identities and the way they intersect with the notions of class, citizenship and nationhood in Russia
• engage in gender-sensitive reading of literary, filmic and visual texts

**Course Prerequisites**
None

**Methods of Instruction**
Course material will be presented through the combination of lectures and discussions. It is important that students come to class having prepared home assignments and ready to offer thoughtful responses to the assigned texts. Each student will be asked to conduct an oral presentation on the topic of her/his choice during one of the final class meetings.

**Assessment and Final Grade**
Students will be assessed according to the following criteria:
- Class participation: 15%
- Midterm test: 20%
- Oral presentation: 20%
- Paper: 25%
- Final test: 20%

TOTAL: 100%

**Course Requirements**

**Class participation.** Students are expected to complete all reading or viewing assignments before each class meeting and to come to class prepared to debate issues brought up by the readings, films or visual texts.

**Midterm and final 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. Each test will take approximately 45 minutes to write.

**Presentation and paper.** Students chose the topic for their presentation and paper based on their own interests and then discuss it with the instructor for final approval. The topic should relate to the class material and could be based on a text, film, theoretical concept, or author covered in the course. You could base your presentation and your paper on what anthropologist call “direct observation technique,” i.e. on your first-hand experience of living in Russia. You can discuss such diverse phenomena as social activism, street fashion, visual representations of gender in popular culture or mainstream media, etc. Alternatively, you can base your research on secondary sources and provide an in-depth account of a particular historic or cultural topic.

Your paper should be 7-10 page long, double-spaced between lines along with 1" margin on all sides and it should use 12-point Times New Roman font. Before submitting the paper to the instructor, each student will give an **oral presentation** on the chosen topic, as a way to share her/his findings with the rest of the class and receiving feedback from peers and the instructor. Your presentation should last 15 minutes. Supporting visuals in the form of handouts, PowerPoint or other forms are welcome.

**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

- **Introduction to the course. Theorizing sex, gender and sexuality: essentialism vs. social constructionism**
  
  Reading:
  Judith Butler, “Gender as Performance,” pp. 109-125

- **Masculine and feminine images in Russian folklore**
  Reading: Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia*, pp. 24-51

Week 2

- **Gender and family order in pre-Petrine Russia**

- **Women, family and public life in eighteenth-century Russia**

Week 3

- **The ‘woman question’ in nineteenth-century Russia**
  Reading: Richard Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia*, pp. 3-37; 89-99

- **Russian urbanization and shifting patterns of family life**

Week 4

- **Gender bending, sexual transgressions in nineteenth-century Russia**
  Reading: Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden: Journals of a Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars*, pp. 3-34;

• Gender politics and state socialism: the new Soviet man and woman
  Reading: Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender Politics in Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 1-12; 68-98.

Week 5
• Sexual revolution of the 1920s
  Naiman, Eric, *Sex in Public*, pp. 45-56; 148-180

• Marriage and family life in the era of NEP
  Assignment: watch *Bed and Sofa* (1927), dir. Abram Room

Week 6
• Soviet masculinities in the making
  Assignment: watch *Sickle and Hammer* (1994), dir. Sergey Livnev

• Women and war
  Handouts: Soviet posters from the time of World War II, 1941-1945

❖ Your paper and presentation topic is due
Week 7

- **Parameters of gender contract during the “Thaw”**
  Reading: Melanie Ilič, *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, pp. 5-28; 149-176

- **Site visit:** The State Russian Museum, collections of Russian avant-garde art and socialist realism. Topic: visual representation of gender in the 1920s and the 1930s

Week 8

- **Women writing their lives: Perestroika and women’s prose**
  Olga Kuzmina, *Women writing*, in *Russian Life* (Summer 2013)

- **The collapse of socialism and the revision of gender order**
  ✴️ Midterm test

Week 9

- **Female subjectivity in film and visual arts. Russian women artists.**
  Reading: Margarita Tupitsyn, “Unveiling Feminism: Women’s Art in the Soviet Union,” in *Arts Magazine* (December 1990), 63-37

- **Female subjectivity in film and visual arts. Women film directors.**
  ✴️ Student presentations
Week 10

- **Bodies and sexualities**
  Elena Omelchenko, “‘My body, my friend?’ Provincial youth between the sexual and the gender revolutions,” pp 137-168.

- **Intersectionality: gender, ethnicity, class**
  - Student presentations

Week 11

- **Sexuality, nationhood, citizenship**

  - Site visit: Crisis Center for women
  - Your paper is due

Week 12

- **Gendered subjectivities and activism**
  Lova V. Why Russian women don’t need western-style feminism 
  https://www.rbth.com/ lifestyle/327529- russian-women-dontneed-feminism

  - Concluding discussion: What comes next? Post-socialist gendered identities and formations
  - Final test
Course Materials

Readings


**Online Resources**


