

# BACK IN THE USSR: The Soviet Experience

Fall 2012  
Mon & Wed 2:45 - 4 PM  
+ some Mondays, 7-10 PM

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"How Stalin met Marilyn" (Leonid Sokov, 1991)

Paul McCartney said that he thought of the USSR as a mythical place when he wrote the famous Beatles song. Two decades since the Soviet Union collapsed, what can we understand about its society and culture, and about its resonance in the popular imagination today? Through fiction, film, diaries and other sources, we will study the radical Soviet experiment that sought to reshape concepts of family, sexuality, space, time, and the meaning of being human.

## BOOKS TO PURCHASE

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* [121 pages]  
Yury Olesha, *Envy* [152 pages]  
Viktor Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line* [159 pages]  
Ludmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night* [155 pages]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

All other readings will be available electronically through the course website.

## “FOURTH HOUR” ACTIVITIES

The registrar scheduled a “fourth hour” for this course. Four of the “fourth hour” activities are mandatory; others are highly recommended – attending these events carries an extra credit incentive (see below). Currently scheduled activities include film screenings on most (not all) Monday evenings during the semester. In some cases, the films you’ll be watching during this time slot are the films that we’re going to be discussing in class; in other cases, you’ll be watching films that we will discuss immediately after the screening during the “fourth hour” itself; yet in other cases, you’ll be watching films that we won’t discuss during class time but are there to supplement other materials we will be discussing in class. All film screenings take place at Pardee 102B (unless noted otherwise) and go either from 7 until 10 PM, or from 8/8:30 until 10 PM (see details below).

In addition to scheduled screenings, additional “fourth hour” activities may be scheduled on a few occasions during the semester depending on the needs of the class and the FYS program.

## SCHEDULE OF “FOURTH HOUR” FILM SCREENINGS

(at Ramer History House 103 unless noted otherwise)

Required screenings are marked with an asterisk (\*); however, you should try to attend as many of the other screenings as possible:

Mon Sept 3, 8:45-10 PM – *Battleship Potemkin*

\* Mon Sept 10, 8:30-10 PM – *Bed and Sofa*

Mon Oct 15, 7-10 PM – *I am Twenty*

Mon Oct 22, 7-8:30 PM – *Mirror* (until 10 PM if you want to stay for the discussion)

\* Mon Oct 29, 7-10 PM – *A House on the Arbat Street* (screening and discussion)

Mon Nov 5, 8:30-10 PM – *The Diamond Arm*

Mon Nov 12, 7-10 PM – *Repentance*

\* Mon Nov 19, 7-10 PM – Special event: *My Perestroika* + Q&A with director Robin Hessman

Mon Nov 26, 8:30-10 PM – *Cargo-200*

\* Mon Dec 3, 7-10 PM – *Hipsters* (screening and discussion)

## EXTRA CREDIT

Attend at least three of the non-required “fourth hour” film screenings and submit journal-style entries about these films by the end of the week in which you attended the screenings.

## WORKING WITH THE WRITING ASSOCIATE

The College Writing Program, which helps to integrate the practice of writing in courses throughout the college, trains selected students as Writing Associates (WAs) and makes them available for courses in a wide variety of disciplines. The WA for this course is **Zoe Staum** ([staumz@lafayette.edu](mailto:staumz@lafayette.edu)). She will meet with each of you in conferences to discuss drafts of your written work and engage you in conversation about your writing so that you can revise it effectively. Each of you will meet with Zoe four times this semester, during the weeks before each assignment is due (see the schedule of classes for these dates). Zoe is obligated to inform me of any late or missed appointments; this course’s policy is such that I will not read your papers until the drafts of them

have been discussed in conferences with the WA – hence, missing a conference with the WA effectively results in a failing grade for the assignment.

