Course title: \( \text{Agitation for Happiness: The Mass Culture of the Soviet Period in Tales, Poems, Songs, and Movies} \)

Course code: \( \text{RUSI 3040 RLPR} \)

Programs offering course: \( \text{Russian Language} \)

Language of instruction: \( \text{Russian} \)

U.S. semester credits: \( 3 \)

Contact hours: \( 45 \)

Term: \( \text{Spring 2020} \)

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

By completing this course, students will:

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.

Course Prerequisites

None.
Methods of Instruction

Class meetings consist of lectures, class discussions, and screenings.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Tests 40%
2. Essay 20%
3. Final Exam 25%
4. In-class Participation 15%

TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Tests

20% each

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.

Final Exam

The final exam is given in class, and it is expected to last for one full session, i.e. 90 minutes. It will consists 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.
In-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.

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+).

Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class 1.1

Introduction to the course. Syllabus, practical matters.

Class 1.2

Visions of Happiness in Stalin Russia: constructing Soviet cultural policy in the 1930s.
The Idea of Communist Transformation

Readings: Vladimir Mayakovsky “Left March”
Leon Trotsky “Vodka, Church and Cinema”

Class 2.2

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>)


Week 3

Class 3.1

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

Readings:

Vladimir Paperny, Kultura Dva, pp. 3-30

Class 3.2

The concept of socialist realism.

Andrey Sinyavsky “Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realism”

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

Week 4
Class 4.1

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>

Class 4.2

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=3I3JwURXpJA, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Week 5
Class 5.1

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=SK3mNGxkdM&t=2717s, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Class 5.2

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=SK3mNGxkdM&t=2717s, accessed on June 1, 2018>
Week 6

Class 6.1.

Everyone becomes a hero when the motherland commands: Soviet Patriotism

Readings:

Konstantin Simonov, “Zhdi Menya: a poem”

Vasiliy Lebedev-Kumach and Aleksandr Alexandrov, “Sviashchennnaia Voina”

Ilya Erenburg, “Opravdanie Nenavisti”

Class 6.2.

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 7.1.

Cultural anthropology of the Soviet Man

Readings:
Tricia Starks, The Body Soviet, pp. 3-36.

Class 7.2

“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=vH6ELHUUml, accessed on June 1, 2018>

Pervoklassnitsa (dir. Ilia Frez, 1948),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8L_K5qZ8, 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 8.1

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 Younost’ (dir. Sergey Gurov, 1955), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FguMk4ami1M>, accessed on June 1, 2018

Class 8.2.

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 9.1.

Us/Them: mentality of the Soviet Mass Culture

Readings:

Samuil Marshak, “Mister Twister”

Class 9.2.

lood-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 10.1

Soviet and anti-Soviet worlds

Readings:

Marietta Shaginyan, “Mess-Mend”

Class 10.2

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 11.1

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 11.2.

Ideologies of Soviet nationalism and internationalism (continued)

Readings:

Mikhail Isakovsky, “Poezhai za moria-okeany: a poem”

Your essay is due

Week 12
Class 12.1.

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=EDSOQClp4tc, accessed June 1, 2018

Class 12.2.

Final exam

Course Materials
Readings


