

HIS149 Russian Culture from the Golden Age to the Revolution

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Course Description

A study of the development of Russian culture and history from circa 1812 to 1941.

Course Goals

By the end of the semester, we will have grown in our ability to:

1. Understand the development of Russian culture, including literature, music, art, ballet, and film, in its historical contexts.
2. Gain a greater appreciation of how culture shapes and is shaped by other historical factors (for example, politics, social change, and national identity).
3. Interpret different cultural forms.
4. Analyze what makes cultures distinctive, including our own.
5. Reflect on the contested nature of national identity in past and present.

GE Contribution

In addition to the course goals above, this course satisfies the Westmont General Education Thinking Historically requirement, and therefore has the following learning objective: Students will be able to analyze historical sources with appropriate attention to their historical contexts.

The course pursues this objective through:

- Daily discussion of primary sources, including literature, art, and music (the reading log and class discussions are key for this point)
- Exploration of the relevant secondary literature (class discussions and the research paper are key for this point)
- Discussion of how the past is relevant for the present—an especially important task for a course that includes other Eurasian cultures (for example, the Ukrainian author, Gogol), and relates past Russian imperialism to current manifestations (class discussions and varied primary sources (see Schedule) are key for this point)

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Readings

Geoffrey Hosking, *Russian History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2012)

Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls* (Yale, 1996)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Penguin, 2014)

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (Random House, 2000)

George Gibian, ed., *The Portable Nineteenth-century Russian Reader* (Penguin, 1993)

Clarence Brown, ed., *The Portable Twentieth-century Russian Reader* (Penguin, 1985)

Note: students should select and read either the Dostoevsky or the Tolstoy volume.

Tasks

1. Reading log

There will be a lot of reading in this class. For each reading, you should record your reflections in a reading log. This is primarily for your own use, but as I will be collecting them from time to time I suggest that you use a binder of some sort. Make sure you have the hard copy with you at each class.

The main aim of the reading log is to help you become a better reader. The log is for you, a place where you can write down what you find interesting, confusing, important etc. in what you read. Your entries do not need to be polished: indeed, the best logs will give evidence of how the texts have made you think, not evidence of how much you know already. As you read, you should also make sure to reflect on the question of what each source might tell us about Russian culture and society. You should pay especial attention to three themes that we will follow through the semester: Russian Orthodoxy, the Russian peasantry, and Russian national identity. These logs will also be invaluable when it comes time to prepare for exams or write your term paper, as you will need to draw on what you have read for these assignments.

Although the reading logs are primarily for your own benefit, I will ask you to share entries with the rest of class as a way of nourishing our discussions together.

Please make sure that you provide a heading for each entry in your log that includes author, title, and page numbers. You should also note specific pages for passages that you refer to and may need to find later for class discussion or another assignment.

Although these are called reading logs, I will be asking you on occasion to provide reflections on other cultural artifacts that we study.

I will comment on your logs but not grade them—this is a low-stakes assignment designed to encourage you to explore the readings. Your logs will, however, be a part of the portfolio that you turn in at the end of the semester.

2. Class Participation (15%)

In this course we will learn, laugh, puzzle, and perhaps even cry together. It will be a communal exercise. It is right, therefore, that some of your grade should rest on your contributions, for they are just that: they are gifts to the rest of the class, as we help one another to learn and grow more.

In addition, on 30 March you will have to make a presentation on either *Anna Karenina* or *Crime and Punishment* alongside the other students who also chose that book.

3. Exams (35%)

There will be two essay exams in the class. I will provide more detail nearer the time.

4. Research Paper (30%)

This is a highly interdisciplinary course, and many of our class sessions may feel similar to what you may have experienced in an English, art, or music class. In each class, however, we will endeavor to relate the culture we are studying to broader themes in Russian history. Over the course of the semester, you should become skillful interpreters on the interface between culture and history, and the research paper provides you with an opportunity to show what you have learned. It will require you to draw on what we have studied together as well as doing your own research. Details to follow.

5. Portfolio (20%)

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a portfolio of your work for the semester. This will include graded copies of your mid-term exam, your paper, and your reading log, but will be more than that. In particular, I want you to provide an account of your learning over the course of the semester, and compiling the portfolio gives you an opportunity to do that.