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES**

This course has four writing assignments that will help you develop as a writer and a critical thinker. All the assignments are described in the “Schedule of classes” section of the syllabus; all the due dates and conference dates are listed there as well. Between the day that the assignment is handed out and the day that it is due, you will be meeting with the Writing Associate to discuss your drafts.

### **GRADING POLICY**

**A** = Excellent work - shows detailed in-depth knowledge of the material and an ability to think critically about it.

**B** = Good work - shows basic mastery of the material but has minor weak spots in knowledge or critical analysis.

**C** = Satisfactory work - shows fundamental grasp of material but with major omissions or misunderstandings.

**D** = Not satisfactory work - minimal understanding, barely passing

**F** = Unacceptable work - does not show sufficient knowledge of the material to allow me to certify that the student has understood the material and basic issues at stake.

### **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

Moodle contains student information that is protected by the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA). Disclosure to unauthorized parties violated federal privacy laws. Courses using Moodle will make student information visible to other students in this class. Please remember that the information is protected by these federal privacy laws and must not be shared with anyone outside class. Questions can be referred to the Registrar’s Office.

### **DISABILITY STATEMENT**

In compliance with Lafayette College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodation need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students must register with the Office of the Dean of the College for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Appended below are the College’s “Principles of Intellectual Honesty.” Please be familiar with them. Students who violate these principles can expect to receive an F for the course and to be referred to the Dean of the College for possible further sanctions.

*Principles of Intellectual Honesty* To maintain the intellectual and scholarly standards of the College and, equally important, the personal ethical standards of our students, it is essential that written assignments be a student’s own work, just as is expected in examinations and class participation. The following generally recognized principles are designed to guide students in writing essays, papers,

and reports, and to forestall acts of plagiarism, misrepresentation, and collusion, and the consequent disciplinary action.

*Use of other persons' writings:* The appropriation of the ideas or phrases of others, without proper acknowledgment, is plagiarism. This is an act of academic dishonesty.

*Use of reference material:* A student must often read extensively before being in a position to do any writing. A student may find passages in books, articles, and computerized sources such as websites that will be helpful in illustrating ideas. There is no objection to quoting such passages, provided the material is put within quotation marks and the source is indicated by footnotes or other means of showing authorship. If a paper or essay consists largely of quotations, normally it will not be regarded as an original piece of work. Paraphrasing, the appropriation of ideas with changed wording, is a form of plagiarism unless the source paraphrased is cited.

*Use of other students' work:* Submission of another student's work as one's own, with or without revision, is dishonest and subjects one to severe disciplinary action. The use of another person's notes or rough draft of a similar subject is considered equally dishonest.

*Working together:* Occasionally two or more students will consider it desirable and proper or will be assigned to engage in a joint investigation with individual or collaborative essays or reports as the finished products. Such a procedure is acceptable only when the instructor has consented to and approved the details of the collaboration. Collaboration beyond the limits established by the instructor is academic dishonesty.

*Re-use of paper:* Submission of the same work in more than one course is a violation of the intellectual standards of the College and is considered to be academic dishonesty. A student who commits academic dishonesty is subject to a range of penalties, including suspension or expulsion. Finally, the underlying principle is one of intellectual honesty. If a person is to have self-respect and the respect of others, all work must be her/his own.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

First Year Seminars (FYS) are designed to “introduce students to intellectual inquiry through engaging them as thinkers, speakers, and writers” – skills essential to your success during your four years at Lafayette College and throughout your life. We will be strengthening your skills of critical reading, writing, and oral communication through exercises developed around the issues central to the topic of the course and during class discussions. Other basic goals to be approached will be library research and participation in an intellectual community (in the sense of holding up your end of the responsibility in group endeavors such as discussions during class and during special events). Yet another goal of the program is to introduce you to the broader academic and cultural mission of the college, including performances and lectures on campus (we already have such events scheduled in conjunction with this course; more events will be added as the college calendar for the semester becomes available).

