CIEE St. Petersburg, Russia

Course title: (Intermediate) Discovering Russia: Film, Music, and Current Press
Course code: RUSI 2002 RLPU
Programs offering course: Summer Russian Language
Language of instruction: Russian
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Summer 2020

Course Description

This course examines various aspects of Russian culture through a close analysis of its verbal and visual texts that represent Russian cinema, music, and mass media. While focusing on two or three Russian films, the students examine the film transcripts and vocabulary lists, to be used in class discussions and written home assignments. A similar approach is employed in the work with the articles from Russian newspapers and journals. It allows students to broaden their knowledge of specific language of current press and socio-political problems of today’s Russia. The emphasis of the course’s musical component falls on various types of Russian song, the study (and performance) of which leads to better comprehension and articulatory skills, as well as to more profound understanding of Russian culture.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- advance their comprehension skills in Russian by listening to music, movies and TV sound tracks;
- develop their speaking and writing skills by participating in the discussion of the movies, newspaper articles, song lyrics;
- examine and classify patterns of Russian culture as expressed in visual, textual and musical media;
- produce more authentic Russian speech patterns.

Course Prerequisites

Students must possess a high enough level of vocabulary and basic grammatical material, in order to understand the lectures. Students’ placement is contingent upon a placement test administered at the beginning of the program.

Methods of Instruction

Considering the multi-dimensional aspect of this course, the methods of instruction vary. Learning songs includes phonetic (training pronunciation), lexical, and grammatical (the introduction of new vocabulary and grammar analysis) and lingvokulturologicheskiy (linguistic explanation of Russian mentality and characteristics of spiritual culture) aspects. Songs will be introduced and learned through listening, analysis of the lyrics, discussion, and memorization of the lyrics/song. In-class film viewing and discussion is preceded by an overview of the film’s scenes, as well as lexical work, a presentation of the film and director. The films, if necessary, will be accompanied by subtitles in English or Russian (depending on the level of knowledge of Russian language students), and students will have complete access to communication in the form of an organized discussion led by the teacher. The opportunity to reflect and express deeper impressions can be done through essay writing, which is the final stage of the film class.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Attendance 30%
2. Essays and Final Exam 40%
3. Participation 30%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements
Attendance

See Attendance

Essays and Final Exam

The final exam is a written exam. Movie reviews and short essays contribute to the final grade.

Participation

Active participation on class is a crucial component of this course.

Attendance

Attendance is crucial for successful completion of the class. Students are allowed to have two unexcused absences for each course for the whole 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. 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+).

N.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: Introductory lesson on Film. Short film in Russia.

Film:
(Film novella) Peter Buslov “Srochnyi remont” (2009)

Music:
- Russian folk songs (Learn songs)
- Classification (soldier, Burlatskii, wedding, genre).

Current Press
General characteristics of various types of media in Russia. Introduction of vocabulary needed for the discussion of this topic.

Structure of an article. How to retell an article you’ve read. How to agree with the writer, how to disagree, how to express your own opinion.

Week 2
Class: Soviet comedy

Film:
Leonid Gaidai (director) “Operatsiya Y i druive priklyuchenya Shurika” (1965)

HW: Essay on the topic “My impressions of the film.”

Music:
- Russian folk songs (Learn songs)
- Classification (soldier, Burlatskii, wedding, genre).

Current Press
Liberal-democratic, propaganda, and oppositional media in Russia. Read headings and subheadings. Choose interesting articles on the basis of the headings and subheadings. News.
Week 3
Class: Social problems in Russian film

Film:
Mikhail Segal (director) “Rasskazy” (2012)

HW: Essay on the topic “My impressions from the film” or “What social problems are raised in American film?”

Music:
- Russian folk songs (Learn songs)
- Classification (soldier, Burlatskii, wedding, genre).

Current Press
Discussion of articles read. Analyze the specific language used. Analyze stylistic devices. Review and consolidation of vocabulary on the topics “Culture,” and “State Social Policy.”

Week 4
Class: Social problems in Russian film continued

Music
- Russian romance. (Practice songs)
- Classification (cue classical, gypsy, urban).

Current Press

Week 5
Class: Youth and problems of the generations

Films:
Valery Todorovskiy (director) “Stilyagi” (2008)
Karen Shakhnazarov (director) “Kuryer” (1986)

HW: Write a review of the film (or essay on the topic: “Problems of the generations in American film”)

Music:
- Russian romance. (Practice songs)
- Classification (cue classical, gypsy, urban).

Current Press

Week 6
Class: Youth and problems of the generations continued

Music:
- Songs of the 20th century. (Learn songs)
- Ditty, tango, art song (B.Okudzhava, Yu.Vizbor, Vladimir Vysotsky).

Current Press
Week 7
Class: Youth and problems of the generations continued

Music:
- Songs of the 20th century. (Learn songs)
- Ditty, tango, art song (B. Okudzhava, Yu. Vizbor, Vladimir Vysotsky).

Current Press
Presentations of articles chosen by students on various topics. Discussion of articles. Exchange of opinions. Characteristics of received information.

Week 8
Class: The image of St. Petersburg in Russian film

Films:
Aleksey Balabanov (director) “Brat” (1997)
Oksana Bychkova (director) “Piter FM” (2006)

HW: Write a review of the film.

Music:
Final Exam

Current Press:
Final Exam

Course Materials
Readings
Course materials include newspaper and magazine articles, films, music and lyrics. All the materials will be provided to students by the instructor.