Your portfolio will begin with an introductory essay. In this 800-word piece you will reflect on your learning during the semester: how you have changed as a reader and how your ability to understand Russia, history, and culture have developed. You will illustrate this in the pages that follow by arranging a selection of what you consider your best work, all of which should be described and reflected up on in your introductory essay. In many cases, these will be lightly revised versions of what you have already submitted; the originals of the reading log, paper, and exam will form the appendix. The portfolio should be carefully arranged, and include a numbered table of contents. Your selected pieces should total no more than twelve pages, double-spaced.

Strong portfolios will be well introduced, well organized, and will show thoughtful engagement with a wide range of readings, a willingness to take risks in your interpretations, and an awareness of how you have grown as a reader and student.

Class Policies

A. Etiquette

Classrooms can be scary places. For some it is the fear of being called on to answer a question. For others it may be the fear that their opinions will not be welcomed or that their questions will appear silly. Classes are, in many respects, extended conversations. Please help to make sure that our times together are marked by civility. Laughing at other people's comments or questions is cruel, talking while they are talking is rude. Please don't.

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please speak to me as soon as possible. You may also find it helpful to consult the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

I do not allow laptop use during class. When people misuse laptops in class they distract others. It is problematic when students are hindered from contributing to class discussion because they know that some of their classmates have checked out. Surfing and shopping during class is different from doing a crossword, daydreaming, doodling, or texting (please don't do these either!) because it is public to people behind you.

If there are compelling reasons why you need a laptop in class, please let me know.

Please put phones away for the duration of class.

Also, this class will operate under what are known as "concert rules"—please come on time, don't get up and walk out unless you have an emergency, and please put your phone away for the duration of class.

B. *Plagiarism and Other Misdemeanors*

"For institutions set aside for teaching and learning... cheating is worse than murder because cheating strikes at the heart of the reason we are here. Although murder is a terrible crime, cheating is worse than murder at these institutions. I do not mean you can kill somebody at a university, but cheating is worse because murder does not challenge the very nature of the institution.... The most compassionate thing you can do as a Christian is to turn in someone for cheating.... [Y]ou are reminding persons who cheat that they are betraying what they care about in terms of their being at that institution." (Stanley Hauerwas, "Honor at the Center," in *Jesuit Education and the Cultivation of Virtue*, ed. William J. O'Brien (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 80, 86.)

Honesty is a basic virtue. I will therefore take cases of academic dishonesty seriously.

Please be particularly careful not to plagiarize. Plagiarism is the failure to acknowledge those to whom you are indebted in your work. As a rule of thumb: if you did not know it at the beginning of the week, it needs a footnote at the end of the week. Do not use Wikipedia or Spark Notes as a shortcut; if you do, acknowledge that you have. Failing to do so could result in a 0 on the assignment or a F for the course. Providing a "Works Cited" page is not enough: you need to cite the works! In my classes, please use the Chicago style for footnotes and bibliographies. If you are unfamiliar with this, you can get the basic details at:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html . You

should make sure you are familiar with the college's academic integrity policy, which is available online at: http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/provost/plagiarism/academic-integrity-policy

The college's policy will be applied in this course, with its sanctions of everything from having to resubmit work to failing the course. Please be careful.

C. *Academic Accommodations*

Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ODS. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please consult the website for more information <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>

D. *Students Facing Difficulties*

This semester, you may face acute difficulty of some sort, for example depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, cross-cultural struggles, family problems or the like. I hope not. But if this does happen, make sure to talk to someone, whether your RD, the campus pastor, one of your professors, or the counseling center. If the difficulty is adversely affecting your academic performance, please let me know as soon as you can.

E. *How to Hand In Your Work*

Please make sure that you submit your papers in the appropriate format (see separate resource).

Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. If you are not going to be at class for any reason, please bring your work to my office at least fifteen minutes before the beginning of class.

I only accept work electronically if specified on the syllabus.

I am stingy when it comes to extensions. All of you are under time pressure, and extensions are unfair to those who have struggled to get their work in on time.

If I grant an extension for reasons that are not related to significant hardship, I will penalize your grade by a letter grade per day (or part of a day).

F. *Missing Class*

Please let me know if you are going to.

If you miss class for any reason, please find a fellow-student willing to let you borrow their notes and tell you what took place in class. You are then very welcome to come and see me with any questions that you still have.

If you miss in-class written work and it is an excused absence (and you have let me know ahead of time), you may make it up for full credit. If this happens more than once, I will ask for official documentation.

If you are not present for a writing assignment and your absence is not excused, you may make it up for half-credit.

I only give make-up exams in cases of bereavement, serious illness, or college approved activities. I may ask for official documentation.