In addition to the larger goals of the FYS program, this course has specific objectives related to its topic. By the end of the course you should be able critically analyze literary texts, films, and memoirs; evaluate scholarly arguments; be able to identify and discuss the importance of major moments related to the Soviet culture and experience.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

### **Mon Aug 27 BACK IN THE USSR: WHY STUDY SOVIET CULTURE?**

### **Wed Aug 29 REVOLUTION AND UTOPIA**

- Andrei Sinyavsky, “The Revolution” (3-27) and “Utopia Found” in *Soviet Civilization* (28-53)
- Alexander Blok, “The Twelve”
- Evgeny Zamyatin, “The Cave”

### **Mon Sept 3 REVOLUTION AND VIOLENCE**

- Isaac Babel, “Crossing the Zbrucz,” “A Letter,” “My First Goose,” “Salt” from *Red Cavalry*; “The Road”
- Leon Trotsky, *Literature and the Revolution* (introduction)

\* Note: in this session, we will pay particular attention to the practice of close reading using Isaac Babel’s stories as an example of close reading a literary text (this is in preparation for an assignment that follows on Sept 12).

### **Wed Sept 5 REVOLUTION AND THE POETICS OF LABOR**

- Watch before class: *Man with a Movie Camera* (dir. Dziga Vertov, 1929)

\* Note: in this session, we will pay particular attention to the practice of close reading using selected sequences from Vertov’s film as an example of close reading a film. (This in preparation for an assignment that follows on Sept 12).

### **Mon Sept 10 REVOLUTION AND THE NEW SOVIET MAN**

- Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (read the entire novella, pp. 1-65)
- Andrey Sinyavsky, “The New Man,” in *Soviet Civilization* (114-152)

Mon Sept 10, 8:30 – 10 PM at Pardee 102B

#### **MENAGE Á TROIS, SOVIET STYLE**

Screening: *Bed and Sofa* (dir. Abram Room, 1927) - **Required**

### **Wed Sept 12 THE NEW SOVIET MAN (AND THE NEW SOVIET WOMAN)**

- Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (65-123)
- Discuss *Bed and Sofa*

\* **Wed Sept 12 - Close reading #1** assignment handed out in class. This assignment will consist of a series (2-3) of brief essays. Each essay will deal with a passage from a story or a novel, or a film sequence. You will need to a) scrutinize the selections in detail; 2) based on your close reading of each selection, you will need to create an argument that locates each selection within the larger work where it originates. Total length: 5-6 pages.

### **Mon Sept 17 Rosh Hashana, no class** (work on your papers and read Olesha’s *Emy*)

**Wed Sept 19 REVOLUTION AND THE INTELLECTUAL (I)**

- Yuri Olesha, *Emvy* (Part One, pp. 11-73)

\* **Wed Sept 19 - Close reading #1** – complete first draft due in class.

☝ **Contact Zoe Staum** ([staumz@lafayette.edu](mailto:staumz@lafayette.edu)), our Writing Associate, in advance to set up conferences to discuss your drafts between Wed Sept 19 and Sunday Sept 23.

**Mon Sept 24 REVOLUTION AND THE INTELLECTUAL (II)**

- Yuri Olesha, *Emvy* (Part Two, pp. 77-152)

\* **Close reading #1** – revised draft due in class.

**Wed Sept 26 Yom Kippur, no class**

**Mon Oct 1 STALINISM AS A CIVILIZATION**

- Watch in advance: *Circus* (dir. Grigory Alexandrov)
- Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (excerpts on socialist realism)

**Wed Oct 3 STALINISM AS A WAY OF LIFE**

- “Chronicle of the Year 1937 as Recorded by the Newspaper *Izvestiya* and Collective Farmer Ignat Danilovich Frolov” (pp. 11-66) and “Diary of Vladimir Petrovich Stavsky” (pp. 219-250) in *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*
- Stephen Kotkin, “Speaking Boleshevik” in *The Magnetic Mountain*

