**RUSS 6300:**

**Imperial Imagination Through Literature and Film**

(conducted in Russian)

**Course Description and Goals:** The course examines how Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet culture constructed the representations of the parts of the former Russian/Soviet empire and ideological purposes these representations served over the last three centuries. The course explores Russian nationalist discourse and addresses the role that these cities and regions play in Russian imperial imagination. We will examine how Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet prose, poetry, and film constructed the representations of these these cities and regions and what ideological and aesthetic purposes these representations served at various stages of their existence. We will study how the heritage of Russian classical 19th-century writers, poets, and artists was adopted in the 20th-century literature and movies. We will discuss what these cities and regions meant for poets and writers of the late Russian Empire, and what new meaning they acquired in the early days of the Soviet regime and under Stalin. We will consider what functions the images of these cities and regions acquired for Russians after the collapse of the USSR. Finally, we will explore how these multi-layered images are used in contemporary Russian ideology. Our analysis of literature and film will be informed by the exploration of the historical context.

**Learning goals for this course:**

1) to enhance advanced oral proficiency by participating in class discussions and preparing presentations in Russian (with a special focus on ability to sustain discussion of complex cultural issues in Russian)

2) to demonstrate reading and writing proficiency in Russian at the high advanced level, by reading wide range of Russian texts, including classical Russian prose and the authentic texts in various media;

3) to learn how to explore, navigate and evaluate various sources of information in Russian, with a special emphasis on the usage of the Russian Internet resources

4) to develop in-depth knowledge of the place occupied by the cultural centers of ethnic minorities in Russian imperial imagination over the past three centuries

5) to demonstrate the ability to successfully analyze various political discourses within Russian and American contexts.

**Grading (highlighted refers to graduate students):**

Active participation in class discussions 15%

Timely and conscientious completion of homework 20%

Weekly essays (one per week) 15%

Oral presentation (due week 15) 10%

Midterm 20%

Final Essay (10 pages; due by 5pm, Tuesday of finals week) 20%

**Active participation in class discussions (15% of the final grade)**

A; engaged, thoughtful participation demonstrating thorough work with the course materials prior to class 90-100%

B; some participation, demonstrating acquaintance with course materials prior to class  80-89%

C; present, but little active participation 70-79%

D; present but or no active participation 60-69%

F; unexcused absence 00-59%

Students will be notified of their cumulative participation grade in the week prior to the drop date and again during the final week of class.

**Homework (20% of the final grade)**

Homework is on the syllabus for each week. Students are required to read assigned texts and thoroughly analyze the selected fragments.

Homework Grading :

A 90-100% - assignment is complete, interpretations and research are excellent, questions are answered

B 80-89% - assignment is incomplete, interpretations are incomplete, not all questions are answered

C 70-79% - inadequate answers to the questions, inadequate research

D 60-69% - inadequate understanding of the texts assigned

F 0-59% - homework not submitted

**Weekly essays (15% of the final grade)**

Each topic includes a choice of prompts for a writing assignment. Undergraduate students are expected to write 1 handwritten page addressing one of the prompts; graduate students are expected to write 2 handwritten pages addressing one of the prompts.  Prompts should be addressed in a thoughtful, creative ways and soundly argued (if the assignment is analytical) and organized, and well written. (Generally, this means that the essay uses varied syntax, is free of lexical and grammatical errors, and is proofread.)

**Oral presentation (10% of the final grade)**

Students will make a 10-minute presentation to the class on the topic of their final essays. Presentations should be spoken, not read, and will be graded on content (40%); presentation skills (30%), language (20%) and quality of visual aids (10%).

**Midterm (20% of the final grade):** Multiple-choice, short, and long answer questions covering the readings.

**Final essay (20% of the final grade):** The final written assignment is a paper of 5 pages in Russian (4300 students) or 10 pages in Russian (6300 students), which is either a close critical analysis of one of the texts read during the course, or a problem-oriented essay addressing one of the topics discussed in class. The topics of final composition are chosen individually and must be approved by the instructor. The final composition can be typed, if desired. Students are required to submit a detailed plan of their final essay two weeks prior to final submission.

