

COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall 2012

Russia and its World: History and Culture



RUS 330



Class meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 2-3.15 pm in Parlin 304

Instructor: Prof. Gilbert C. Rappaport

- Personal office: Calhoun 1
- Mailbox in department office: Calhoun 415
- Phone: 471-3607
- E-mail: grapp@austin.utexas.edu.
- Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12.30-1.30 and by appointment (let me know in class or by e-mail when you'd like to meet and we'll arrange something very soon)

Cross-listings and unique numbers:

- CL 323 (33695)
- HMN 350 (39890)
- REE 325 (44640)
- RUS 330 (45020)

Degree credit. This course:

- Satisfies core curriculum requirements for an undergraduate degree with flags for *Writing* and *Global Cultures*;
- Counts toward a major or minor in either Russian or in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
- Can serve as an elective in any degree plan
- Under certain conditions (consult the graduate advisor) it can count toward the M.A. degree in:
 - Slavic Languages and Cultures; or
 - Russian East European, and Eurasian Studies

Prerequisites: Upper-Division or graduate standing. Exceptions may be granted with permission of the instructor. No knowledge of Russian is expected or required.

Content and goals of the course:

This course will attempt the impossible: to explain why Americans are so fascinated by Russia. The answer may lie in the fact that this expansive maxi-country (or mini-world), separated from our own country at the Bering Strait by a mere 2.5 miles of shallow seawater, is both a mirror-image of America and its opposite. The feeling is mutual: Russia has gone from a colonial conqueror of its continent and indigenous people to being the Anti- (Bizarro?) America to a society of unbridled commercial capitalism, all the time trying to definite its position between Europe and Asia. Understanding Russia's centuries-old Russia could lead to better understanding ourselves.

Coursework will consist of lectures, reading, and discussion in English on the political and cultural history of Russia, from its prehistoric origins to the events of 1917 leading to communist rule. Special emphasis will be on enduring themes of cultural identity, imagination, and conflict, both with neighboring peoples and within.

The backbone of the course is a sketch of the history of the Russian people, from their origins to the revolutions of 1917. From this structure we will make forays to sample the best of the cultural world at each period in time. Class presentations will highlight creative work especially in art, architecture, and music. We will often jump forward in time to see how a particular historical event or cultural product is used later in Russian history for political purposes or as an inspiration for artistic creativity. Included in the course will be tours of Russia's capitals Moscow and St. Petersburg as fascinating preserves of historical and cultural values, alongside the delights of modern urban life.

And what lies ahead for the new Russia? As Winston Churchill said, "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

Learning resources:

There will be numerous handouts, which should be kept in a loose-leaf binder. Materials may also be made available for purchase as course packets.

- **A course website** will be maintained on Blackboard with lecture notes and other materials
- There is no perfect textbook for this course and none is required. An excellent book which I would strongly recommend is the following:
 - Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg. *A History of Russia*. 8th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0195341973.Also useful, although less comprehensive, are the following, which focus more on political history than the cultural perspective:
 - Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009. ISBN: 978-1851686131.
 - Ronald Hingley. *Russia. A concise history*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1991. ISBN: 978-0500276273
 - John M. Thompson. *Russia and the Soviet Union: An historical introduction from the Kievan state to the present*. 6th ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0813343952

Student responsibilities: You are expected to attend class regularly, do any assigned readings on time, take careful notes during class, participate actively in class discussions, take all in-class exams, do the writing assignments on time, and give a joint class presentation at the end of the semester on a topic you have developed with the instructor. This syllabus is supplemented by a *Block Schedule* overview of the semester and a detailed *Daily Assignment Schedule*, which describes assigned preparation and in-class activities. You should thus be ready for each class meeting with relevant observations and questions.

Regular attendance is essential and expected: absences inevitably affect your course participation grade (if you aren't in class, you can't participate). If you are absent, it is **your** responsibility to find out from another student what was covered in class and obtain any handouts that were distributed.

Student evaluation: Course grades will be assigned by weighting class and homework activities as follows:

Four writing assignments: ¹	50%
Three in-class exams: ²	40%
Class participation: ³	10%

¹The first three **writing assignments** (10% of the course grade each) are to be at least 800 words in length (typically 3-4 pages double-spaced). Topics and guidelines will be distributed in class. The final paper (20% of the course grade) is intended to be a revision and expansion of one of the previous three papers, bringing a broader perspective possible at the end of the course. (A completely new paper is acceptable, but in no way preferable.) This final paper must be at least 1600 words or 800 words longer than the paper it is expands on, whichever is longer. The assignments are due (as shown on the block schedule) on the following dates.

