

# Introduction to Russian Film

RUSS 4812  
Tulane University, Spring 2017  
T/TH 2:00-3:15, Newcomb 4

Prof. Sarah Ruth Lorenz, [slorenz@tulane.edu](mailto:slorenz@tulane.edu)  
Office Hours: Mon. 1-2; Th. 3:30-5:00  
Office: Newcomb 305C

This course will survey the development of filmmaking in Russia and the Soviet Union from the pre-revolutionary period through the Stalin era. We will view the sensational melodramas or literary adaptations popular before 1917 as well as the internationally famous "montage" cinema of the 1920s, which was revolutionary in both its style and its politics. We will examine how film was adapted "for the masses" beginning in the 1930s, in the genre of comedy as well as historical drama. The films will serve as a gateway to an understanding of late imperial Russian and post-revolutionary Soviet culture and society. At the same time, students will learn to appreciate and analyze the formal language of film, including mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound. We will read contemporary documents in which filmmakers reflect on formal and theoretical questions of cinema and articulate the guiding creative principles of their work. Additional secondary readings will fill in the historical and cultural contexts of the films and suggest interpretations. Students will be expected to engage in their own analysis and interpretation every week during class discussion and in regular discussion prep assignments.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will become familiar with the leading films, filmmakers, cinematic genres, dominant themes and formal concerns of Russian and early Soviet film. They will be able to explain and provide examples of the general formal and thematic features of melodrama, revolutionary montage and Stalin-era musicals, and state which filmmakers contributed to which creative developments. Assessed via the short-answer and analysis portions of in-class tests.
- Students will be able to explain how the cultural and social history of late imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union is reflected in film of the period. Topics will include late imperial concerns with gender and sexuality, the revolution, and collectivization and industrialization under the five-year plans. Assessed via writing assignments and in-class tests.
- Students will acquire analytical skills applicable to all film viewing. They will be able to explain how the films in our course, and by implication all films, use the techniques of narrative structure, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound to shape the viewer's experience. Assessed via discussion prep assignments, papers and the analysis portion of in-class tests.
- Students will hone their attention to detail and ability to analyze complex cultural objects. Assessed via discussion prep assignments and papers.
- Students will develop their ability to articulate an argument, support it with evidence and communicate it with an effective essay structure and prose style. Assessed via discussion prep assignments and papers.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS:

*The Russian Cinema Reader Volume One: 1908 to the Stalin Era*. Ed. Rimgaila Salys. 2013. ISBN 978-1-61811-212-5. (abbreviated "RCR" in the schedule)

Access to the course website at <http://luchsveta.org/index.php/russian-film/>

Additional readings will be posted at the above website, including excerpts from *Film Art: An Introduction* by Bordwell and Thompson and *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*, Ed. Ian Christie and Richard Taylor.

You will have to pay a rental fee to watch at least one film online, and more if you are unable to attend screenings.

<b>GRADING:</b> 8% - Attendance	12% - Discussion Prep Assignments
8% - Participation	12% - Paper 1
18% - Midterm	18% - Paper 2
24% - Final	

### **VIEWING FILMS, SCREENINGS**

- For information on viewing films, visit <http://luchsveta.org/index.php/russian-film/> . Most films will be screened on Sunday or Monday evenings at a time to be determined after surveying the class.
- Attendance at screenings is strongly encouraged but not required. The screening will be your best chance to view the film in a large-screen format, which is helpful since film (especially silent film) is a visual art that was designed to be viewed in a large format.
- Students who are unable to attend screenings are responsible for making their own arrangements to view the film. Some films can be streamed online in good-quality versions; for other films the only quality version is on DVD. DVDs for all films are on reserve in the Music & Media Center at the library. See the course website <http://luchsveta.org/index.php/russian-film/> for details.

