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Russian Culture and Thought - RUSS 150W

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Department of European Languages and Literatures, Queens College, CUNY
Russian Culture and Thought 150W-001 (43350)
Spring 2025

Russ 150W
Tu, Th. 12:15PM - 1:30PM
3 hr., 3 cr.
Queens Hall, Room 320

Asst. Prof. Malika Ziyamova
E-mail:malika.ziyamova@qc.cuny.edu

Instructor Office Hours: Every Tuesday from 11:10 am to 12:10 pm. Meetings will be held in Queens Hall, Room 205L (Adjuncts' office on the second floor).
Class Meetings: This is an in-person course that includes constant use of Brightspace content. ALL required assignments, weekly course materials, as well as some of the most recent announcements and updates for the course will be posted on Brightspace under "Announcements". Access to Brightspace is **mandatory** for this course. You are expected to check it on a regular basis.

Course Description and Learning Outcomes
This course is a survey of Russian culture and civilization through the lenses of literature, art, folklore, music, history, politics, philosophy, and key aspects of everyday life. Russian history has resulted in a culture that is both familiar and alien to Western observers. Russia's writers, intellectuals, artists, and scientists have been long and widely appreciated for their contribution to understanding the human condition. The reading, translation, adaptation, and response to their work has shaped a good deal of the cultural and intellectual heritage we have inherited. The reading of primary and secondary texts is (or can be) the basis for reflection on the relation of written documents of various provenances to evolving social and historical contexts, by considering the circumstances of composition and by the discussion of the texts *per se* that raise questions of interpretation. This course aims to give students an awareness of such literary and cultural artifacts produced in Russia that have had the most impact on the cultural and intellectual life of "the West".

Through our readings and discussion, we will try to identify and understand elements that distinguish Russian from the Western culture. The tools of our analysis will be critical reading, close analysis of texts, critical writing, discussion, and debate.
Knowledge of Russian is not required; all assignments are in English. Discussions will be in English. The assigned readings may be completed either in English or Russian (if a student can read Russian, not required!). Written assignments should be written in English.

RUSS 150W will count towards the requirements for the minor or major in Russian.

***This course is a Writing Intensive course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement.**

Required Textbook:

Bova, Russell. *Russia and Western Civilization: Cultural and Historical Encounters*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003. **– The Queens College Library, CUNY provides access to a free electronic version of this textbook via:** https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/qc-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1974446

This course uses Open Education Resources/Zero-cost course material. No textbook purchase is required. All reading material is publicly available. All links/pdf copies for each week will be posted on Brightspace.

Reading assignments must be completed at the beginning of each week for which they have been assigned (**see the *Course Schedule* below**). They will include original texts, critical readings, as well as instructor's notes, videos links, and supplementary course materials posted on Brightspace.

Grading

The single most important thing you can do, both for your learning and for your grade, is to keep up with the reading so that you can participate actively in class. To help you stay motivated, 20% of your grade is based on class participation and attendance. To meet minimum participation requirements, you should plan on speaking at least once in every class. Valid forms of participation include asking questions (to the instructor, or to classmates during the discussion); answering questions asked by the instructor or other students; commenting on the readings; responding to classmates' comments and ideas; volunteering to read aloud when needed; taking an active role in small-group activities; and completing writing activities such as short responses and quizzes.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation in class activities (see below)	20%
Three critical essays (see "Writing," below)	60%
Final exam	20%

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59

***Attendance and Class participation**

Regular attendance and active participation in informed discussions are deemed vital for this course. Attendance will be taken at each class period and together with participation will determine a significant portion of your grade. You are expected to be in every class. However, obviously there may be times when either you are too sick to attend, or you have a major event that conflicts with the class schedule in a way you cannot control. It is up to you to figure out your priorities in such cases, and to get notes from a classmate if you are unable to attend class. Also, your participation grade will be based on the quality and frequency of your contributions when you are present. If you need to be absent on the day when an assignment is due, contact me *before* class and submit the assignment by email.

