

LIBB 2100
RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS: SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC
Spring 2016
Alexei Bogdanov

Libby RAP, Libby 140

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:00 – 12:50 p.m.

Office hours: by appointment

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SYLLABUS

SCOPE. LIBB 2100 Russian Revolutions: Social and Artistic examines one of the most significant forces of social and cultural development -- revolution, as seen not only in the light of its political and economic causes and effects but, more specifically, through the lens of one of its major cultural concomitants -- revolution in the arts. Most of the material for this course is drawn from the history of the twentieth century Russian social and artistic revolutions which, due in part to the new research conducted during the two post-Soviet decades, provide some of the most striking examples of art as revolutionary social practice.

FORMAT. Since there are no prerequisites for the course, most of your three hours of credit will be based on lectures, readings and discussions. *Lectures* will include PowerPoint presentations, as well as short excerpts from films and videos. All assigned *readings and screenings* of films and videos have to be done prior to their discussion. Films and videos that need to be watched in their entirety are in D2L. Please refer to our Course Schedule (below) on a regular basis in order to be aware of what needs to be read and/or watched for our upcoming class meetings. The Course Schedule is subject to change; updates will be announced in class and posted on D2L. The quality of our *discussions* will depend on your preparedness and participation, which, in turn, will be reflected in your final grade.

GRADING

Attendance and participation	20%
Four homework assignments	20%
Four quizzes	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Comprehensive final exam	20%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. I will be taking attendance at each of our meetings. Unexcused absences: you may miss 3 classes for personal or medical reasons. Any more absences than this will affect your grade by one grade increment; for instance, an A- grade will automatically become a B+, a B grade will automatically become a B-, and so forth. In cases of hospitalization or a death in the family, contact me immediately to discuss options.

You are expected to be prepared for each class meeting, i.e. familiar with the texts and other materials, in accordance with the class schedule. This is your daily homework. Lack of preparedness will be noted and will affect your participation grade. Your active participation is strongly encouraged: it is through your actual involvement in the subject and through its discussion with the others that you understand it most thoroughly. If for some reason you find it difficult to participate, *please talk to me* about ways in which I can help facilitate your participation.

HOMEWORK. In addition to your daily homework (readings and screenings), there will be four homework assignments; actual due dates are indicated in our Course Schedule below. Each assignment is based on the most recently covered material and requires answers to questions prepared by me, in the form of a short essay. The length of each essay should be at least one

single-spaced page (approximately 500 words). If a homework assignment is not done and submitted by the due date, it may be submitted at a later date. However, *in the absence of a documented medical excuse, only 50% of the grade for a late homework assignment will be counted in the calculation of your final grade.*

QUIZZES. There will be four quizzes, administered throughout the semester to ensure that you have properly studied and understood our most recent materials. See our Course schedule for exact dates of the quizzes.

EXAMS. These will consist of shorter essays. You will have to answer four out of five questions, for 20 points each. The questions will be related to the material covered during the period preceding the exam, i.e. Midterm and Final exams will be comprehensive, covering all the material studied prior to the exam. A week before each exam you will be given a study guide specifying the topics that need to be addressed. You are encouraged to work together in small groups as you prepare for the exams.

Books, notes and electronic devices are not allowed during the exams and quizzes. There will be no make-up exams or quizzes without a documented medical excuse.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Pluto Press, 2008
[Communist Manifesto]
- Russia and the Soviet Union, by John M. Thompson. Westview Press, seventh Edition, 2013 [Thompson]
- Readings on Desire2Learn [D2L]

Statement about Disabilities. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices)

Statement about Honor Code, Academic Honesty, & Plagiarism. The development of the Internet has provided students with historically unparalleled opportunities for conducting research swiftly and comprehensively. The availability of these materials does not, however, release you from appropriately citing sources where appropriate; or applying standard rules associated with avoiding plagiarism. Specifically, I expect your papers to draw ideas and information from various sources (and to be cited appropriately), presented generally in the your words after careful analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. An assembly of huge blocks of other individuals' existing material, even when cited, does not constitute an appropriate representation of this expectation. Uncited or plagiarized material will be treated as academically dishonest, and the paper will be assigned an 'F' as a result. If you are confused as to what constitutes plagiarism, you should review the CU Honor Code on this topic, or see me. Papers submitted, written in part or in whole by someone other than yourself, shall be considered fraud under the University Honor Code, and will result in an 'F' for the entire course. You may review the Honor Code at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/Home.html>

