



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. Marlee Putnam as the senior editorial assistant for the course. Marlee 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 provide peer mentoring and assistance with your webwork.

We will devote many of our 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 and be prepared 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
- Willingness to strengthen and develop competencies in research, digital authorship, web annotation, and other digital humanities tools
- 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
- Two Midterms
- 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*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 2017)

Other Required Course Materials

- **Links from the main course website here:**
<http://amynelson.net/sovietculturef18/>
- **Posted on Canvas if necessary**

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Blog contributions /Digital Artifacts (5 minimum)	30%
Participation:	
Commenting on other students' blogposts: at least three comments every time there is a blogging opportunity	10%
Contributing to the learning community in the Athenaeum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating and participating in discussion • Contributing to group activities during class • Completing group activities after class if necessary • Coming to class having read, listened to or watched the assigned materials • Generally being an engaged and responsible member of the learning community.* 	15%
<p>*Note that all of the above requires your physical attendance in class. We all know that life happens, and that you might need to miss 1 or 2 classes during the semester.</p> <p>If you have to miss class on a day that you have an assignment or your group is expecting you to participate, you need to let me (and your group) know if at all possible. This is just common courtesy.</p> <p><u>TLDR: Missing more than 3 classes, for any reason, will have a negative effect on your final grade in the class.</u></p> <p>Do not skip three classes and then ask for an "excused" absence to attend a wedding, job interview, go to an out-of-state football game, etc..</p>	
First Midterm	15%
Second Midterm	20%
Final self-assessment	10%

Academic Integrity

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

"As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do."

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting

the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit:

<https://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

https://ccc.vt.edu/advocacy/Cultural_Community_Centers/lgbtq.html

Class Schedule – Draft – Check the Website for Updates

Week	Topic	Common Reading – Print Sources
Week 1		
T 8/21	Intro / Pre-Revolutionary Heritage	Fitzpatrick 1-39; RR 1-11, 40-53, 128-133 (Intro, Bathing, Buck Morss, Cooking)
Th 8/23		
Week 2	The Avant-Garde	
T 8/28		RR 13-15 (Scythians)
Th 8/30		
Week 3	Questions of Soviet History	
T 9/4		Fitzpatrick 40-174
Th 9/6		
Week 4	Bolshevik Visions / Revolutionary Cinema	
T 9/11		Entertainment vs. Enlightenment MC 3-120; RR 303-347
Th 9/13		
Week 5	New Men and Women	
T 9/18		RR 351-412
Th 9/20		
	Questions Of Soviet History / Digital Artifact Assessment	
Week 6		
T 9/25	Cultural Revolution / War on Backwardness	MC 120-214 (Cultural Revolution); RR 413-440
Th 9/27		
Week 7		

M 10/1	Drop Day	
T 10/2	Joyful Songs / Heroes & Heroines	MC 215-286 (High Stalinism);
Th 10/4		
Week 8	Lady MacBeth / Purges	
T 10/9		MC 287-330 (Purges); RR 441-486
Th 10/11		
Week 9	Defending the Motherland	
T 10/16		MC 333-407 (Russia at War); RR 487-532 (The War Years)
Th 10/18		
Fr 10/19	Fall Break	
Week 10	Holy War to Cold War: Finding the Big Deal	
T 10/23		MC 411-489 (Postwar Era)
Th 10/25		
Week 11	Space Age and the Thaw	
T 10/30		RR 533-568 (The Thaw)
Th 11/1		
Week 12	More Thaw	
T 11/6		
Th 11/ 8		
Week 13	Mature Socialism	RR 615-665 (Life Under Advanced Socialism)
T 11/13	2nd Midterm	
Th 11/15		
Thanksgiving		
Week 14	Things Fall Apart	
T 11/26		RR 663-696 (Things Fall Apart)
Th 11/29		
Week 15	Brave New Worlds	
T 12/4		
F 12/7	Final Self Assessment	