Final Essays will be graded as follows:

Communicative content 20%

Lexicon and spelling 20%

Grammatical accuracy 20%

Syntax (variety, use of complex sentences) 20%

Originality of ideas 20%

**Course syllabus example:**

**Course Description and Goals:** The course examines how Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet culture constructed the representations of Crimea and ideological purposes they served over the last three centuries. The course explores Russian nationalist discourse and addresses the role of Crimea in Russian imperial imagination. We will examine how Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet prose, poetry, and film constructed the representations of Crimea and what ideological and aesthetic purposes these representations served at various stages of their existence. We will study how the heritage of Russian classical 19th-century writers, poets, and artists was adopted in the 20th-century literature and movies. We will discuss what Crimea meant for poets and writers of the late Russian Empire, and what new meaning Crimea acquired in the early days of the Soviet regime and under Stalin. We will consider how Crimea emerged as an anti-Soviet symbol in the late Soviet culture and investigate what functions the image of Crimea acquired for Russians after the collapse of the USSR. Finally, we will explore how this multi-layered image was exploited by Putin’s propaganda in preparations for the annexation of Crimea. Our analysis of literature and film will be informed by the exploration of the historical context.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction. The Ukrainian crisis and its place in Russian and Ukrainian current politics. Russian public opinion on the annexation of Crimea. Crimea and Ukraine: Geographical location, nature and resources; people and culture.**

Readings:

* Stephen F. Cohen, “Distorting Russia: How the American Media Misrepresent Putin, Sochi and Ukraine,” <http://www.thenation.com/article/178344/distorting-russia>;
* Timothy Snyder, “The Battle in Ukraine Means Everything,” available at <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117692/fascism-returns-ukraine>

Questions for class discussion

* What arguments does Stephen Cohen put forward in defense of Vladimir Putin and his politics?
* Why is this text relevant for our discussion regarding the annexation of Crimea?
* Using the Internet, find out who was Alexander Litvinenko, and why Cohen had to defend Putin against accusations of terrorism?

Optional readings:

* Serhii Plokhyi, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), pp. 323-345.

**Week 2: The annexation of Crimea by Catherine the Great (1776). Russian classical 19th-century poets and writers on Crimea and their heritage in the Soviet and post-Soviet culture: Alexander Pushkin.**

Readings:

Alexander Pushkin, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai. A Tale of the Tauride* (1823)

Questions for class discussion

* Review the brief outline of Pushkin's biography (slides 53-58) and apply the concept of Orientalism to Pushkin's poem.
* What is the Normanist Theory and why it remains politically important today?
* Where does Christianity and literacy come from to Russia?

Optional:

* Watch fragments from the ballet *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, music by Boris Asafyev and choreography by Rostislav Zakharov (the ballet premiered in Saint Petersburg (then Leningrad), in 1934 at the Kirov Academic Theatre, now The Mariinsky Theatre)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlNj0vpJqdQ>

* Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter “The Historical Roots of Modern Ukraine,” pp. 13-24;

**Week 3: Tatars and Kazaks: Zaporozhskaya Sech. Russian 19th-century poets and writers on Crimea and their heritage in the Soviet and post-Soviet culture: Nikolai Gogol.**

Readings:

* Nikolai Gogol, *Taras Bulba.* Chapters 1 and 2.  
  Watch the movie «Taras Bulba» (Vladimir Bortko, 2009)
  + <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1242457/>

Questions for class discussion

* What have your learned about cossacks from "Taras Bulba"?
* What is the political message of Bortko's film, if any?

**Quiz 1.**

**Week 4: Russian classical 19th-century poets and writers on Crimea and their heritage in the Soviet and post-Soviet culture: Leo Tolstoy. The Crimean War.**

Readings:

* Leo Tolstoy, *Sebastopol Sketches.* “Sebastopol in December”

Questions for class discussion

* "Sebastopol in December"  -  Romanticism or Realism?
* Patriotism vs. pacifism in "Sebastopol in December."
* What norms and ideals of Russian nobility were challenged by "Sebastopol in December"?

Optional:

* The Crimean War - The Siege of Sevastopol 1854–55 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA5NZ_lRgsU>
* Defense of Sebastopol (1911) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsRiPnzMw_I>
* Watch: The Crimean War - Episode 1 The Reason Why <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqik0WDMDco>

**Week 5: Crimea in the Russian early 20th-century literature and art: Anton Chekhov, Viktor Vasnetsov, Vasily Vereshchagin, Arkhip Kuindzhi, and Konstantin Alekseyevich Korovin.**

Readings:

* Anton Chekhov, ‘The Lady with the Little Dog’

Questions for class discussion

* Mark all the quotes in the text that characterize Gurov and Anna.
* What is Chekhov’s novella about? How would you summarize its main idea? What did Chekhov try to accomplish in this work?
* What have you learned about life in Yalta? How is it different from Gurov's life in Moscow?