Statement about Religious Holidays and Observances. I will make reasonable accommodation for religious observances and in so doing, be careful not to inhibit or penalize those of you who are exercising your rights to religious observance. The university policy states that every effort will be made to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate with me ahead of any holidays or religious observances that affect your class participation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

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| January | <p>11 Introduction. What is a revolution? Revolutions: social and artistic.</p> <p>13 Reading: Thompson, 159-81. Russia at the end of the nineteenth century and European revolutionary ideas. Film excerpt: <i>Nicholas and Alexandra</i> (D2L).</p> <p>15 Reading: Communist Manifesto, 1-30. Understanding the Marxist view of capitalism and class struggle.</p> <p>18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, CAMPUS CLOSED.</p> <p>20 Reading: Communist Manifesto, 31-84. "The specter of communism" in late nineteenth century bourgeois societies.</p> <p>22 Readings: Thompson, 182-201. Revolution, Reform and War. Quiz #1.</p> <p>25 Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, Lev Shestov (D2L); Leonid Andreyev's short story <i>The Abyss</i> (D2L). Modernist literature dealing with the "death of God" and the newly discovered complexities of the human mind.</p> <p>27 Reading: Symbolism; Vyacheslav Ivanov, <i>Thoughts on Symbolism</i>; Ivanov on Ecstasy (D2L). Symbolism as a Russian spiritual revolution in modernist poetry.</p> <p>29 Readings: V.I. Ivanov, <i>Poets of Spirit</i>; A.A. Blok, <i>I Apprehend You...</i>; <i>A Girl Was Singing</i>; <i>Night, Street, Lamp, Drugstore, Unknown Woman</i> (D2L).</p> |
| February | <p>1 Reading: Aleksandr Blok, <i>The Puppet Show</i> (D2L).</p> <p>3 Reading: Robert C. Williams, <i>From Naturalism to Symbolism: Meyerhold's Theater of the Future</i> (D2L). <i>The Puppet Show</i>, cont.; Russian Symbolism and the Avant-garde theatre.</p> <p>5 Reading: Nikolai Evreinov, <i>The Theater of the Soul</i> (D2L). Symbolism (continued). HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #1, due 2/10/16.</p> <p>8 Reading: <i>The Ballets Russes</i> (D2L) Video: <i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i> (D2L). Diaghilev and the revolution in classical ballet.</p> <p>10 Readings: John E. Bowlt, <i>Art</i> (subchapters "The Neo-Russian Style," "The Symbolist Aesthetic," – D2L, 205-13). Russian avant-garde art. Video clip: <i>The Avant-garde in Russia</i> (D2L).</p> <p>12 Reading: John E. Bowlt, <i>Art</i> (subchapter "The Avant-garde" – D2L, 213-18). Futurism in art and poetry.</p> <p>15 Futurist Manifestoes: <i>Slap in the Face of Public Taste</i>, etc. (D2L); poems by Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, David Burliuk, Aleksei Kruchenykh (D2L). Futurism in art and poetry (continued).</p> <p>17 Reading: Vasili Kandinsky, Content and Form (D2L). Video clip: <i>Vassily Kandinsky</i> (D2L). QUIZ #2.</p> <p>19 Reading: Thompson, 203-15. The revolutions of 1917. Sergei Eisenstein's <i>October</i>, a revolutionary film about the Great October Socialist Revolution.</p> <p>22 Readings: Thompson, 215-27. Vladimir Mayakovsky, <i>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin</i> (D2L, <i>Mass Culture in Soviet Russia</i>, 86-89); <i>The Proletariat and Art</i>, from <i>Soviet Literature, an Anthology</i>. (D2L). Revolutionary art and the new</p> |

revolutionary regime.

- 24 Readings: LEF Manifestoes: *What Does Lef Fight For?*, etc. (D2L). Vladimir Mayakovsky, *A Poem About My Soviet Passport* (D2L). Film excerpt: *Aelita* (D2L). Left art, Constructivism and collectivism, propaganda and entertainment.
- 26 Readings: John E. Bowlt, *Art* (subchapter “The October Revolution” – D2L, 218-21). Revolutionary artists as the revolution’s visionaries.

