The Icon and the Sword: An Introduction to Medieval Russian Literature and Culture

REE 325/RUS330 (Undergraduate)

REE 385 (Graduate)

Dr. Michael Pesenson

This course offers an introduction to the rich and multifaceted literary and cultural achievements of medieval and early modern Russia. Students will explore the worldview of medieval Orthodox Slavs by delving into such topics as religion, spirituality, art, literature, history and popular culture. We will read and discuss fundamental texts from Kievan and Muscovite Rus' that reveal a vibrant and thriving literary and cultural life. These texts include notable examples of historical writing, military tales, saints' lives, homilies, adventure tales and miracle tales. We will also examine regional differences in cultural production, particularly in art and iconography. In addition, we will watch several famous Russian films and operas based on medieval motifs: Alexander Nevsky, Andrei Rublev, Ivan the Terrible, Boris Godunov, Ivan Susanin, and Prince Igor and discuss how composers and directors re-imagined medieval Russian culture in their own times. At the end of the course we will explore the effects of the Petrine Reforms on Russian culture of the eighteenth century as Russia abandoned its medieval ways in favor of rapid Westernization.

Week 1: Kievan Rus' – An Introduction to History and Culture

Thursday, 8/26 - Overview of Course

Readings:

Schenker, The Dawn of Slavic, Chapter 1 (Historical Setting)
Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind, Chapter 1 (Pre-Christian Paganism)
Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles and Tales, 1-17

Week 2: Kievan Rus' – An Introduction to History and Culture

Tuesday, 8/31 – Historical Overview: Early History of the Eastern Slavs through Kievan Rus'

Readings:

Zenkovsky, 43-73
Butler, Enlightener of Rus': The Image of Vladimir Sviatoslavich across the Centuries, Chapter 2 (25-55)
Likhachev, History of Russian Literature, 11-17th c., 69-109.

Thursday, 9/2 – Russian Chronicles – The Christianization of Rus'

Readings:

Franklin, Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus', xvi-xliv, 3-29
(Ilarion, Sermon on Law and Grace)
Butler, Chapter 1 (3-23)
Fennell/Stokes, 40-64
Poppe, "The Christianization and Ecclesiastical Structure of Kyivan Rus' to 1300", 311-338
Freeze, Russia: A History, 1-17

Week 3: Literature of Kievan Rus'

Tuesday, 9/7 – Vladimir Christianizes Rus' (continued) and Metropolitan Ilarion's Sermon on Law and Grace

Readings:

Hollingsworth, Hagiography of Kievan Rus', xxvi-lvii, 3-32, 97-116
(Tales of Boris and Gleb)
Sciacca, "In Imitation of Christ: Boris and Gleb and the Ritual Consecration of the Russian Land." *Slavic Review* 49/2 (Summer, 1990). (JSTOR: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2499484)
Fennell/Stokes, Early Russian Litearture, Hagiography, 11-32

Thursday, 9/9 – Kievan Hagiography: The Cult of St. Boris and Gleb

Readings:

Hollingsworth, lviii-lxviii, 33-95
(Life of Feodosij Pecherskij)
Fennell/Stokes, 32-40
Likhachev, 117-127
Heppell, The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery, 55-56, 69-71, 108-110, 139-147, 153-169, 181-190, 205-210

Week 4: Literature of Kievan Rus'

Tuesday, 9/14 – Kievan Hagiography: Life of Feodosij; Selections from Kievan Caves Paterikon (Demons wreaking havoc!)

Readings:

Zenkovsky, 92-100
(Instruction of Vladimir Monomakh)
Veder, The Edificatory Prose of Kievan Rus', 3-30
(Selections from the Izbornik of 1076)
Fennell/Stokes, 64-79
Likhachev, 114-117

Jaroslav's Statutes (electronic resource, Eve Levin)

Thursday. 9/16 – Edificatory Prose of Kievan Rus'

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 167-190
(The Lay of Igor's Campaign)
Likhachev, 134-161
Fedotov, Chapter 11 (The Tale of Igor's Campaign)
Fennell/Stokes, 191-206
Jakobson, Roman. 1952. "The Puzzles of the Igor' Tale on the 150th Anniversary of Its First Edition." *Speculum* 27. 43–66. (JSTOR: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2855293);

Week 5: Epics and Military Tales – From The Lay of Igor's Campaign to Zadonshchina

Tuesday, 9/21 – The Tale of Igor's Campaign

Screening of Alexander Borodin's opera: **Prince Igor**; date/time TBA

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 192-223
(Battle on River Kalka, Orison on the Downfall of Russia, Tale of the Destruction of Riazan, Zadonshchina)
Fennell/Stokes, 80-107
Likhachev, 192-208

Thursday, 9/23 – Military Tales of the Mongol Campaigns

Readings:
Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 44-130
Zenkovsky. 224-236; 243-248
Fennell/Stokes, 107-121

Week 6: Life under the Mongol Yoke and Defeat of the Mongols

Tuesday, 9/28 – Life of Alexander Nevsky and Serapion's Sermon on the Merciless Heathens

Screening of film: **Alexander Nevsky**; date/time TBA

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 315-322
(Orison on the Life and Death of Grand Prince Dmitry Ivanovich)
Fennell/Stokes, 121-138

Likhachev, 261-279, 286
Cherniavsky, "Saintly Princes and Princely Saints"

Thursday, 9/30 – Defeat of the Mongols: Orison on the Life and Death of Dmitry Ivanovich; Kulikovo Pole Cycle

