**RUSS 6360**

**Russian Culture through Songs**

### [This is the graduate version of RUSS 4360]. In this course, songs are both the object of analysis and a stepping off point for broader discussion and writing as we explore key issues in the last 80+ years of Russian and Soviet culture and history. Materials are presented in a specially designed computer interface. Students are presented with both rich annotation to help develop a sophisticated understanding of these often not uncomplicated songs, and a broad range of contextual content in various media is provided for directed exploration of the broader cultural context. Songs run the gamut from 1930s popular music to bards, rock and other contemporary forms.

Some topics to be covered include:

* the fate of the capable individual in Brezhnev’s Russia
* gypsy song in Russian culture
* Soviet official attitudes toward jazz and other Western musical forms, as well as exploration of the subcultures that formed around them
* the history of the Soviet/Russian national anthem
* ironic strategies for challenging official discourse
* the Soviet experience during World War II,
* reflections of Putin’s Russia in the songs of the Chechen war
* prayer and religion in Russia and the Soviet Union
* reflections of camp life
* the Soviet-era cult of the hero and its reverberations (Gagarin)
* glasnost era rock music and youth alienation
* complicated love for the motherland
* the fate of communism and communists in a post-communist era, satire and its relation to power
* the problem of compromise or non-compromise of principles in choosing a career
* the problem of emigration

**Learning goals for this course:**

1) to develop advanced oral and aural proficiency (with a special focus on listening for detail);

2) to demonstrate reading and writing proficiency in Russian at the high advanced level, by capitalizing on the innovative interface and encounters with a broad range of authentic target-culture texts in various media;

3) to hone presentation skills through speaking on the cultural context, sense and significance of an iconic song;

4) to develop in-depth knowledge of select focus areas of Russian culture,

5) to demonstrate sophisticated critical reflection on the complexity and context of songs as cultural objects; and

6) to meaningfully compare perspectives and practices both within Russian/Soviet culture and between Russian and American cultures.

Course site: <http://clsp.gatech.edu>

Login: xxxxxxxxxxx Password: xxxxxxxxx

*Instructions for use of the materials are available in the first two sections: “Введение: How to use these materials” and “Как сдать домашнюю работу”. Be sure to read them carefully. Written work can be printed directly from the site (use the feedback or print buttons) or compiled into a Microsoft Word document to be printed later. I suggest that you use Microsoft word for essays. Homework and essays must be submitted on paper.*

*The course site is fully functional in* ***Mozilla Firefox****,* ***Google Chrome*** *or* ***Opera****. Please choose one of these browsers to connect to the site.*

**Grading:**

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Active participation in class discussions 20% 15%

Timely and conscientious completion of homework 20% 15%

Weekly essays (one per unit; 1-2 pages typed) 40% 35%

Oral presentation 10% 10%

Final paper 10% 25%

[Grading for graduate students differs from undergraduates, in that less weight is given to participation, homework, and weekly essays, and more to the final paper.]

**Active participation**

A; engaged, thoughtful participation which demonstrates thorough work with the course materials prior to class

B; some participation, demonstrating acquaintance with course materials prior to class

C; present, but little active participation

D; present but or no active participation

F; unexcused absence

Tardy; -5 points

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**

Homework is found in the dedicated course website and is required of all students. In addition, graduate students are *required* to read/view 2-3 of the contextualizing texts accompanying each of the main texts [for undergraduates, these are optional].

A; assignment is complete, answers are full and thoughtful

B; assignment is complete, answers are brief/minimal

C; very inadequate answers

D; incomplete

F; homework not submitted

For each class day late; -5 points

**Weekly essays**

Each unit includes a choice of prompts for a writing assignment. These range from suggestions for analysis of texts and problems to parameters for creative writing or personal reflections. Undergraduate students are expected to write 2/3 to 1 typewritten pages; graduate students are expected to write 1-2 typewritten pages

An A will be assigned to work which is thoughtful, creative, soundly argued (if the assignment is analytical) and organized, and well written, given the student's linguistic level. (Generally, this means that the essay uses varied syntax, is free of lexical and grammatical errors, and is proofread.)

**Oral presentation**

Students will make a 10-minute presentation to the class on the historical/social context, meaning and artistic qualities of one glasnost'-era song. Presentations should be spoken, not read, and will be graded on content (40%); presentation skills (30%); language (20%); and quality of visual aids (10%). No more than 2-3 minutes maybe taken up with musical examples.

