



How do the arts influence and reflect their environment? What role does culture play in revolutionary change? What are the peculiarities of the arts and culture in authoritarian systems? This course explores the ways in which both “high” and popular culture shaped and reflected the essential dynamics of Soviet society. Our inquiry will be guided by the artifacts of cultural expression, from popular music, film, and other forms of entertainment, along with literature, poetry and the visual arts. This course is an invitation to explore the rich and distinctive cultural traditions of twentieth-century Russia and the often tragic circumstances under which they evolved.

Course Context and Expectations

What Makes this Course?

You do! While this syllabus provides a road map for regular class sessions, a large part of our work together will be a collaborative discussion, exploration, and analysis of significant artifacts of Soviet culture. Much of this work will take place in a networked learning environment, which will use blogging, Twitter, and other learning technologies to construct, elaborate and refine the contours and content of the course. **This is a course that you make rather than a course you take.** I am interested in deepening and expanding our in-class discussions, as well as our creative and research endeavors. I hope that this hybrid course format will help us

create the course together in an immediately accessible, professional, enduring and transparent medium.

This is a networked course that leverages active co-learning and the web to enhance our understanding of the key characteristics and dynamics of Soviet culture. We are a community of co-learners, and will depend on each other's unique aptitudes and experiences to make the most of our time together. We are fortunate to have Ms. **** as the senior editorial assistant for the course.

**** will help me curate the content from your posts into an inviting and rich multi-media experience on the main course website. She will also serve as a peer mentor and embedded cultural expert in our F2F meetings.

We will devote several F2F meetings to working with, experiencing, and even performing various forms of cultural creativity. There will be opportunities to watch classic and popular films, read Futurist manifestoes out loud, perform agitational skits, listen to music, etc. Our collaborative work in these sessions will help shape the work you do on your blogs. In other words, you will need to come to class in order to participate fully in the learning community.

The blogging / digital artifact assignments are intended to leverage the freely accessible resources of the World Wide Web as well as the digitized collections of the Virginia Tech libraries in order to:

- Develop your skills in historical, critical, and textual analysis
- Develop your skills identifying, using and citing cultural artifacts (texts, film, music, etc.)
- Develop your understanding of the key developments and dynamics of Soviet Culture

Course Requirements

- Interest in Soviet culture and commitment to knowing more about it
- Willingness to explore collaborative networked learning
- Commitment to participate in the learning community (course) in consistent, collaborative, and productive ways.
- Setting-up and maintaining a blog.
- Mothballing your blog (closing down the comments if you aren't going to monitor them) at the end of the semester
- Questions of Soviet History Assignment
- Digital Artifact assessment
- MT Project
- Final Self-Assessment

Required Texts

Adele Barker and Bruce Grant, eds., *The Russia Reader. History, Culture, Politics* (Duke, 2010)

James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia. Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Indiana, 1995)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 2008)

Other Required Course Materials

- **Links from the main course website here:**
<http://amynelson.net/sovietculturef15/>
- **Posted on Scholar if necessary**

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Blog contributions /Digital Artifacts (7 minimum) 50%

Responding to classmates' blog posts (33 minimum) 20%

Two midterm projects 20%

Final self-assessment 10%

Academic Integrity

Do not cheat. Do not plagiarize. All assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Virginia Tech Honor Code. For more information about the Honor Code and the undergraduate honor system see: <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Special Needs

If you need accommodations because of a dis/ability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible.

Safe Zone

My office is a certified Safe Zone, and I am committed to creating a more inclusive and accepting environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning communities and their allies. For more information on LGBTQ services and opportunities, please visit <http://www.mps.vt.edu/lgbtq/index.html>.

Class Schedule

Week	Topic	Common Reading – Print Sources
Week 1		
T 8/25	Networked Course Intro	
Th 8/27	The Pre-Revolutionary Heritage	Fitzpatrick 1-39; RR 1-11, 40-53, 128-133 (Intro, Bathing, Buck Morss, Cooking)
Week 2		
T 9/1	The Avant-Garde	RR 13-15
Th 9/3		
Week 3		
T 9/8	Questions of Soviet History	Fitzpatrick 40-171
Th 9/10		
Week 4		
T 9/15	Bolshevik Visions / Revolutionary Cinema	Entertainment vs. Enlightenment MC 3-120; RR 303-347
Th 9/17		
Week 5		
T 9/22	New Men and Women	RR 351-412
Th 9/24	Questions Of Soviet History / Digital Artifact Assessment	
Week 6		
T 9/29	Cultural Revolution / War on Backwardness	MC 120-214 (Cultural Revolution); RR 413-440
Th 10/1		
F 10/2	Drop Day	
Week 7		
T 10/6	Joyful Songs / Heroes & Heroines	MC 215-286 (High Stalinism);
Th 10/8		
Week 8		
T 10/13	Lady MacBeth / Purges	MC 287-330 (Purges); RR 441-486
Th 10/15	(Fall Break)	
Week 9		
T 10/20	Defending the Motherland	MC 333-407 (Russia at War); RR 487-532 (The War Years)
Th 10/22		
Week 10		
T 10/27	Holy War to Cold War: Finding the Big Deal	MC 411-489 (Postwar Era)
Th 10/29		

Week 11

T 11/3 Space Age and the Thaw RR 533-568 (The Thaw)

Th 11/5

Week 12

T 11/10 Soviet Baby Boomers RR 615-665 (Life Under Advanced Socialism)

Th 11/

12

Week 13

T 11/17 Everything Was Forever.... RR 663-696 (Things Fall Apart)

Th 11/19 **2nd MT Assessment**

Thanksgiving

Week 14

T 12/1 Present meets Past in the Caucasus RR 281-302 (Derlugian, Bazorkin)

Th 12/3

Week 15

T 12/8 Brave New Worlds / **Final self-assessment**
