Course title: The Arts of St. Petersburg
Course code: AHIS 3001 RASP
Programs offering course: Russian Area Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring 2021

Course Description

This is a survey course, dedicated to the fine arts of St. Petersburg from their beginning in the early eighteenth century to the present day. Every period of the city's artistic history is presented by its highlights, i.e. the most representative works of art, which will be discussed during regular classes and visits to the State Russian Museum, the State Hermitage Museum and city tours. Special attention is paid to the cultural exchange between Russian and Western art and architecture. Students will learn and apply different methods of art historical analysis, when discussing paintings, sculptures and architectural monuments. The ultimate course objective is a profound aesthetic perception of St. Petersburg's history as well as the city's everyday life through its art and culture.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- identify periods in the development of arts and architecture in St. Petersburg and most representative works of art during each period;
- compare and contrast major movements in Russian art history and in the Western art;
- classify and describe factors that shaped the history of fine arts in St. Petersburg;
- apply methods of art historical analysis to selected works of art, to identify their genre, style and formal features.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

The course combines the with the field trips to the State Russian Museum (twice) at 4 Inzhenernaya St., to the State Hermitage Museum at 2 Dvortsovaya Sq. (once) and a concluding city tour. The classes are a combination of lectures and discussions. The students are encouraged to participate in these in-class discussions of the works of art with a help of the assigned readings. The course work also involves individual presentations done by each participant.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Oral Presentation 20%
2. Essay 30%
3. Quizzes 10%
4. Final Test 20%
5. In-Class Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Oral Presentation

The students are required to make one short (10-15 min.) oral presentation, which is a kind of a city excursion including – but not limited to – the architectural monuments encountered along the way. The imaginary itinerary is chosen from a set of city tours proposed by the instructor in the beginning of the course. The presentations
will start in mid-March with one presentation per class, therefore students will have about one month to get prepared for the presentation. The students are free to use any plan or method yet are supposed to try their best to maintain a high scholarly standard as exemplified by lectures and readings. Necessary information/consultations are provided by the instructor if requested.

**Essay**

The purpose of the essay is to demonstrate the skills of using different methods of art historical analysis: visual description, formal analysis, stylistic analysis, biographical method, etc. The subject matter of the essay is “a (visual) artist’s life in the city.” Students choose an artist for their essay on their own, preferably after a consultation with the instructor. I warn you against overloading your essay with biographical details or anecdotes from the artist’s life. Instead, please, focus on her/his creative works, which reflects, in direct or indirect way, this artist’s experience of living in the city. Your essay should be 8-10 pages long, preferably with the figures illustrating the artworks in question.

**Quizzes**

5% each

Two multiple-choice quizzes will be given during the semester in order to check the factual knowledge of the material.

**Final Test**

Instead of a formalized examination a freer final evaluation styled as a written test intended to sum up the discussed topics is planned for the last class. The students will be given a set of questions concerning most basic facts dealt with during the semester.

**In-Class Participation**

Taking part in discussions and teamwork is essential for the studies. It is important that all students prepare course readings for the assigned dates and are ready to analyze and discuss the issues brought by these readings.

Note that the readings listed under “weekly schedule” and “course materials” sections are by no means all mandatory. These texts are provided by the instructor for a general information to the students, they may be used by the students for preparing their oral presentations and written essays or/and for future reference.

**Attendance**

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+).

_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: 1.1

Introduction. Syllabus, practical issues.

What is there so special about St. Petersburg?

Class: 1.2

Art in St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg in Art. Images of the city throughout three centuries explained.
Week 2
Class: 2.1.

The beginnings. Peter to Catherine the Great. City planning activity, general plans attempts. Mixing of styles and traditions, breaking with the medieval (Russian) past. A fortress, a port, a paradise. Canals affair. Russian baroque vs. baroque in Russia. Gardens and parks. (Neo)classical revolution. Quarenghi.


Class: 2.2.

Peter’s disinterest in visual arts. Portraits a lieu of the icons. The (marble and bronze) idols return. Western art collecting/imitating by the czars and the czarinas. An academy of arts or an orphanage styled as the enlightenment hothouse? The first attempts to paint "histories".


Week 3
Class: 3.1.

Introduction to the concept of Russian art, past and present. History of the State Russian Museum and similar collections.


Class: 3.2.

Site visit: The State Russian Museum (Main building).


Week 4
Class: 4.1.


Quiz #1

Class: 4.2.


Week 5
Class:  5.1  


Oral presentation by students

Class:  5.2  

The great schism at the Academy. The salon and the Itinerant painters. Ilya Repin. New landscape as a fleeing the city strategy. The symbolism and the decadence.


Week 6  
Class:  6.1  

New age begins: the revolutions, artistic and political ones. Neoclassical style of the 1910s. Revolutionary romanticism. Tatlin tower. So-called monumental propaganda and revolutionary romanticism. Petrograd and Leningrad. Constructivism and other trends of the late 1920s-early 1930s, local differences as opposed to the style of Moscow. New architectural typology, a phenomenon of the zhilmassiv.


Week 7  
Class:  7.1  

Social Realism in the Art of Leningrad (continued)

(Mis)fortunes of avant-garde/Soviet art in 20th & 21st century Russia. Introductory thoughts to the exhibition of the 20th century as represented in Russian museum.


Class:  7.2  

*Site visit: The State Russian Museum (Benois wing).*


*Your essay is due*

Week 8  
Class:  8.1  

Stalinism and the World War II. The traumatic experiences of the purges and the siege. The fight against the past (the religion) vs. conservation and careful study. The art deco and classical motives in the old city and the Soviet districts of Leningrad. Metro in the city, the first line and the further development.
Quiz #2

Class: 8.2

The monuments to the fallen and the victory: designed vs. real. Socialistic reconstruction and war in visual arts. Late Stalinist painting and monumental sculpture. (Last traces of the) avant-garde overcome, birth of the unofficial art.


Week 9

Class: 9.1

Late to post-Soviet. Khrushchev's reforms and the emergence of the new slums (novostroiki). Late Soviet modern architecture (Space age buildings). The new monuments and the street sculpture degradation. St. Petersburg again. The "elite" houses of the 1990s, from the densification practice to the new residential areas. New churches. Gradozashchitniks.


Class: 9.2

Late Soviet realistic paintings with some elements of avant-garde tolerated. Unofficial stage. Culture palace exhibitions. Informal groups of the late 20 century, mitki to new academism. Contemporary situation.


Week 10

Class: 10.1

Recent history of St. Petersburg Art Institutions.

Site visit: Museum of Street Art (address: 84 AB, Shosse Revoliutsii St.)


Class: 10.2

Recent history of St. Petersburg Art Institutions.

Site visit: Museum of Street Art (address: 84 AB, Shosse Revoliutsii St.)


Week 11

Class: 11.1

Introduction to the Hermitage visit. Western art in Russia. The reception and the conflict. The uneven image of the classical art as seen through the museum culture. The contemporary exhibitions policy.
Your essay is due

Class: 11.2

Site visit: The State Hermitage museum.

Architecture in/outside. Ancient, medieval, modern at the Hermitage. The great artists and the masterpieces.

Week 12
Class: 12.1

Conclusion. What’s next? St. Petersburg, present and future.

Final test
Class: 12.2

City tour. The architectural monuments in context. Cityscapes, city views, and city stories.

Course Materials

Readings


26.


**Online Resources**