**Final paper**

Undergraduate students: This final paper is comparable to the weekly essays in terms of text-type (a choice of essayistic, analytical, or creative writing), but more ambitious in scope (3-5 pages depending on the individual’s s language proficiency).

Graduate students: 7-8 pages typewritten in Russian. The paper may address a historical period or problem using songs as a point of entry or as evidence; analyze a single song in the context of its time; or make a comparison between songs from different contexts (including between the Russian context and another geographical/historical context to which the student has access).  It is strongly encouraged that students refer to 2-3 secondary sources (journalistic or scholarly) in setting up the analysis, but the paper is primarily an analytical essay, rather than a work of research.

An A paper will have a sound and recognizable overarching thesis which is argued and refined throughout; strong organization; judicious use of quotations and descriptive illustrations from the song(s); proper citation of secondary sources; clear and precise language use (evaluated with an eye to the given student's linguistic level); and will be free from careless errors.

**Absences**

Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. <http://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

**Student Disability Resources**

Reasonable accommodations are provided to self-identified students with disabilities who meet the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the program of study. Consideration may be given to the substitution or modification of certain course requirements as long as such changes do not detract from the quality of the educational experience and the changes remain within the accreditation criteria for the degree program. Such substitutions or modifications must be approved by the school chair, department head, or college dean, and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and/or the Graduate Committee. For further information, please go to <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu>

**GT Honor Code**

*"Having read the Georgia Institute of Technology Academic Honor Code, I understand and accept my responsibility as a member of the Georgia Tech community to uphold the Honor Code at all times. In addition, I understand my options for reporting honor violations as detailed in the Code."* <http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code>

**Summary Schedule:**

Week 1 – Vysotsky’s anti-fairytales. Fate of the talented individual in the era of Stagnation. “Besshabashnaia toska i gusarstvo.” Main unit song: Vysotskii, “Pro dikogo vepria.”

Week 2 – The gypsy song and gypsies in Russian culture. Main unit songs: “Dve gitary” (ispol. Leshchenko), Vysotskii, “Moia tsyganskaia.”

Week 3 – 1930s popular music. Tango and jazz. Jazz in Soviet polemics about appropriate musical forms. The mass song. Main unit songs: Tsfasman, “Neudachnoe svidanie,” Leshchenko, “Akh, eti chernye glaza.”

Week 4 – The Soviet and Russian national anthems in historical perspective and popular performance. Main unit song: “Gimn SSSR” [1977] (ispol. gr. “5’nizza”).

Week 5 – War, part I. Songs of the World War II. Main unit songs: Shul’zhenko, “Sinii platochek,” Utesov, “Baron fon der Pshik.”

Week 6 – War, part II. Songs of the Second Chechen War. Anti-war songs and neo-patriotism in Putin’s Russia. Main unit songs: 5’nizza, “Soldat,” Liube, “Davai za.”

Week 7 – Prayer in Russian poetry and song. Okudzhava’s “The Prayer of Francois Villon” and Soviet militant atheism.

Week 8 – Songs of the [labor] camps. Songs of the criminal world. Main unit song: Aleshkovskii, “Okurochek.”

Week 9 – Gagarin. Gagarin the man and Gagarin the Soviet hero figure par excellence. Gagarin’s death. The Soviet cult of Gagarin and youth reaction (s*tyob*). Main unit songs: Kristalinskaia, “Nezhnost’,” Undervud, “Gagarin, ia vas liubila.”

Week 10 – *Glasnost’* and youth alienation. Tsoi’s “Kukushka.” Covers and remakes. Main unit song: “Kukushka” (ispol. Zemfira). **Student research presentations**.

Week 11 – “Strange love” for the motherland/step-mother in Russian culture. Main unit song: Katya Iarovaya, “Na smert’ Rossii.”

Week 12 – Moscow October: 1992-93. Fate of the communists in post-communist Russia. Changing social mores. Main unit song: Akvarium, “Moskovskaia oktiabr’skaia.”

Week 13 – Satire and the powers that be in Putin’s Russia. Elections and protests. Main unit song: Shaov, “Vyberi menia.”

Week 14 – Life choices. Question 1: Career or (sub)culture. The “stylish ones” (*stilyagi*). Music on bones (contraband records cut on used x-ray film in the 1950s). Question 2: To emigrate or to “stay put?” Main unit songs: VIA Gra, “Emu ne nuzhna Amerikanskaia zhena,” Anatoly Krupnov (Chernyi obelisk), “Ia ostaius’.”

Week 15 --The fate of the “little man” in Putin’s Russia. Main unit song: Grisha Danskoi, “Na verkhnei bokovoi.” **Final paper**.