### **PAPERS, DISCUSSION PREP ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS**

- The papers you will write will consist of cinematic interpretation. You will present a cohesive argument about some debatable aspect of the film, whether thematic or stylistic, and back up your thesis with evidence. I will offer suggested topics and questions, which you may modify to fit your interests. I am happy to discuss your papers with you in office hours at all stages of the writing process. Aim to come to me with at least the beginning of an idea.
- Pages are counted according to the following format: Times New Roman, 12 point, double spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Papers must be submitted electronically by the deadline via email to me. Unexcused late papers will be accepted at the instructor's discretion, no more than one week late, with points deducted for each day late. I will consider granting deadline extensions in special circumstances.
- You will write three “discussion prep” assignments. These are informal, one-page responses to a question distributed in advance. Your ideas are meant to feed into that day’s discussion.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Since discussion is a major part of our course, attendance and participation are important. Your final attendance and participation grades will be determined simply by calculating the percentage of days on which you attended / participated. Multiple late arrivals will count as an absence. Aim to contribute substantially to discussion at least once per class. It’s a good idea to notify me (via email, preferably in advance) about any unavoidable absences. In special circumstances, some absences can be excused.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You are responsible for knowing and following the Tulane Code of Academic Conduct, found online at <http://tulane.edu/college/code.cfm>. The Code includes the following provisions: "In all work submitted for academic credit, students are expected to represent themselves honestly. The presence of a student's name on any work submitted in completion of an academic assignment is considered to be an assurance that the work and ideas are the result of the student's own intellectual effort, stated in his or her own words, and produced independently, unless clear and explicit acknowledgment of the sources for the work and ideas is included (with the use of quotation marks when quoting someone else’s words). This principle applies to papers, tests, homework assignments, artistic productions, laboratory reports, computer programs, and other assignments. You are expected to turn in original work reflecting your abilities, to be clear when you have collaborated with other students, and to refrain from all forms of plagiarism and cheating. Academic dishonesty will result in Honor Board review."

	Tuesday	Thursday
Pre-Revolutionary Film: Melodramas, Literary Adaptations	1/17 Introduction In class: <i>Stenka Razin</i> (1908), <i>Drama in a Gypsy Camp</i> (1908)	1/19 View: <i>Romance with Double Bass</i> (1911); <i>The Cameraman's Revenge</i> (Starewicz, 1912) (via Canvas) Read: RCR 43-47, 48-51; <i>Film Art</i> 3-14: "Film Artistry" and "Mechanics of the Movies"
	1/24 View: <i>Drama on the Volga</i> (Larin, 1913) Read: RCR 52-54; <i>Film Factory</i> #2, 4	1/26 <i>Drama on the Volga</i> View: <i>The Queen of Spades</i> (Protazanov, 1916) <i>Film Art</i> 112-140 (Misc-en-scène I)
	1/31 View: <i>Child of the Big City</i> (Bauer, 1914) Read: RCR 55-60	2/2 <i>Child of the Big City</i> Read: RCR 14-31, 61-64 <i>Film Art</i> 140-153 (Misc-en-scène II)
	2/7 View: <i>The Dying Swan</i> (Bauer, 1917) Read: <i>Film Art</i> 162-173 (Cinematography I)	2/9 <i>The Dying Swan</i> Read: RCR 32-42 <b>Discussion Prep #1</b>
Film of the 1920s: Revolutionary Themes, Revolutionary Forms, the New versus the Old	2/17 View: <i>The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks</i> (Kuleshov, 1924) Read: RCR 87-94	2/16 <i>Mr. West</i> Read: RCR 95-100; <i>Film Art</i> 173-178, 182-213 (Cinematography II)
	2/21 View: <i>Bed and Sofa</i> (Room, 1927) Read: RCR 144-154	2/23 <i>Bed and Sofa</i> Read: RCR 155-171 <b>Paper #1 (4-5 pgs., due Friday at 6 p.m.)</b>
	<i>No class – Mardi Gras</i>	3/2 In-class screenings Read: <i>Film Art</i> 218-231 (Editing I) <b>Midterm Test</b>
	3/7 View: <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> (Eisenstein, 1926) Read: RCR 107-115 <i>Film Factory</i> #30	3/9 <i>Potemkin</i> Read: RCR 116-143; <i>Film Art</i> 231-238, 244-245, 251-260 (Editing II)
	3/14 View: <i>Man with a Movie Camera</i> (Vertov, 1929) Read: RCR 172-191	3/16 <i>Movie Camera</i> Read: RCR 66-86; <i>Film Factory</i> #12, #13, #21, #28, #57
	3/21 View: <i>Earth</i> (Dovzhenko, 1930) Read: RCR 192-196	3/23 <i>Earth</i> Read: RCR 197-206 <b>Discussion Prep #2</b>
----- Spring Break -----		