- October 2 (Tuesday of Week 6 in class)
- October 30 (Tuesday of Week 10 in class)
- November 29 (Thursday of Week 14 in class)
- December 14 (by noon on Friday of the examination period, one week after the end of classes)

A penalty may be assessed for an assignment submitted after the time it is due.

²**Exams** will be based on both the class lectures and preparatory reading assignments. We will be covering a considerable amount of factual and conceptual material; it will be made clear, however, what will be required of you for examination purposes. The exams (as shown on the block schedule) are held in class on the following dates:

- September 25 (Tuesday of Week 5)
- October 23 (Tuesday of Week 9)
- December 6 (Thursday of Week 15)

In-class exams cannot be rescheduled or delayed, nor can make-up exams be offered.

³**Class participation** includes not only attendance, but completing reading assignments on time and taking an active part in class discussion.

The result of these calculations will be on a number on a scale of 0-100. Plus/minus grading will apply. This numerical grade will be converted to a letter grade as follows:

93	≤	A	≤	100	73	≤	C	<	76
90	≤	A-	<	93	70	≤	C-	<	73
86	≤	B+	<	90	66	≤	D+	<	70
83	≤	B	<	86	63	≤	D	<	66
80	≤	B-	<	83	60	≤	D-	<	63
76	≤	C+	<	80			F	<	60

An Incomplete in the course (grade of X) will be granted only under the direst of circumstances (e.g., an unexpected family or health crisis preventing you from continuing your academic work) and you will be asked to substantiate any such circumstances.

These rules will be strictly observed by your instructor.

This course carries the *Writing* flag. The course is intended to give you experience with writing in an academic discipline. A substantial portion of your grade accordingly comes from your written work. The quality of written expression on this work is an important component in determining the course grade.

Attendance policy. Regular attendance and active participation in class are expected. Your attendance will be recorded by the instructor. Your first three absences (out of the 28 class meetings) will not result in a direct penalty. Each absence without documented and proper justification beginning with the fourth one will result in a penalty of 1.5 points (out of 100) on your course grade. That is a substantial penalty, so you should make class attendance a high priority.

Writing Center. I encourage you to take advantage of the Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC), FAC 211, 471-6222: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UT may visit the UWC for assistance with any writing project. Do not feel that there is any stigma attached to utilizing the UWC's services. Getting feedback is a normal part of a successful writing project. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance they provide is intended to foster independence. Each student determines how to use the consultant's advice. The consultants are trained to help you work on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work. The Writing Center website contains materials which you should find useful in working on papers for this course. [adapted from text provided by the UWC.]

Accommodations for disabilities. Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Religious holidays. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Course policy on electronic devices

- Please ensure that your cell phone and any other electronic communication devices are **OFF** and **OUT-OF-SIGHT** throughout the class period.
- Laptop computers may be utilized during class, but **EXCLUSIVELY** for purposes related to the activities of the class that day and **ONLY** with the permission of the instructor.
- Failure to observe these courtesies will be reflected in your class participation grade.

Scholastic dishonesty. Students are expected to maintain the standards of academic integrity. At a minimum, this means the following (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php):

- Acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- Complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- Follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- Avoid engaging in any form of scholastic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

Scholastic dishonesty includes unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, and multiple submission of the same work. The consequences of scholastic dishonesty can be severe, and may include grade-related penalties (possibly a failing grade), suspension, or even expulsion, from the University. Academic dishonesty violations can be resolved by the individual faculty member through a “faculty disposition” process or be referred to Student Judicial Services (SJS) in the Office of the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. For more information on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, see the Student Judicial Services website (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

Internet

- In this class we will use *Blackboard*, a web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>, to distribute course materials and information. Help in using Blackboard is available at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- According to the University policy, it is every student's responsibility to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, including coursework. Certain communications may be time-critical. E-mail should be checked daily, but no less frequently than twice per week. It is further the student's responsibility to keep the University and instructor informed as to changes in e-mail address. The policy is available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

Counseling Services

Student life can be stressful. You should be aware of the many services offered to all of us in the UT community by the University's *Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)*. See their website for further information: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>. Two particular resources of importance are available at all times:

- The CMHC offers a telephone counseling line: 471-2255.
<http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html>
- If you are concerned about the behavior or well-being of someone else on campus, the Behavior Concerns Advice Line provides a central resource for us to share our concerns: 232-5050 or <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Disclaimer. This syllabus is a good faith statement of the instructor's plans and objectives at the beginning of the semester. The details here are subject to change. Such changes will be communicated in class and in writing by e-mail in a timely fashion.

Problems: If there are any questions or problems about any aspects of this course, feel free to contact the instructor.

Let's have a great semester!