**Mon Oct 8 Fall break, no class**

**Wed Oct 10 STALINISM AS PRISON UNIVERSE**

- Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales* (selected stories)
- Anna Akhmatova, “Requiem”

**Mon Oct 15 ALLEGORIES OF STALINISM (I)**

- Watch before class: *Ivan the Terrible* (Part I, 1944, released January 1945)
- Andrey Sinyavsky, “Stalin: The State-Church” in *Soviet Civilization*, pp. 81-113
- Maureen Perrie, *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin’s Russia* (pp. 149-168)
- Joan Neuberger, “The Politics of Bewilderment. *Ivan the Terrible* in 1945”

\* Note: In this session and in the session on Oct 17 we will pay particular attention to the range of scholarly arguments that can be made about a single work (in this case, *Ivan the Terrible*). Be ready to summarize the arguments made by scholars in the critical sources you are reading about the film. This will prepare you for the assignment that follows on Oct 17.

**Wed Oct 17 ALLEGORIES OF STALINISM (II)**

- Watch before class: *Ivan the Terrible* (Part II, 1946, release prohibited until 1958)
- Anne Nesbet, “Inanimations: Snow White and Ivan the Terrible”
- Ivan Kozlov, “The Artist and the Shadow of Ivan,” in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*

\* **Wed Oct 17 – Expository essay** assignment handed out in class.

In this paper (5 pages long) you will be asked to develop a topic of your own choice that allows you to analyze a particular issue in or a particular angle on a primary text/film (or a small set of primary sources). In your analysis, you should also draw on one or two critical studies by other scholars to support your argument or contrast with your argument.

**Mon Oct 22 REPRESENTING THE WAR**

- Watch in advance: *Cranes are Flying* (dir. Mikhail Kolotozov, 1957)

\* **Tues Oct 23 Expository essay** (complete first draft) due

☝ **Contact Zoe Staum**, our Writing Associate, in advance to set up conferences to discuss your drafts between Tues Oct 23 and Sun Oct 28.

**Wed Oct 24 WAR AND THE QUESTION OF MEMORY**

- Watch and discuss in class: animated film *A Tale of Tales* (dir. Yuri Norshteyn, 1979, 29 minutes long).

**Mon Oct 29 SKILLMAN LIBRARY SESSION**

- Meet at Skillman Library at 2:45 sharp for a session with librarian Terese Heidenwolf. You will be introduced to library collections and databases that will help you with your final assignment: A researched essay that uses critical sources to interpret a literary text or a film – sources that unlike in Expository essay, you will need to select and locate on your own.

\* **Mon Oct 29 - Researched essay** assignment handed out. This is 5-6 page paper in which you will be asked to build an argument around a primary source – this will be a literary text, a memoir, or a film – that we have studied in class at any point during the semester (both up to the midterm and after), in light of two or three different scholarly sources (articles or book chapters) about that primary source. While you will be asked to stick to the primary sources listed on this syllabus, you will be choosing the secondary sources on your own after the visit to Skillman library today. *The draft of this essay will be due on December 1; you will discuss the draft with the Writing Associate Dec 3-7; the revised essay will be due together with the take-home final on Dec 15. Seek me out during office hours some time in the month of November to discuss your progress.*

\* **Mon Oct 29 – revised Expository essay** due in class.

Mon Oct 29, 7 PM – 10 PM at Pardee 102B

**NARRATING THE SOVIET PAST**

In this session, we will watch an hour-long documentary that concentrates on a single apartment building in Moscow and, in doing so, teases out complicated and interwoven narratives of the Soviet experience. We'll follow the screening with a two hour-long discussion.