29 MIDTERM EXAM

March

- 2 Reading: Thompson, 229-38. Stalin’s revolution from above. Revolutionary artists as the revolution’s victims. Video clip: *Russian Avant-garde: A Romance with the Revolution* (D2L).
***Assignment: watch Sergei Eisenstein’s *The Battleship Potemkin* and Dziga Vertov’s *The Man with the Movie Camera* (D2L, under “Course Materials”).
- 4 Reading: David Gillespie, Sergei Eisenstein: The Mytho-Poetics of *Revolution* (D2L). Eisenstein’s film *The Battleship Potemkin*. The mythology of the great revolution for the revolutionary masses.
- 7 Reading: David Gillespie, *Dziga Vertov: Life “Caught Unawares”* (D2L). Vertov’s film *The Man with the Movie Camera*. The avant-garde art now seen as pseudo-revolutionary, “devoid of social content.”
- 9 Readings: Thompson, 238-44; Daniil Kharms (D2L). Film excerpt: *Stalin, #2 – Despot* (D2L). Stalinism: a new revolution, counter-revolution or absurdity?
- 11 Readings: John E. Bowlt, *Art* (subchapter “Soviet Socialist Realism” – D2L, 221-26). Samuil Marshak, *Mister Twister*; Soviet songs: *March of the Happy- Go-Lucky Guys, Sportsman’s March* (D2L). Film excerpt: *Jolly Fellows* (D2L). Socialist Realism as the end of the artistic revolution.
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #2, DUE 3/16/16.
- 14 Readings: Varlam Shalamov, *Prosthetic Appliances, A Child’s Drawings, Lend-Lease* (D2L). Film excerpt: *Burnt by the Sun* (D2L). The horrors of Stalinism in literature and cinema.
- 16 Readings: Thompson, 244-52; *Katyusha; The Blue Kerchief; Wait for Me; Smolensk Roads; Holy War; Tanya* (D2L: *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, 315-41). The Great Patriotic War (a.k.a. World War II) and the arts.
- 18 Readings: *The Story of a Real Man; Soviet State Anthem* (D2L: *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, 416-21, 406-07). The Great Patriotic War and the arts (cont.). Quiz #3.

SPRING BREAK

- 28 Readings: Thompson, 255-65. Film excerpt: *Bound by the Wind*. The Cold War as a result of the export of the revolution, and its global human toll.
- 30 Reading: Thompson, 265-76. Film excerpt: *Rivals: JFK vs. Krushchev* (D2L). The Cold War (continued).

April

- 1 Readings: Thompson, 277-80. Film excerpt: *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (D2L). Destalinization and the Thaw. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #3, due 4/6/16.
- 4 Reading: John E. Bowlt, *Art* (subchapter “Developments after Stalin,” D2L, 226-34). Film excerpt: *The Children of Theatre Street* (D2L). The arts in the post- Stalinist USSR.

- 6 Readings: Thompson, 280-91; *Samizdat*; *Joseph Brodsky* (D2L).
Video clip: *Joseph Brodsky: A Maddening Space* (D2L). Stagnation, complacency and dissent under Brezhnev.
- 8 Reading: Benedict Erofeyev, *Moscow Circles*, pp. 1-24, 167-88 (D2L).
Stagnation and degradation through the eyes of an inspired alcoholic.
- 11 Readings: Thompson, 293-309. Films excerpts: *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union (Part 2)*; *Black Square* (D2L). Gorbachev's revolution: *perestroika* and *glasnost*.
- 13 Readings: Tatyana Tolstaya, *Night* (D2L); Poetry of Glasnost: Bella Akhmadulina, Yunna Morits, Dmitrii Prigov (D2L). Russian literature and poetry before and under Gorbachev.
- 15 Readings: *Glasnost and Sex*; *Soviets Struggle with Sexual Glasnost* (D2L).
Films excerpts: *Russian Revolutions, Part 1: Sex, Lies and Nuclear Weapons*; *Intergirl* (D2L). The new sexual revolution.
- 18 Reading: Thompson, 309-24. Gorbachev's downfall and Yeltsin's great capitalist revolution. Quiz #4.
- 20 Readings: Thompson, 324-28; Valery Ronshin, *Absurd Tales* (D2L). Film excerpt: *Taxi Blues* (D2L). Dark reality and dark humor in the brave new world of capitalism.
- 22 Reading: Thompson, 328-37. Film excerpt: *Window to Paris* (D2L).
Westernization and cultural revival. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #4, due 4/27/16.
- 25 Reading: Thompson, 337-45. Film excerpt: *Prisoner of the Mountains* (D2L).
Toward prosperity through war. Final Exam Study Guide.
- 27 Readings: Thompson, 347-60; *Pussy Riot Was Carefully Calibrated for Protest* (D2L). Putin's reign: a new stability or a new stagnation? Pussy Riot's punk prayer: "Mother of God, cast Putin out!"
- 29 Reading: Thompson, 361-75. Where did the revolutions go? Summary and Conclusion.

May

1 (Sunday) 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. FINAL EXAM