

RUT 3504: Russia Today
Prof. Michael Gorham
UF Russian Studies
Dept. of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
University of Florida
Fall 2017

Meeting times: T 5–6, R 6

Location: Pugh 120

Section: 07GF; 07GE (GR 6)

Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30 AM –12:30 PM, or by appointment

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Course Description and Goals

“Russia Today” will give you a comprehensive introduction to the various traditional and newly emerging institutions, practices, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes and symbols that shape everyday life and thought from the late-Soviet era to the present day (1985–2017). No less importantly, it will also help you develop the methodological and analytical tools needed for critically examining any culture, foreign or native. The course will draw heavily from anthropology, journalism, politics, literature, film, and popular culture as a means of exploring the special place that culture (broadly defined) occupies in the complex process of defining and reinventing national, social, and individual identity. In doing so it will take a thematic approach and will depend on regular and active student participation. It will also provide you with extra-credit opportunities designed to enhance their interaction with and understanding of Russian culture and society today.

Credit and Prerequisites

This course carries three credits that also satisfy General Education requirements for Humanities (H) and International (N) courses. For those students registered in section #07GE, it also satisfies 6000 words for the Gordon Rule writing requirement. There are **no prerequisites** and **no knowledge of Russia or Russian language is required**.

Course Requirements

Final grades will depend on your performance in the following areas:

- Section (07GE) (Gordon Rule, 6000 words):
 - Class participation and quizzes: 10%
 - Regular short-response/blog/discussion posts (3000 words total): 15%
 - Two longer essays (3000 words total): 30%
 - Test 2: 45%

- Section (07GF) (non-Gordon Rule):
 - Class participation and quizzes: 10%
 - Class presentations: 10%
 - Test 1: 35%
 - Test 2: 45%

Guidelines for Class Participation and Quizzes (all students)

Under the assumption that long-term learning and personal development depend primarily on one's active engagement in the subject matter at hand, our class meetings will often take the form of group discussions of the assigned readings and broader issues relating to them. Background cultural, historical, social, and political information will be provided in the form of short lectures. For this reason, it is essential not only that you complete assignments promptly and thoughtfully but also that you come to class prepared to share one or two coherent and articulate ideas, questions, or opinions. Study questions for readings slated for discussion will be made available at the course website and should be consulted prior to class. Participation will be evaluated based on the quality and quantity of your in-class and on-line contributions, and will count for 5% of your final grade. Regular pop quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester to assess your basic comprehension of the reading assignments. These quizzes will be short, factually oriented, and based on the readings due for the day on which they are given. If you miss class on the day of a pop quiz, you will receive a failing grade for that quiz. Your cumulative average on the pop quizzes (with the lowest quiz score being dropped) will count for 5% of your final grade.

The "class presentations" and "discussion papers" described below are also designed to enhance in-class discussions.

Guidelines for Class Presentations (non-Gordon Rule students)

Students from the non-Gordon Rule section will be asked on a regular basis to prepare 2-3 minute oral comments on assigned readings and/or Russia-related news reports as a means of initiating class discussion. (See detailed guidelines posted in Canvas.)

Tests

The two tests (only 1 for Gordon-rule section) will be closed-book and cumulative, consisting of a combination of true-false and multiple-choice questions, short-answer IDs, short, sight analyses of relevant texts, and essay questions. Test and final grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 93 – 100%	C- = 70 – 72%
A- = 90 – 92%	D+ = 67 – 69%
B+ = 87 – 89%	D = 63 – 66%
B = 83 – 86%	D- = 60 – 62%
B- = 80 – 82%	E = less than 60%
C+ = 77 – 79%	
C = 73 – 76%	

Tentative test schedule (dates subject to change with fair advanced warning):

- Test 1 (section 07GF only) – Tuesday, Oct. 10 (during regularly scheduled class meeting)
- Test 2 – Tuesday, Dec. 5 (during regularly scheduled class meeting)

There will be no final exam for this course.

Make-up test policy: Make-up tests will be offered only in the case of legitimate conflicts well-documented in advance.

Film Screenings

There will be 2 afternoon/evening film screenings connected to the course. Films will be available on course reserve for independent viewing, but you are strongly encouraged to attend the evening screenings to get the full benefit of the large screen.

Extra-credit Opportunities (Details TBA)

Guidelines for Writing Assignments (Gordon Rule students)

Format and Presentation

Shorter written-response assignments will assume a variety of forms: contributions to discussion forums, blog posts, or more formal 1–2-page response papers. For the response papers and longer essays, you should use some 12-point legible font, typed and double-spaced, on 8 1/2" by 11" paper with top and bottom, left and right margins of 1 inch. You must always edit your paper submissions down to two pages or less (for the shorter responses) and six pages or less (for the longer essays).