	Tuesday	Thursday
The Cultural Revolution: Tighter State Control, Stalinism, Socialist Realism, Film for the Masses	4/4 View: <i>Chapaev</i> (S. and G. Vasiliev, 1934) Read: RCR 235-239 <i>Film Factory</i> #132	4/6 <i>Chapaev</i> Read: RCR 240-249; <i>Film Art</i> 264-293 (Sound)
	4/11 <i>Circus</i> (Aleksandrov, 1936) Read: RCR 250-268	4/13 <i>Circus</i> <i>Film Factory</i> #140 <b>Discussion Prep #3</b>
	4/18 <i>Ivan the Terrible Part I</i> (Eisenstein, 1944)	4/20 <i>Ivan I</i> Film Factory #92; RCR 208-234
	4/25 <i>Ivan the Terrible Part II</i> (1946) Read: RCR 269-303	4/27 <i>Ivan II</i> <b>Paper #2 (5-6 pgs., due Friday at 6 p.m.)</b>
	5/2 Review	
Final Exam: Wednesday, May 10, 1:00-5:00 p.m.		

### UNIVERSITY SUPPORT:

- Please let me know if you have a disability and require an accommodation as established by the Goldman Office of Disability Services. Contact them at <http://tulane.edu/studentaffairs/disability/> if you think you may require an accommodation that has not yet been established.
- If you are facing some challenges and are not sure how to handle them, contact Student Resources and Support Services at (504) 314-2160 or <http://tulane.edu/studentaffairs/support/> .

### ONE WAVE

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As One Wave, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence, know that you are not alone. Learn more at [onewave.tulane.edu](http://onewave.tulane.edu).

### Campus Resources:

<b>Strictly Confidential</b>	<b>Mostly Confidential</b>
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one's self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i>	<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i>
<b>Counseling &amp; Psychological Services (CAPS)   (504) 2277</b>	<b>Coordinator of Violence Prevention   (504) 314-2161</b>
<b>Student Health Center   (504) 865-5255</b>	<b>Tulane University Police (TUPD)   (504) 865-5911</b>
<b>SAPHE Hotline   (504) 654-9543</b>	<b>Office of Institutional Equity   (504) 862-8083</b>

## **DEPARTMENTAL MISSION**

This course contributes to both the content and the skills aspects of our departmental mission. One of our content-related outcomes is that students "be familiar with a range of seminal literary and cinematic works and with their significance within the cultural context." Our skills-related outcomes are that students develop the abilities to "critically consider cultural artifacts," "construct and articulate interpretations of a given object" and "effectively communicate arguments." The discussion of particular films, filmmakers, and filmmaking trends adds to students' cultural literacy, while the discussion of film form, and the analysis carried out in class and in written assignments, develops students' analytic and writing abilities.

### **Mission Statement:**

The Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies strives to provide students with a strong basis of knowledge in the German and Slavic languages and cultures, as well as the ability to critically approach cultural texts, monuments, and discourses. We seek to contribute to our respective fields and to a larger understanding of our world by training our students as scholars in the discipline, as well as by taking an active part in the scholarship that advances our disciplines and the academic community as a whole.

### **Program outcomes:**

Our majors will: 1) gain mastery of all aspects of the language: they will be able to speak, understand, read, and write in the language. 2) have an understanding of the significant historical moments and cultural developments in the nation's history. 3) have an understanding of the way in which past events and cultural developments influence present, and national developments are related to those in the larger world community. 4) be familiar with a range of seminal literary and cinematic works and with their significance within the cultural context. 5) be able to critically consider cultural artifacts, whether literary, cinematic, or other. 6) be able to construct and articulate interpretations of a given object under consideration. 7) effectively communicate arguments and analyses.