Screening and discussion: *A House on the Arbat Street* (dir. Marina Goldovskaya, 1993)

Read: Stephen Bittner, "History of a Metaphor" and "History and Myth of the Arbat" in *Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (1-39)

**Wed Oct 31 INTIMACY AND COMMUNAL LIVING**

- Joseph Brodsky, “In a Room and a Half”
- Abram Tertz, “Tenants”
- Andrei Sinyavsky, “The Soviet Way of Life” in *Soviet Civilization* (153-189)

**Mon Nov 5 VISIONS OF THE FUTURE, TALES OF THE PAST**

- Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line* (13-91)
- Viktor Erofeev, “The Russian God” (article on vodka from the New Yorker)
- Abram Tertz, “Pkhents”

**Wed Nov 7 ALCOHOL, PROPHECY AND THE FANTASTIC**

- Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line* (91-end)
- Continue the discussion of Tertz’s “Pkhents”

**Mon Nov 12 THE DOUBLE BURDEN: POETRY AND PARENTING**

- Ludmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night* (pp. 1-86)
- “Youth” and “Everyday Life” from *Dear Comrade Editor: Readers’ Letters to the Soviet Press under Perestroika*

\* **Close reading #2** assignment handed out in class. This paper will be based on a close reading of a literary text or a film studied after the mid-term; you will need to make an argument about a larger issue in whatever text or film you pick based on the details you can support through close reading. Same as **Close reading #1** except that now you yourselves will need to identify the selections that are worthy of close reading. Length: 5 pages.

**Wed Nov 14 THE DOUBLE BURDEN: ANXIETIES OF THE EVERYDAY**

- Ludmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night* (pp. 86-155)

\* **Fri Nov 16 – Close reading #2** draft due by 5 PM by email to me and the WA

👉 **Contact Zoe Staum** ([staumz@lafayette.edu](mailto:staumz@lafayette.edu)), our Writing Associate, in advance to set up conferences to discuss your drafts between Fri Nov 16 and Mon Nov 19

**Mon Nov 19 No afternoon class;** work on your papers and come to class in the evening

Mon Nov 19, 7 PM – 10 PM at Oechsle 224

**Special Event: *My Perestroika* (dir. Robin Hessman, 2008)**

Screening and discussion of the film; Director present - **Required**

**Wed Nov 21 Thanksgiving break, no class**

**Mon Nov 26 THE END OF THE EMPIRE**

- Viktor Pelevin, “Vera Pavlovna’s Ninth Dream”
- Dmitry Prigov, Poems (selections)

\* **Mon Nov 26 - Close reading #2** (revised draft) due in class



**Wed Nov 28 THE FUTURE OF NOSTALGIA**

- Svetlana Boym, “Nostalgia and Post-Communist Memory” (57-71), “Ilya Kabakov’s Toilet” (309-326) and “Immigrant Souvenirs” (327-336) in *The Future of Nostalgia*
- “Sots-art”: art by Komar, Melamid, Kosolapov, Sokov, and Kabakov

\* **Fri Dec 1** – Draft of **Researched essay** (assigned during the library visit on October 29 and modeled on Expository essay assignment) **due**

☝ **Contact Zoe Staum** ([staumz@lafayette.edu](mailto:staumz@lafayette.edu)), our Writing Associate, in advance to set up conferences to discuss your drafts between Fri Dec 1 and Fri Dec 7.

**Mon Dec 3 RUSSIA AFTER THE END OF HISTORY**

- Watch before class: *Brother* (dir. Alexei Balabanov, 1997)

Mon Dec 3, 7 PM – 10 PM at Pardee 102B

**THE RUSSIANS IMAGINE AMERICA**

Screening and discussion: *Hipsters* (dir. Todorovsky, 2008) - **Required**

Read: Alexei Yurchak, “Imaginary West” in *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More* (158-206)

**Wed Dec 5 RUSSIA TODAY: BACK IN THE USSR?**

- The closing statements of the accused members of the punk band Pussy Riot (from their trial in Moscow in August 2012) <http://nplusonemag.com/pussy-riot-closing-statements>

**Dec 15** – Revised draft of **Researched essay** due