Optional:

* Maxim Gorky. "Anton Chekhov: Fragments of Recollections"

**Week 6: The Bolshevik Revolution (October 1917). The White Guard and Bolsheviks’ conquest of Crimea (November 1920). Isaak Babel, *Red Cavalry*.**

Readings:

* Isaak Babel, Red Cavalry (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), “Italian Sun,” and “Gedali,” pp. 59-65. Compare the war as depicted by Babel and Tolstoy.

Questions for class discussion

* What are Babel’s attitudes to violence?
* What are Babel’s attitudes to the Bolshevik’s revolution of 1917?

Optional:

* Watch Sergei Eisenstein’s film *The Battelship Potemkin* (1925)
* Serhii Plokhyi, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), pp. 215-227.

**Week 7: Mikhail Bulgakov, *The White Guard****.* **“The Flight” (film by Vladimir Naumov, Alexander Alov, 1970, based on Bulgakov’s novel *The White Guard* and his play “The Flight”).**

Readings:

* Mikhail Bulgakov, *The White Guard.*

Questions for class discussion

* Describe the Turbins’ way of life and the main protagonists of the novel. Why are so many of the protagonists made so young?
* What role do the German government and troops play in the novel and why does the action take place in Ukraine?
* Find out who are Leo Trotsky, Vladimir Lenin, and Shimon Petlura.

**Week 8: Mikhail Bulgakov, *The White Guard, continued.* “The Flight” (film by Vladimir Naumov, Alexander Alov, 1970, based on Bulgakov’s novel *The White Guard* and his play “The Flight”).**

Readings:

* Mikhail Bulgakov, *The White Guard.*

Questions for class discussion

* What happens to colonel Nay-Turs?
* What message about the revolution does Bulgakov convey?
* What happens in Crimea according to “The Flight?”

**Quiz 2**

**Week 9. Ivan Aivazovsky and his paintings of Crimea**. **Maximillian Voloshin. Voloshin’s museum in Koktebel. Crimea in the Silver Age of Russian Poetry: Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam,** **and Marina Tsvetaeva on Crimea.**

Readings:

* Anna Akhmatova, “By the sea”
* Read Maximilian Voloshin’s *Inscriptions on Watercolors*.

Questions for class discussion

* Compare Voloshin’s representations of Crimea and his style (see Voloshin’s watercolors at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, http://www.floartfund.com/ru/project77.html) to those of Ivan Aivazovsky: http://www.theathenaeum.org/art/list.php?m=a&s=tu&aid=2159http://see-art.ru/art\_all/

Optional:

* Read Osip Mandelstam, “Feodosia”.

**Week 10: Crimea under the Soviets. Crimea in the Soviet propaganda: “Crimea –The Soviet Union Resort.” Pioneer camp Artek. The Ukrainian Famine (Holodomor).**

Readings:

* Arkadyi Gaidar. *Timur and his team.*
* Memoirs about the Soviet Artek

Questions for class discussion

* Using Catriona Kelly's chapters, describe the most important measures taken by the Soviet government toward the political indoctrination of children.
* What is humanism?
* What is totalitarianism?

Optional:

* Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World. Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007), Chapters Chapter "Pioneers and Pet-Keepers."
* Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter “Stalinism: Famine and Terror,” pp.103-121
* Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), Chapter “The Soviet Famines,” pp. 21-58.
* Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World. Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007), “‘Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for a Happy Childhood!,’ 1935-1953,” pp. 93-129.

**Week 11: Crimea and Ukraine in the Second World War. The Holocaust in Ukraine. Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *Babi Yar*. Deportations of Crimean Tatars. The creation of the Yalta system.**

Readings:

* Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *Babi Yar.*

Optional:

* Serhii Plokhyi, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), Chapter “Pax Mongolica,” pp. 49-60; experts from Chapter “Hitler’s Lebensraum,” pp. 263-275.
* Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), Chapter “The Final Solution,” pp.187-206.

**Midterm**

**Week 12: The Transfer of Crimea from Soviet Russia to Soviet Ukraine by Nikita Khrushchev in 1954. Soviet tourism to Crimea in the 1960s and 1970s.**

Readings:

* State documents on transfer of Crimea to Ukraine.

http://rusidea.org/?a=25021906

Questions for class discussion

* What is the “Thaw”?
* Who transferred Crimea to Ukraine and why?