More detailed guidelines on topics and execution will be provided with the individual assignments.

Submission We will use the Canvas E-learning system of the University of Florida to process all writing assignments. All papers will likewise be subjected to originality check using the “Turnitin” interface. To get into the system, you will need your Gatorlink ID and password to log on at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>. Unless you are instructed otherwise, all written assignments should be submitted within this system as Word (“.doc” or “.docx”) files. Name your file according to the following protocol, inserting the relevant information in place of the brackets: “[your last name]_Response[#]” or “[your last name]_Essay[#]”, where “Response1” refers to the first response paper due, “Essay1” to the first longer essay, and so on. Jane Doe’s second short response paper, in other words, would be named “Doe_Response2” (without the quotes). Deadlines for electronic submissions are normally by class time (for shorter written assignments) and 5 PM (for longer essays) on the listed due date, but you should always consult the “Weekly Assignments” page to be sure.

Grading and revision

All written work will be graded using a 10-point scale (corresponding to the percentage grade scales listed on page 2). Grades will be based on both style and content. Students receiving a 9.5 or lower will have the option of revising papers. In order to qualify for a maximum full-grade increase, revisions must be turned in on time (see posted due dates and times) and electronically, and must represent a substantial improvement of the original work. Both comments and grades for all written work will be returned within two class meetings.

Please note: Due to the great importance of editing and revision in the writing process, the highest possible grade will rarely be awarded to first submissions. You should expect to invest additional time in revision in order to achieve the highest grade.

Course Policies

Attendance: While not officially required, attendance will be a critical factor in your overall course performance. This is because most learning happens through active engagement and because of the participation/preparation policy outlined above. Moreover, much of the questions making up the midterm and final will be based on in-class lectures and discussions that are not necessarily duplicated in the course readings.

Students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Late assignments: You should make sure to turn in assignments by the dates and times specified. Unexcused late submissions will receive no credit.

Academic Honesty: It is surprisingly easy for an instructor to detect cheating and plagiarized work. Please familiarize yourself with the UF Academic Honesty Guidelines so as to avoid inadvertent violations. All students will be expected to abide by the Guidelines and violations will be prosecuted forcefully and formally. Please review these guidelines at: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>, and contact me with any questions or concerns. For a reminder of the UF Student Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>.

Course Materials

Important note: Course information and materials (detailed assignments, study questions, handouts, etc.) will be available primarily (and, in most cases, only) through the course website listed above.

Books for Purchase

- Neidhart, Christoph. *Russia’s Carnival: The Smells, Sights, and Sounds of Transition*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Pelevin, Victor. *Homo Zapiens*. Trans. Andrew Bromfield. New York: Viking Press, 1999.
- Pesmen, Dale. *Russia and Soul: An Exploration*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell U. P., 2000.
- Putin, Vladimir. *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia’s President*. New York: Public Affairs, 2000.
- Periodic in-class and electronic handouts

Writing Manual (Gordon Rule section only)

- Diana Hacker, *Rules for Writers*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004 (or latest edition).

Preliminary Course Schedule and Deadlines

The following schedule is subject to change, with advanced notice. See course webpage for detailed assignments.

Part I: Nation and Revolution ~~ Chaos and Order

Introduction
Revolution and Transition
Reinventing Russia
Tsar Putin

Gordon Rule deadlines:

- **Short Response #1 due Thursday, Aug. 31, by class time. (Revisions due 9/14.)**
- **Short Response #2 due Tuesday, Sept. 12, by class time. (Revisions due 9/22.)**

Part II: People & Places

The Russian Soul
The Heartland
Evening Film Screening: "Window to Paris" (Wednesday, Sept. 27, time & location TBA)
Health, Medicine, and the New Bio-Politics

Gordon Rule deadlines:

- **Short Response #3 due by 5 PM on Friday, Sept. 29. (Revisions due 10/13, 5 PM.)**
- **Essay 1 outline due Thursday, Oct. 5; complete paper due Thursday, Oct. 12 (5 PM). (Revisions due 10/19, 5 PM)**

Non-Gordon Rule: Test 1 (Tuesday, Oct. 10)

Part III: Media & Entertainment

Sport and Leisure
Television, Internet, and the Mass Media

Part IV: Business Culture & Corruption

Business, Wealth, and Consumer Culture
Evening Film Screening: Wednesday, November 1 (Title, time & location TBA)
Culture of Corruption

Gordon Rule deadline: Short Response #4 due by 5 PM Friday, Nov. 4. (Revisions due Friday 11/10, 5 PM.)

Part V: Faith, Nation, Aliens

Faith and spirituality
Nationalism and national identity
Russian Images of America

Both sections: Test 2 (Tuesday, Dec. 5)

Gordon Rule: Essay 2 (due Tuesday, Dec. 12, 5 PM)