G. *What You Can Expect From Me*

I will be as civil and punctual as I require you to be. I will aim to get you your tests and exams back promptly. On your exams and papers, I will do all I can to make clear why you received the grade you did; if it still does not make sense, do come and see me.

Format for Written Assignments

Please turn in your assignments in the following form:

- With your name, date of completion, course details and your mail slot number at the top
- *Without* a creative title
- *Without* a cover page
- 12-point font
- Times New Roman
- Black ink
- Double-spaced
- Margins of between 1 and 1.5 inches
- Stapled

In addition, at the top of your document, please provide the following three pieces of information:

1. Word count (you may omit page references from this count if you wish)
2. What percentage of the reading you completed
3. Any sources that you used, other than sources that appear in your footnotes (e.g. introduction to the book, Wikipedia, another student's paper, websites) *and* how you used them

Please make sure that you submit your work to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) (instructions on this forthcoming).

Grading Scale

I use the following grading scale:

A	94-100
A-	90-94
B+	86.66-90
B	83.33-86.66
B-	80-83.33
C+	76.66-80
C	73.33-76.66
C-	70-73.33
D+	66.66-70
D	63.33-66.66
D-	60-63.33
F	59 and below

To receive an **A** or an **A-**, your work must be exceptional and elegant. It must go beyond the call of mere fulfillment of the task at hand and demonstrate careful and creative reflection.

To receive a **B** grade, your work must be competent and careful. It must be accurate, well organized, and well presented. B work is work which competently fulfills the requirements of the course.

C grade work is good, but has problems. It demonstrates a knowledge of the facts, but an insecure grasp of the subject at hand. C grade work is usually speckled with inaccuracies, both in detail and form. Work which fails to follow the guidelines for an assignment is highly unlikely to get more than a C.

A **D** denotes work that is along the right lines, but has not gone nearly far enough. It is for work that does little to convince of hard work or care. Understanding is minimal, accuracy sporadic, and presentation poor.

F work fails to meet the standards of the institution. The objectives of the course have not been achieved.

Draft Schedule (from 2023)

	Topic	Reading	Assignments
10 Jan	Introduction: Culture and History		
12 Jan	Russia: The First Eight-Hundred Years	Hosking, 1-36	
19 Jan	Themes in Russian Cultural History	Hosking, 37-70	
24 Jan	Literary Russian: Pushkin	Gibian, 1-33	
26 Jan	Westernizers and Slavophiles: Lermontov	Gibian, 129-98	
31 Jan	Gogol: A Ukrainian Missionary	Gogol, 1-55	
2 Feb	Glinka and the First Russian Opera	Gogol, 56-127	
7 Feb	Critics: Chadaev and Herzen	Gogol, 128-194	
9 Feb	A Christian Country?	Gogol, 194-248	
14 Feb	A Male Country?	Gibian, 281-91, 401-04	
16 Feb	Turmoil and Indolence	Gibian, 274-80, 293-301	
21 Feb	<i>Holiday</i>		
23 Feb	A Sketch from a Hunter's Album: Turgenev	<i>Handout</i>	
28 Feb	Introducing Dostoevsky and Tolstoy	C&P; AK	
2 Mar			Mid-Term Exam
7 Mar	Stasov and Russian Art	C&P; AK	
9 Mar	Chernyshevsky: <i>What Is to Be Done?</i>	C&P; AK	
13-17 Mar	<i>Spring Break</i>		
21 Mar	Mussorgsky's Music	C&P; AK	
23 Mar	Russian Faces: Repin	C&P; AK	
28 Mar	Rimsky Korsakov and the Other	C&P; AK	

30 Mar	Final Reflections on <i>Anna Karenina</i> and <i>Crime and Punishment</i>	C&P; AK	Presentations
4 Apr	A Diagnosis On the Stage: Chekhov	Gibian, 532-34, 549-607	
6 Apr	A Soviet Author? Gorky	Gibian, 616-29; Hosking, 71-96	
11 Apr	Symbolism: Blok and Bely	Brown, 74-89; Hosking, 77-111	
13 Apr	The Ballets Russes and Modernism: Stravinsky	Brown, 187-201	
18 Apr	Responding to the Revolution: Akhmatova and Zoshchenko	Brown, 111-15, 231-38	
20 Apr	Emigrés: Kandinsky et al.		Research paper
25 Apr	Loyalty: Osip and Nadezhda Mandelstam	Brown, 169-83, 185-86, 403-12	
27 Apr	Tragedy: Stalin and Russian Artists	Brown, 418-19, 423-34	Portfolios
3 May			Final Exam, 12:00 p.m.