

RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS: FILM

Autumn 2017

Class meetings: Tu/Th 2:30-4:20 @ ART 003

Office hours: Tu/Th 1:15-2:15, and by appointment

Prof. Sasha Senderovich

Office: Padelford Hall A210E

Email: senderov@uw.edu



From *Bed and Sofa* (1927)

From the early years of the Soviet avant-garde to the post-Stalinist era of covert critique and the Putin regime that is still ongoing, Russian film offers an intriguing perspective on Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet life and the art of film. We will explore the pioneering cinema of Eisenstein, Vertov, and Pudovkin; the Hollywood-modeled propaganda films and musical comedies of the 1930s; the representation of World War II; the aesthetic and moral quests of post-Stalinist filmmakers like Kolotozov, Muratova, and Shepitko; and new directions in post-Soviet cinema from the end of the USSR to the Putin era.

This quarter, because 2017 marks the hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, we will focus specifically on thinking about the past century in Russian film as dealing with the revolution as a subject. Or, rather, *revolutions*—plural—in society, everyday life, gender, sexuality, and the art of cinema itself.

Course materials: All films are available with English subtitles. All films are available to stream online on a combination of platforms, including Youtube (free), Kanopy (free), FilmStruck (free trial period), and Amazon Video (small charge). All efforts will be made to minimize or eliminate costs associated with streaming for the students. There are no textbooks that students are required to purchase. I will be posting links for each film as the quarter progresses.

Schedule of classes and assignments:

Note: please watch all films prior to the start of each respective class session if “watch before class” is indicated next to the title of the film. All films can be streamed at home / in the library; I will provide links to all the films as they come up, through Canvas and through direct communication with the students.

Please check this syllabus before each class: some film titles may change depending on availability of films (though the number of films will remain the same and will not increase). There will also be selected *short* (very short) background readings from <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/> throughout the semester; reading these will help your comprehension of the class material enormously though we will not necessarily discuss these in detail the same way we discuss the primary sources in our course—the films themselves.

INTRODUCTION ❖ THE CENTURY OF REVOLUTIONS

Thursday, Sept 28 In the Kingdom of Shadows

- Watch / discuss in class: *The Cameraman's Revenge* (Władysław Starewicz, 1912)
- Watch / discuss in class: *Trofim* (Aleksandr Balabanov, 1995)
- Read / discuss in class: Maxim Gorky, “The Lumière Cinematograph”

ONE ❖ REVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS

Tuesday, Oct 3 Imagining the Soviet Union

- Watch before class: *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (Lev Kuleshov, 1924)

Thursday, Oct 5 The Montage of Attractions

- Watch before class: *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Tuesday, Oct 10 Filming the Revolution

- Watch before class: *The End of Saint Petersburg* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927)

Thursday, Oct 12 Life Caught Unawares

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

Tuesday, Oct 17 Revolution at Home: Menage á trois, Soviet Style

- Watch before class: *Bed and Sofa* (Abram Room, 1927)

Thursday, Oct 19 Visions of a New Land

- Watch before class: *Earth* (Oleksandar Dovzhenko, 1930)

TWO ❖ THE STALIN REVOLUTION

Tuesday, Oct 24 Comedy as Ideological Entertainment

- Watch before class: *Circus* (Grigory Alexandrov, 1936)

Thursday, Oct 26 Fairytale Stalinism

- Watch before class: *The Radiant Path* (Grigory Alexandrov, 1940)

Tuesday, Oct 31 The Totalitarian Gaze

- Watch before class: *Ivan the Terrible – Part I* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1944)

Thursday, Nov 2 Allegories of Terror

- Watch before class: *Ivan the Terrible – Part II* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1946)

✍ **Sunday, Nov 5 Take-home exam #1 is due** (you will have one week to complete it)

THREE ❖ THE REVOLUTION TURNS INWARD

Tuesday, Nov 7 Representing War

- Watch before class: *The Cranes are Flying* (Mikhail Kolotozov, 1957)

Thursday, Nov 9 Topic: TBD; in-class activity

Tuesday, Nov 14 Memory of Flight

- Watch before class: *Wings* (Larisa Shepitko, 1966)

Thursday, Nov 16 The Double Burden

- Watch before class: *Brief Encounters* (Kira Muratova, 1967)