YOU MUST ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY, COME ON TIME TO CLASS, AND BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN CLASS ACTIVITIES TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE!

Each reading must be completed **BEFORE** the class date on which it is scheduled for discussion.

***Writing (take it home Essay assignment)**

This course is a Writing Intensive (W) course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement.
W classes include a significant portion of time devoted to writing instruction. This may include things such as revision workshops, discussions of rhetorical strategies, or reflective writing about writing

assignments. Students will write three critical essays, each of about **5 double-spaced pages with standard one-inch margins in 12-point Times New Roman font**, excluding bibliography and the title page. The essays are due on the dates indicated in the course schedule (see below). **Detailed guidelines for each essay assignment will be given in class and duplicated on Brightspace**. Each essay assignment should be submitted on the due date or before on Brightspace. **No LATE work** will be accepted except in cases of emergency. In such a case appropriate documentation (for example, a doctor's note) should be provided.
Each of your essays should unfold an *argument* in which you make a claim about one or more of our readings, explain your reasons for believing your claim, and support (back up) your reasons with evidence in the form of quotations from the text. You are not required to use any outside sources to write these essays, but if you do consult a secondary source (e.g. for historical information), be sure to cite it, preferably in the MLA format: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/1/
The language in which you write need not be excessively formal—in fact, the closer you can stick to your "natural," everyday voice, the better—but it should be carefully proofread to make sure that it says what you want it to say; that your sentences are clear and grammatically sound; that the logic of your transitions from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph is made clear to the reader (who should never have to read your mind); and that it conforms to the basic expectations of standard written English.

Please note: the course schedule (including the assignment deadlines!) is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Please remember to consult the Brightspace course page for the most recent announcements and updates.

***Final Examination**
The format and submission guidelines will be announced in class as well as posted on Brightspace.
NO MAKE UP EXAM.

COURSE POLICIES

QUEENS COLLEGE POLICIES

COVID-19 Information: Please refer to the Coronavirus Resources page on the QC website for the most up-to-date guidance.

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. The Office of Special Services (SPSV) is committed to supporting students with qualifying disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access. If you have previously received accommodations due to a disability, believe you may have a disability, or have a temporary disability, please visit the office's website for further information on the assistance they can offer you. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you are encouraged to get registered sooner rather than later. You may also contact their office at qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu or call 718-997-5870 during office hours for assistance as well. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, visit: Special Services | Special Services (cuny.edu).

Queens College Classroom Photography and Recording Policy: Neither photographs nor recordings (audio or video) of all or parts of classes at Queens College may be made without written permission from the course instructor(s). The Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Special

Services may provide for the recording of classes on behalf of a student receiving disability accommodations, missing class due to religious beliefs, or experiencing extended absence due to medical or other exigent circumstances. The Queens College Classroom Photography and Recording Policy applies to both students and visitors. Students and visitors are not authorized to copy, download, or disseminate authorized recordings and photographs to others. Students in violation of this policy are subject to disciplinary action, and visitors in violation of this policy are subject to removal from the classroom and/or campus (Adopted at Queens College Academic Senate Meeting, November 14, 2024).

Carefully note the dates for the required assignments as listed on this syllabus (**which overrides any information as given in the timetable**). If you miss an assignment without a valid excuse, such as illness (you must provide a doctor's note) or family emergency, you will receive a zero for that assignment. *It is your responsibility to inform the instructor of your absence **BEFORE** the scheduled class.*

***Policy on Cell Phones:** Cell phones and other PDAs **must be turned off** during class except with special permission from your instructor.

Class Etiquette: Please avoid being late for class and early to depart; those chronically late and in a continual need to leave early will see their grade reduced. While a bottle of water or a cup of coffee is fine, please avoid bringing food. Therefore, we discourage students from eating or chewing gum in class.