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 259-290
(Works of Epiphanius the Wise)
Likhachev, 279-285
Nil Sorskii, *The Predanie*
Rock, "Russian Piety and Orthodox Culture 1380-1589" (*Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity*)
Miracle Tales (electronic resource, Eve Levin)

Week 7: Rise of Muscovy – Resurgence of Monastic Culture

Tuesday, 10/5 – Muscovite Hagiography: Epiphanius the Wise, St. Sergius and Nil Sorskii

Readings:
Bird, *Andrei Rublev*, 1-81

Thursday, 10/7 – **Screening of film Andrei Rublev in class!**

Readings:
Selections from Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*
Selections from Grierson, *Gates of Mystery: The Art of Holy Russia*, 11-71

Week 8: Muscovite Art and Architecture

Tuesday, 10/12 – How to Read an Icon

Readings:
Hughes, "Art and Liturgy in Russia: Rublev and his Successors" (*Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity*)
Selections from Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture*

Thursday, 10/14 – Art and Architecture of Medieval Muscovy

Readings:
Zenkovsky. 290-300
(Tale of Peter and Fevroniia of Murom)
Tale of Dracula (electronic resource)
Zenkovsky, 333-353
(Afanasy Nikitin's Journey Across the Three Seas)

Likhachev, 336-340, 331-333, 353-359

Week 9: Muscovite Literature

Tuesday, 10/19 – Three Tales (Peter and Fevronia, Dracula, and Afanasii Nikitin)

Readings:
Selection from the *Domostroi* (trans. Pouncy)
Penitential Questions (electonic resource, Eve Levin)

Thursday, 10/21 – *Domostroi* – Instructions for Keeping a Muscovite Household

Readings:
Freeze, *Russia: A History*, 17-54
Zenkovsky, 300-313; 323-332
Likhachev, 312-315; 288-294, 344-353

Week 10: Muscovite Autocracy and Local Traditions

Tuesday, 10/26 – Novgorodian Literature: Life of Michael of Klopsk, Story of John, Archbishop of Novgorod, Tale of the Novgorod White Cowl

Readings:
Selections from Fennell, *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, 1564–1579*
Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy*, "The Reign of Ivan the Terrible"

Thursday, 10/28 – The "Kurbsky – Ivan the Terrible" Correspondence

Screening of selections from the films *Ivan the Terrible* and *Tsar*; date/time TBA

Readings:
Crummey, The Formation of Muscovy, "The Time of Troubles"
Zenkovsky, 378-390 (From Avraamy Palitsyn on the Time of Troubles)
Likhachev, 426-433
Fennell/Stokes, 207-226
Pushkin, Boris Godunov

Week 11: The Time of Troubles and the Election of the Romanovs

Tuesday, 11/2 – The Time of Troubles

Screening of selections from Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar* and Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*; date/time TBA

Readings:

Zenkovsky, 391-399 (Life of Yuliania Lazarevsky)
Tale of the Demon Possessed Woman Solomoniia (electronic resource, Eve Levin)
Ziolkowski, Tale of Boiarynia Morozova
Fennell/Stokes, 226-231

Thursday, 11/4 – Three 17th century Women's Lives

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 399-452 (Life of Archpriest Avvakum Written by Himself)
Fennell/Stokes, 231-249
Likhachev, 518-527

Week 12: Russian Literature of the 17th Century

Tuesday, 11/9 – Archpriest Avvakum and the Old Believer Schism

Readings:
Zenkovsky, 441-501 (Secular Tales)
Likhachev, 478-487; 491-493; 494-496
Fennell/Stokes, 249-268
Morris, "The Tale of Savva Grudcyn and the Poetics of Transition." *Slavic and East European Journal* 36/2. 202–16. (JSTOR: http://www.jstor.org/stable/308966);

Thursday, 11/11 – 17th Century Secular Tales: Shemiaka's Judgment, Frol Skobeev, Savva Grudtsyn, Misery-Luckless Plight

Readings:
Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 1-105
Lotman/Uspenskii "The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture"

Week 13: The Petrine Revolution

Tuesday, 11/16 – Peter the Great Embraces the West: Founding of St. Petersburg

Readings:
Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 109-173
Feofan Prokopovich, "Sermon on the Internment of Peter the Great" (The literature of 18th century Russia)
Selection of Odes by Trediakovsky and Lomonosov (The literature of 18th century Russia)
Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, Chapter 1

Thursday, 11/18 – NO CLASS

Week 14: From Peter the Great to Catherine the Great

Tuesday, 11/23 – Russian Literature and Culture in the Middle of the 18th Century

Readings:

Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, Chapter 2
Pushkin, "The Bronze Horseman"
Fonvizin, *The Brigadier*
Selected poems of Derzhavin

Thursday, 11/25 – Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Into the 19th Century

Tuesday, 11/30 – Russian Literature and Culture in the Middle of the 18th Century

Readings:

Karamzin, Poor Liza
Karamzin, The Island of Bornholm
Selections from Radishchev, Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow

Thursday, 12/2 – Last Day of Class - Russian Literature at the Turn of the 19th Century

CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Regular attendance in class. More than 3 unauthorized absences over the course of the semester will lower your attendance/participation grade.**
2. **Keeping up with the readings. Make sure to have read all assigned readings before the start of class.**
3. **Completing all assignments in a timely manner. Deadline extension for assignments will only be given in cases of medical emergency with prior authorization.**

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

1. **Attendance and Participation – 20%**
2. **Take home Midterm – 30%**
3. **Take home Final – 30%**
4. **Short response papers - 20%**