FOUR ❖ RUINS AND AFTERLIVES OF THE REVOLUTION

Tuesday, Nov 21 The Perils of the Good Life

- Watch before class: *The Diamond Arm* (Leonid Gaidai, 1973)

Thursday, Nov 23 No class, Thanksgiving

Tuesday, Nov 28 Into the Sci-Fi Zone

- Watch before class: *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979)

Thursday, Nov 30 “There is no Sex in the Soviet Union”

- Watch before class: *Little Vera* (Vasily Pichul, 1988)

Tuesday, Dec 5 The End of Saint Petersburg

- Watch before class: *Brother* (Aleksei Balabanov, 1997)

EPILOGUE ❖ THE PUTIN ERA: WHITHER?..

Thursday, Dec 7 Church and State

- Watch before class: *Leviathan* (Andrey Zviagintsev, 2014)

✍ **Sunday, Dec 10 Take-home exam #2 is due** (you will have one week to complete it)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Before diving into details, a few words on my grading philosophy. I strongly dislike quantitative grading and, as a pedagogue, I have a relatively strong envy of my colleagues who teach at universities and colleges where qualitative grading is the norm (e.g. Hampshire College, which has no grades). However, we all have to play by the rules of the University of Washington, and that means coming up with the best possible way to produce a quantitative grade for each student at the end of the course. To this end, I try to approach my courses in the following manner:

- a) I believe that, in 2017, courses in the Humanities can enormously enrich students' professional and personal lives if they prioritize analytical thinking over rote memorization and regurgitation. As your professor in the age of readily-available and internet-searchable answers to fact-oriented questions, my duty is to teach you the skills that Google and Wikipedia aren't good at: the harder-to-define skills of critical and analytical thinking. Therefore, I approach my role as someone who is tasked not with teaching you content (or, anyway, not *only* content) but rather as someone who has great interest in using our class time and our class material to aid you in improving your critical skills in analytical thinking and concise, topical, precise expression. I design different course requirements based on this approach.
- b) I recognize that there are numerous learning styles and that no one measure of assessment will suit all students in the same way. For this reason, I aim to break down the composition of the final grade (which, remember, I have to give you given UW's expectations!) between different kinds of assignments so as to best play to as many of my students' strength as possible.

So, with this in mind, this is what we're working with:

Out of the total of 100 points, the final grade will consist of the following four parts

❖ Part 1. Quizzes: 36 points (2 per quiz, total of 18 quizzes)

These will take place during every class session starting with the second meeting of the class and running through the end of the quarter.

All quizzes are "open book": while we technically have no actual books in this course, you are more than welcome (and, indeed, you are encouraged!) to keep detailed notes on films you watch and to use these notes during quizzes.

The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you *attentively* watch all of the assigned films on time, don't fall behind, and are prepared to participate in class. These quizzes will be short, and they will be tabulated with the help of Poll Everywhere (paper backups will be available in case technology fails us). Most quizzes will contain between two and four multiple-choice questions, for the total of 2 points per quiz.

I've relied on this method of assessment for several years now, and I tweaked and improved it based on my students' feedback. My students' consistent feedback has been that though many find that they would rather not have regular quizzes in class, most acknowledge that the quizzes allow them not to fall behind in the course. The major upside to having these regular quizzes is that students in my courses *never* have to memorize or cram any material because my courses don't contain more typical cumulative in-class midterms or finals for which one has to study extensively. Basically, this part of the assessment is aimed solely at making sure you stay on top of the course material and are actively engaged in the learning process—I do not design these quizzes to trick you, I design them to aid your steadily-paced learning. Think of this as a whooping third of the final grade for doing what you should be doing in the course to begin with: doing all regular homework assignments (watching films) on time.

If you arrive in class late or leave the class early you may end up missing a quiz, so please arrive on time. You cannot make up in-class quizzes you miss. In case of a documented excused absence (e.g. illness), we may be able to make special arrangement for you to make up a missed quiz.

As a matter of policy, I will drop the lowest two grades on your quizzes (these may include the quizzes you miss due to an illness or for any other reason). You can also have additional lowest quizzes dropped if you attend extra credit

events, to be announced throughout the quarter; availability of extra credit events will depend on what appropriate cultural offerings are available at UW or in the Seattle area throughout Autumn 2017.