Required tools and accounts

E-mail and Brightspace accounts: Your instructor will regularly send messages to the entire class. They will be sent to your email account registered with Brightspace and CUNYfirst. Access to Brightspace is **mandatory** for this course. You are expected **to check it on a regular basis**. Homework information will be posted on the Brightspace under "**Announcements**." **Please ensure that you have access to Brightspace, that your email account registered with Brightspace is valid**, **and that you check it for communications regularly**.
For more information about Queens College email account, please visit: Email | Information Technology Services (cuny.edu)
For more information about Brightspace account, please review: https://www.qc.cuny.edu/brightspace/

Technical Support: For technical help with your Queens College email, Brightspace, and CUNYfirst accounts, please contact the Queens College helpdesk located in the I-Building, Room 151 - (718) 997-4444.
For more information please visit: About | Information Technology Services (cuny.edu)
Or Online Services | Information Technology Services (cuny.edu)
Email: helpdesk@qc.cuny.edu

Course Rules and Regulations

1. On the first day of the semester, familiarize yourself with the entire course, including the syllabus, course structure, and course materials.
2. Follow the course guidelines, rules and regulations.

3. Use a QC email account (or other account associated with your Brightspace and CUNY first) to register for access to Brightspace on the CUNY portal in order to participate in this course.

4. Complete all required readings and assignments, participate in discussions, and complete written required assignments on time.

5. Read, respond, and complete if necessary, all instructor's announcements and current course tasks.

6. Observe the deadlines for submissions – please try to post your work on Brightspace in advance in order to avoid technical issues, such as sudden disruption of the Internet service.

7. No changes of the due dates and/or times, except for the following situations: student's illness which must be proven by a doctor's notice or other emergency/hardship situation with written proof.

8. The final course grade will be calculated based on all course grades.

9. Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. According to the *QC (Revised) Academic Integrity Policy*, "Students found in violation of the Revised Academic Integrity Policy can face both academic and disciplinary sanctions." Like any form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism can result in a failing grade in the course and further disciplinary action such as suspension or dismissal from the College. Each course assignment must be your own individual work. In writing assignments, indeed, in all classwork, you must document direct quotations, paraphrases, information and ideas.

CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity: Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided at https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/academic-integrity-policy/ Please read this document, paying careful attention to the sections on plagiarism and Internet plagiarism. If you are not sure how to cite work you have found on the internet, please review the APA or MLA Guidelines.

Writing Center: Queens College Writing Center will operate online, and you can schedule an appointment by visiting: https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/wc/

Statement on Student Wellness: As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. QC services are available free of charge. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: Counseling Services | Counseling Services (cuny.edu)

Use of Student Work: All programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies. For these purposes, samples of student work are occasionally made available to those professionals conducting the review. Anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Course Evaluations: During the final four weeks of the semester, you will be asked to complete an evaluation for this course by filling out an online questionnaire. Please remember to participate in these course evaluations. Your comments are highly valued, and these evaluations are an important service to fellow students and to the institution, since your responses will be pooled with those of other students and made available online. All responses are completely anonymous; no identifying information is retained once the evaluation has been submitted.

Licensing Statement:

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RUSS 150W, Russian Culture and Thought
Course Schedule

Note: *This syllabus is a subject to change. The instructor may add and/or modify the course materials, including stories, critical readings, assignments, and discussions at any time during this course.*

January 28
Introduction to the Course, Requirements, course Syllabus (pdf posted on Brightspace)
***"Meet Your Classmates"* -** Introduce yourself to the class by discussing about your academic goals, why you decided to take this course and if you have any previous knowledge of Russian culture, literature, and history.

January 30
Russia - A Brief History: Kievan Rus' and the Tsardom of Muscovy
Reading assignment:
Introduction in Bova, **pp. 3-20** (pdf posted on Brightspace)

February 4-6
Russia and the West: Peter the Great
Reading assignment:
P. Bushkovitch, *"Peter the Great"* (pdf on Brightspace)

Myths of the Two Cities: Moscow and St. Petersburg
Selected works:
Moscow vs St. Petersburg | Which Russian City Should You Visit?