Optional:

* Serhii Plokhyi, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015) pp. 296-304

**Week 13: Crimea as an anti-Soviet symbol in the late Soviet culture. Vassily Aksyonov’s novel *The Island of Crimea, (trans.* *Mikhail Henry Heim,* New York: Vintage Books, 1967): the foretelling of the Crimea crisis? Aksenov and the dissident movement in Soviet Russia.**

Readings:

Vassily Aksyonov, *The Island of Crimea*.

Questions for class discussion

* Compare the descriptions of life in the Soviet Union and that of Crimea.
* How would you describe the differences between the USSR and Crimea, as per the novel? Select quotations from the text that describe everyday life in the USSR.
* List the names of the historical figures – writers, political leaders, generals or artists – mentioned in these chapters whom we have discussed previously in our course.

**Week 14 (11/21-23): Crimea as an anti-Soviet symbol in the late Soviet culture. Vassily Aksyonov’s novel *The Island of Crimea* (continued).**

Readings:

* Vassily Aksyonov, *The Island of Crimea.*

Questions for class discussion

* What Russian 19th-century political movement comes to mind if you think about the contrast between Luchnikov's background, lifestyle, and his democratic inspirations?
* Why is the reference to Chekhov’s *The Lady with the Dog* so important for Aksenov?
* Why is the last chapter called “Spring”?

**Week 15: Fiction and Politics: Why Crimea? Does the annexation of Crimea signify a return to the Yalta system? Is there a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis?**

General discussion and students’ presentations.

Readings:

* Dmitry Medvedev's letter to the Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko on the "Holodomor"
* Putin’s Speech on the Annexation of Crimea ( March 18, 2014 )

<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

Questions for class discussion

* Search the news and find out how the US, the UK, and France have responded to the annexation of Crimea.
* What is to be done to resolve the conflict?

Optional:

* Dina Khapaeva, “Triumphant Memory of the Perpetrators: Putin’s Politics of Re-Stalinization,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies,* 2016, n. 49, pp. 61–73

**Major works discussed in the course:**

**Literary works:**

* Alexander Pushkin, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai. A Tale of the Tauride* (1823)
* Nikolai Gogol, *Taras Bulba.* Chapters 1 and 2.
* Leo Tolstoy, *Sebastopol Sketches.* “Sebastopol in December”
* Anton Chekhov, ‘The Lady with the Little Dog’
* Isaak Babel, Red Cavalry, “Italian Sun,” and “Gedali”
* Mikhail Bulgakov, *The White Guard*
* Vassily Aksyonov, *The Island of Crimea*

**Historiography and Literary Criticism:**

* Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
* Catriona Kelly, Childern’s World. Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991, (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007)
* Nikolay Koposov. Memory Wars, Memory Laws. Politics of Memory in Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)
* Serhii Plokhyi, *The Gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015)
* Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010),
* Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)
* Mykola Riabchuk . “Holodomor: The Politics of Memory and Political Infighting in Contemporary Ukraine,” *The Harriman Review,* 2007, pp.3-9
* Georgy Kasianov “How a War for the Past Becomes a War in the Present,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16/1 (2015).
* Dina Khapaeva, “Triumphant Memory of the Perpetrators: Putin’s Politics of Re-Stalinization,”*Communist and Post-Communist Studies,* 2016, n. 49, pp. 61–73

**Further readings:**

* Vasily Veresaev. *The Deadlock*, (novel).
* Robert Tucker, *Stalin in Power: the Revolution From Above, 1929–1941* (New York: Norton, 1990).
* Nina Tumarkin. Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia. Harvard UP, 1983.
* Christel Lane. The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society: The Soviet Case. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
* D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968)
* Paul Bushkovitch, *A Concise History of Russia* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
* Karen Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2014)
* Dina Khapaeva. “Unfinished Experiments with a Reader. N. Gogol. Peterburgskie Povesti,” English translation by Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in Literature*, vol. 46, no. 2, spring 2010, pp. 46–98.
* Feuer, Kathryn B. *Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace*, Cornell University Press, 1996.
* Gottlieb, Vera, and Paul Allain (Eds.), The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
* David M. Bethea, *The Shape of the Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (1989)
* Haber, Edythe C. "Dwellings and Devils in Early Bulgakov." Slavic and East European Journal 37 (September 1993): 326-338. http://www.homeenglish.ru/ArticlesBulgakov.htm
* Marietta Oamrovna Chudakova. Biolgraphy of Bulgakov<http://www.imwerden.info/belousenko/books/litera/chudakova_bulgakov.htm>
* Milne, Lesley, *Mikhail Bulgakov: a critical biography,* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
* Robert Conquest. *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties (1968)*
* J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985