❖ Part 2. Participation: 18 points

Students are expected to be prepared for class and contribute to class discussions regularly, intelligently, and in a way informed by course assignments. All are expected to be active participants in group and partner activities. This emphasis on participation is based on the fact that a major goal of this class is to develop skills to talk and converse meaningfully on complex historical topics.

Note: students will have multiple ways in which to show that they are engaged including group work, in-class activities, and conversation / discussion. Those students who speak the most aren't necessarily the students who will be the "best" participants—sometimes the opposite is the case. However, in most cases, regular contribution to class discussions is a marker of good preparation and engagement. *In my experience, participation grades tend to be roughly similar to overall assignment averages*, as participation can only be as good as one's preparation and comprehension.

The following will typically cause the participation grade to bring the overall course grade *down*:

- Showing lack of respect for other students or the professor, including by interrupting or intimidating others, disrespectfully dominating class discussion, or making derogatory comments about individuals or groups on the basis of religion, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender, etc.
- Using a phone or other electronic device in class other than when required for class activities (see phone and laptop policy below).
- Consistently lacking engagement during class or during group work or class activities.

The following will typically cause the participation grade to bring the overall course grade *up*:

- Demonstrating through one's comments and class participation that one is learning from one's earlier errors or responding to feedback over the course of the quarter.
- Showing unique interest in and respect for other student's contributions and comments, building on their thoughts, and helping to create a dynamic learning atmosphere in the classroom.

Note: Not everyone starts out in the same place when it comes to class participation. I believe that class participation is a skill that one acquires, with regular practice and effort, over time—the same way that one acquires other critical skills in any given class. Participation in college classes is good preparation for discussions in other spheres of one's professional and social lives, so this is something we all get better at with practice. I am mindful of this in assessing this part of the final grade: I will pay as much attention to regular participation as I will to progress and improvement over time. **To this end, we will schedule one-on-one meetings with each student in the middle of the quarter;** these meetings will offer an opportunity to discuss every student's progress in the class, including how their participation in the course is going.

❖ **Part 3. Written assignments: 45 points (2 take-home exams).** The larger number of points given to the assignment on which the student performs better.

There will be two take-home exams during the quarter. Cumulatively they will be worth 45% of the final grade, but I will make the decision of how much each of the two exams will be worth on case-by-case basis with an eye toward bringing up students' grades. To take one example, let's say that Student A performs poorly on the first exam but shows a remarkable improvement on the second exam. Student A is a typical and expected case of a student improving as they learn new ways of thinking about course material, and I, as the course instructor, want to encourage this improvement. So, I may decide to, for example, make the first (worse) take-home worth 15% of the grade while making the second worth 30%. To take another example, Student B is the opposite of Student A: a brilliant first take-home but poor performance on the second. This could happen for any number of reasons: maybe student B got less interested in later material, maybe they fell ill, maybe something else happened in their lives that made it difficult to do as well the second time around. So, I'll calculate this part of their grade accordingly – for example, 30% on exam 1 and 15% on exam 2. Numbers in these exams are approximate, but you get the idea.

These take-home exams are open-book exams. You will generally have as close to a week's worth of time as possible to complete each from the moment the exam is posted until the exam is due. I aim to give my students a generous amount of time to complete exams—you should use this time wisely and produce the best work possible. I find that take-home exams, where students are asked to analyze and apply their knowledge rather than in-class exams for which students have to memorize material and study in advance tend to produce better learning outcomes.

Details of these take-home exams will emerge during the quarter. I never start out any of my courses with a precise set of exams in mind: I design these for to each group of students, depending on how our class goes. Expect to see on this take-home exams versions of assignments that we will be doing together in class (for example, analysis of specific scenes in films, short conceptual questions, possibly very brief micro-essays). These exams are not papers with specific word counts—they will be a set of different short questions.

We will be modeling various exam questions in class throughout the semester so by the time you take the exam, you will know exactly what kind of thinking the exam expects you to showcase. So, this all goes back to regular participation in class and regular in-class quizzes: learning ways of thinking that we'll be polishing in class is not something you can make up, so do your best to avoid missing classes.

❖ Part 4. Introductory survey: 1 point

There will be a brief introductory survey, to be completed online, due at the beginning of the quarter. This will be for me to learn a bit more about you as students so I can know a little bit better how to best shape class interactions during the quarter depending on backgrounds and interests of students in class.