February 11
Russia and the West: Catherine the Great
Reading assignment:
P. Bushkovitch, *"Catherine the Great"* (pdf on Brightspace)

February 13
Theatre and Drama in Catherine's Age
Reading assignment:
The Comedy by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, *"Oh, These Times!"* (pdf on Brightspace)

***February 18** **Classes follow a Monday schedule**

February 20
The Russian Idea and the West: Slavophiles and Westernizers
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 32-51**

February 25
Russian Cultural History: Russian Folk and Fairy tales
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 145-154**

February 27
Russian Folktales
Reading assignment:
Russian Fairy Tales (pdf on Brightspace)
Selected works:
Jack Frost, movie

***The First Critical Essay is DUE March 2, Sunday. Please drop your Essay 1 into the assignments box on Brightspace by 11:59 PM.**

March 4
Literary Giants: 19th-century: Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 154-159**
Selected works:
A. Pushkin, *"Eugene Onegin"* movie: Excerpt, 1;
Excerpt, 2

***March 6 Classes follow a Wednesday schedule**

March 11
Literary Giants, cont.: 19th-century: Nikolai Gogol
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 159-163**
N. Gogol, *"Nevsky Prospect"* (pdf on Brightspace)

March 13
Literary Giants, cont.: 19th-20th centuries: Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy

March 18
Literary Giants, cont.: 19th-20th centuries: Anton Chekhov
Reading assignment:
A. Chekhov, "*The Cherry Orchard"* (pdf on Brightspace)

March 20-25
The Russian Revolutions
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 113-129**
Selected works:
The October Revolution. Storming of the Winter Palace.

March 27-April 1
Russia in the Twentieth Century: Stalinism, Soviet Propaganda, First Five-Year Plan, Gulag, Women's Rights, Soviet Culture
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 129-139**

April 3
Soviet Literature: Politically Engaged Poetry, Russian Émigré Prose, Women's Prose in the Stalin Era
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 163-174**
Selected works:
O. Mandelstam, *"The Stalin Epigram"*; A. Akhmatova, *"Requiem 2"* (pdf files on Brightspace)

****The Second Critical Essay is DUE April 6, Sunday. Please drop your Essay 2 into the assignments box on Brightspace by 11:59 PM.**

April 8
WWII (The Great Patriotic War)
Selected works:
Soviet Storm, documentaries

April 10
Soviet Women in the Second World War
Required assignment:
Battle for Sevastopol, movie
Selected works:
Digital Public Library of America, Lt. Lyudmila Pavlichenko

***April 12-20** **No classes scheduled - Spring Recess**

April 22-24
Russian Art
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 177-207**
Selected works:
The Firebird, Igor Stravinsky's ballet

The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg
The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
The Guggenheim Museum, New York, Vasiliy Kandinsky
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Russian Art Collection

April 29-May 1
Russian Music
Reading assignment:
in Bova, **pp. 210-240**
Selected works:
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, from *"The Nutcracker," "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy"*
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, 1st Piano Concerto, performs Denis Matsuev, director Yuri Temirkanov
Pelageya, *"Under a Green Willow"*
Vladimir Vysotsky – *"Wolf Hunt"*

*****The Third Critical Essay is DUE May 4, Sunday. Please drop your Essay 3 into the assignments box on Brightspace by 11:59 PM.**

May 6-8
Soviet Union, The Brezhnev Era, The Portrayal of Women in Soviet Cinema in the late 1980s
Required assignment:
Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears, movie

Perestroika Era, Collapse of the Soviet Union

May 13
Youth and Popular Culture
**Suggested Reading:*
in Bova, **pp. 319-350**
Selected works:
Kino (band) and Viktor Tsoi: *"Blood Type" ("Gruppa krovi")*
Polina Gagarina, *"Cuckoo,"* a 2015 remake

May 15
The Image of Youth in Late Soviet Cinema
Required assignment:
The Messenger Boy/Courier, movie

Perspectives on the Future, Democracy and Russian political culture
**Suggested Reading:*
in Bova, **pp. 243-276**
Last day of classes. Preparation for the final exam.

May 22. Final Exam: 11:00AM - 1:00PM (TBD)