How your final grade will be calculated:

At UW, grades are given on a 4-point scale. In this class, assignments will be graded in points. Points will add up to 100 (so, e.g., a 36-point assignment is 36% of your final grade). If you want to know how you are doing in the course, add up your points and then do the math to see what grade you would get if you get different numbers of points on the assignments left in the course. I calculate grades this way because students tend to find it easier to add points than think in terms of percentages. The 100-point total makes it clear the relative importance of different assignments or sections of assignments. **To calculate your grade**, I will take your total number of points, multiply by 4, and move the decimal point over two places (divide by 100). For example, if your final point total is 92 out of 100, then $92 \times 4 = 368$, and $368/100 = 3.68$ on UW's 4-point scale. As UW grades must be submitted in tenths of a point, I will round up or down to the *nearest* tenth: in this example, your final grade will be 3.7.

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

Extra credit opportunities will be available throughout the quarter. These will involve attending public lectures and / or events on topics relevant to our course (e.g. history and culture of Russia and the former Soviet Union, cinema, etc.) hosted both at the University of Washington and throughout the city of Seattle. These will be announced in class as they come up (you are also welcome to ask me about some event that you know about and I don't: ask me in advance, so that I can decide whether what you have in mind would qualify as an intellectually enriching and topic-specific event to count for extra credit). Please do not request extra credit at the end of the quarter: the idea is that you take advantage of various extra credit opportunities throughout the quarter.

Extra credit will generally be 1 point per event; you can use these points to fill in some gaps in the quiz grades that you might accumulate during the term. In addition to attending the event, you will be asked to contribute a short (1 page or about 300-350 words) written response about what you learned at the event and how this information adds to your knowledge of the topic we study in our course. I hope that offering extra credit in this fashion will incentivize students' participation in a rich set of offerings at UW and in Seattle. One-time extra credit is available to students who send the professor one picture of a cat—any cat you deem worthy of attention—by 11:59 pm on Monday, October 2; send the cat pic by email to the prof., put "feline extra credit" in the email's subject line (you must follow these directions precisely to receive extra credit). Extra credit events will be posted in Announcements (in Canvas) as they come up, so please monitor our class site.

LAPTOP AND PHONE POLICY

Phones

Phones will be used in class only during the first few minutes of class or immediately after breaks for Poll Everywhere quizzes. Once these quizzes are over I will make it clear that we are done with them and phones must be switched into *airplane mode* so that you will not be distracted by incoming texts. Vibrate mode is not acceptable. (Believe me, if you don't switch it to airplane mode you will be distracted).

There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to have your phone on. These will primarily relate to child and family care obligations. If this is your situation in general or on a particular class day, please tell me in advance, and be prepared to step out of the room if you are contacted. You will not be penalized for telling me or for stepping out of the room in such circumstances.

No other communication is urgent enough to interrupt you during class. You can get back to it during the break or after class is over. I'm a human being with a smartphone, too, so I know from my own experience that if my phone is on vibrate or otherwise altering me to messages the message will feel urgent. It is my obligation as your professor to devote the class time to you as my students; it would not be acceptable for me to use my phone during such times. I ask the same of you as students in the course.

We will take a short break about half way through each class. This is the appropriate time to use the bathrooms, refill your water, or check your email. Students who repeatedly leave at times other than this may be penalized, unless they communicate to me about special circumstances.

Laptops

Laptops are not allowed in class unless I specifically tell you to bring them for a class activity that may need to involve computers—this means that you should have a paper notebook in which to take notes and you should bring readings. (If you do not have a smart phone to take quizzes in Poll Everywhere, you may use your laptops to take these quizzes but put your laptops away when the quiz is over.)

This policy is based on compelling research showing that students learn less, enjoy classes less, and distract both themselves and others around them if they use laptops in class for note taking (even if they *only* use them for notetaking, which is rare in practice). For example, see the following articles:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/28/why-students-using-laptops-learn-less-in-class-even-when-they-really-are-taking-notes/>

<http://college.usatoday.com/2012/09/08/laptops-may-be-the-ultimate-classroom-distraction/>

<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>

Note: Any student who has a specific need for a computer during class (such as a need for documented learning accommodation or learning style that may require the use of specific software) should speak with me about their particular circumstances so that appropriate arrangements could be made.

I encourage you to speak with me about these requirements if they are not clear. Please communicate with me if you are having any particular problems with the course or if a simple change could go a long way. Email is the best way of doing so. I am more than willing to work with you if you take the initiative to be in touch when appropriate but I am much less flexible when I hear about problems at the last minute or after the fact. I hold regular office hours but I am also willing to meet with any of you at other times. Just let me know and we can set something up.

NOTE-TAKING

Bring a regular paper notebook to class. As is the case with the research on the negative effects of laptops in the classroom, there is now research on how taking notes by hand on paper is far more effective than turning yourself into a transcription machine writing down every word that the professor says without processing what's being said as much as you do when you take notes on paper. For example, take a look at this:

<http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop>

You will find it enormously helpful for your performance in class discussions, on in-class quizzes, and on take-home exams if you take good notes on homework assignments (i.e. on films you watch). You don't want your notes to be exhaustive and take up many pages—sparse and more precise notes are much easier to navigate when you need to use them than lengthy notes. Close reading and close scrutiny of details of films and film sequences is really our task for the quarter, so you may want to structure your notes accordingly. In class, I will do my best to model good note-taking practices for you: I might make specific suggestions, on occasion, of different ways to write something down.

If you wish to take notes at home on your computers, you are, of course, welcome to do so. In this case, however, you must print these out before class if you'd like to access your notes in class given that use of laptops and smart phones is not permitted during class.

COMMUNITY STANDARDS, ETIQUETTE, AND COMMUNICATION

I borrow the following—with permission—from my UW colleague Prof. Mika Ahuvia:

The Five Commandments (of Russian 223 / CHID 270C)

1. Thou shalt strive to create a positive learning environment for all, with respect for everyone's ethnicity, color, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship status, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status.¹
2. Thou shalt use your freedom of speech and expression in a manner that is consistent with UW's values of equality and respect for all campus community members: Your need for self-expression is important, but may never come at the expense of other people's needs.²
 - a. Instructor reserves the right to move class conversations forward.
3. Thou shalt not over-generalize about any religion or religious / cultural community.
 - E.g. ~~Jews are ...~~, ~~According to Christianity ...~~, ~~All Muslims ...~~, ~~All Russians ...~~
4. Thou shalt not tokenize your classmates (by expecting them to represent millions or billions of people.).
5. Thou shalt prioritize your health and well-being and your classmates' health and well-being. Reach out to your classmates and professor if you feel overwhelmed or need help.
 - a. Name & email/# of classmate _____
 - b. Name & email/# of classmate _____

¹ Executive Order No. 31: Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action in This policy is adopted in compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)) and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ([20 USC § 1681](#)), Title I and II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-11) and [45 C.F.R. Part 84](#), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)), Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq](#)), [Chapter 49.60 RCW](#), and Gender Equality in Higher Education ([Chapter 28B.110 RCW](#)). For full text, see <http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/PO/EO31.html>

² See: Marshall Rosenberg and Deepak Chopra, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (PuddleDancer Press, 2015).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Religious Observances

Please communicate all anticipated absences due to religious observances at the *start* of the quarter (not the day before the holiday). As with all absences, you are expected to check with other students about what you missed and catch up on all reading and work.

Access and Accommodations

It is important to me that this course be accessible to all students. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

If you are not sure whether you will need the accommodations you have been granted or not sure whether your condition requires accommodations, it is best to err on the side of disclosure and documentation in case they do prove necessary. I will keep all accommodations confidential and will attempt to address them discretely if possible. The presence of an accommodation will have no effect on your grade.

Academic Integrity

Students at the University of Washington are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct, professional honesty, and personal integrity.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of the [University of Washington Student Conduct Code](#) (WAC 478-120). We expect you to know and follow the university's policies on cheating and plagiarism, and the [SPH Academic Integrity Policy](#). Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University of Washington regulations. For more information, see the University of Washington Community Standards and Student Conduct website.

Classroom Climate

Diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences are essential to the critical thinking endeavor at the heart of university education. Therefore, I expect you to follow the [UW Student Conduct Code](#) in your interactions with your colleagues and me in this course by respecting the many social and cultural differences among us, which may include, but are not limited to: age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender identity and presentation, citizenship and immigration status, national origin, race, religious and political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and veteran status. Please talk with me right away if you experience disrespect in this class, and I will work to address it in a professional and educational manner. DCinfo@uw.edu is a resource for students with classroom climate concerns.