

RUS4501 Russian Research Seminar



Instructor: Dr. Ingrid Kleespies

Office Hours: M 2-3pm; T 12:30-2:30pm

**Office hours subject to change due to scheduling conflicts; please check announcements.*

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Course Description

This is a multi-part course that is designed to introduce Russian majors and minors to some of the more significant trends and ideas in Russian literary, cultural, and historical studies. Students will develop their ability to understand and produce critical scholarly argument in a variety of formats, including class discussion, formal presentation, and a written research project. The main portion of the course will be devoted to readings and discussion in literary and cultural studies (in English), with particular emphasis on the notion of Russian identity as between east and west. We will consider several key Russian/Soviet cultural institutions and patterns, including narratives of Russian identity, imperialism, and distinctive lifeways like the *kommunalka* (Soviet-era communal apartment). We will also examine some examples of contemporary Russian-American fiction for the window it provides into the Russian experience of the post-Soviet world. A significant focus of the course consists of students' independent research papers and presentations. Over the course of the semester we will also complete selected readings/discussion in Russian on topics of Russian history and we will devote one class meeting to a consideration of various career paths for which a specialization in Russian studies is useful.

Required Texts

1. *A Hero of Our Time*. Mikhail Lermontov. Trans. Natasha Randall. Penguin Classics, 2009.
2. *Pnin*. Vladimir Nabokov. New York; Vintage International, 1989.
3. All additional required readings are located on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10%). Attendance (5%) and participation (5%) are mandatory. **Participation in this class is a significant part of your grade:** please come to class having completed the assigned reading and prepared to take part in discussion (see the participation rubric in the class files for additional information).

Unexcused absence cannot be made up. Acceptable excuses include illness, religious holidays, & military obligation. **These need to be documented excuses.** Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to the material covered. Except in the case of certified illness or other UF accepted excuse, there will be no make-up option for missed exams/assignments. Where possible, make-ups should be arranged prior to absence. Alternatively, students should contact me on return to classes.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

Homework (18%). Our readings in *Advanced Russian through History* will be accompanied by short Russian language exercises that are designed to increase your reading, speaking, and writing skills. You are expected to complete the reading before class, to participate in small group and pair work in class, and to complete the post-reading exercises after class, due the following Friday. In addition to the textbook exercises, two short response papers (1-2pp; in English) will be assigned to accompany the in-class film screenings.

Research Presentation (29%). You will be expected to give a formal 10-15 minute presentation (28%) on the subject of your original research. In addition to teaching the class about something we do not know, your presentation is an excellent opportunity for you to receive feedback on your project. Presentations will be peer reviewed. When not presenting, students are required to ask one question per day of presentations (this counts as one homework assignment, 1 pt.)

Research Paper (43%). Each student is required to write an independent research paper of 10-12pp. (38%) on a subject related to Russian Studies. An informal, one-paragraph proposal (1 pt.) is due September 4; a formal one-paragraph topic proposal (2 pts.) is due October 7 and a 1-2 page paper outline (2 pts.) is due November 8. We will attend a research workshop with a UF librarian on October 9 and will workshop paper topics in class on November 8. Papers are due on Canvas via turnitin.com by 10:40am on Dec.4.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59

*Students will need to earn a C or higher to use this course toward a major or minor and/or earn General Education Credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Course Policies

Class Demeanor: Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

University Honesty Policy: **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. No use of ChatGPT or other generative AI system will be tolerated. All written work in this course must be your own.** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the [UF Conduct Code](#) Links to an external site. website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Plagiarism, whether from other people or through use of ChatGPT or other generative AI systems, will not be tolerated. All work in this course must be your own. Here is why: writing is hard - but it is also essential to learning, and especially to the development of critical and analytical thinking skills. It is precisely these skills, and the ability to articulate them clearly and persuasively, that you will need to succeed in any career you choose to pursue. Use of other people’s or other entities’ work means “short-circuiting” the development of these skills. Presumably that is not why you chose to attend UF.

Please be aware that most of the currently available AI tools are fairly recognizable in their output. This is because machine-generated content tends to produce vague generalities and repeat cliched ideas and unsophisticated (even incorrect) interpretation. This content is *much less interesting* than the ideas and discussion you generate – you are capable of more creativity and insight than the machine.

Staring at the blank page happens to us all – but it’s where our best ideas emerge. **Be a writer, not an editor! Be a creator, not a tweaker!** If you are struggling with an assignment, please come see me in office hours or send me an email.

You are free to use spell check, grammar check, and synonym identification tools (e.g. Grammarly and MS Word).

Canvas

Assignments, handouts, grades, etc. will be posted on the course website on Canvas. It is your responsibility to check the website regularly and keep up to date with the class.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the ["Get Started with the DRC"](#) webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. It is important

for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Missed assignments may be made up with provision of appropriate documentation and/or for partial credit, pending discussion with instructor.

Illness: If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.

Email Etiquette: Please keep in mind that email is a formal means of communication. I ask that you address me as Dr. Kleespies, both in class and in writing. I also ask that you please limit email to working hours (M-F 9-5) except in case of emergency. Please be sure to check the Canvas site for information about assignments and due dates.

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under 2 GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

In-Class Recording: Please see class files for the official UF policy regarding in-class recording.

Academic, Health, and Wellness Resources: For information about academic, health, and wellness resources for students, please select the "Campus Resources" option on the left sidebar of the course Canvas page.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 AUGUST 23

Introduction to course: myths and narratives, history and identity;

Friday, August 23

Introduction to course, no assignment due.

WEEK 2 AUGUST 26 – AUGUST 30

Orientalism; Russia-as-Orientalizer vs. Russia-as-Orient.

Monday, August 26

1. *Orientalism*, pp.1-28.

[2. Optional: *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp.89-143.]

Wednesday, August 28

No Class

1. *A Hero of Our Time* I: "Preface," "Bela" **for 9/4**.

2. Preliminary research topic proposal **due 9/4**.

Friday, August 30

No Class

1. *A Hero of Our Time* I: "Preface," "Bela" **for 9/4**.

2. Preliminary research topic proposal **due 9/4**.

WEEK 3 SEPTEMBER 2-6

A Hero of Our Time; "the Tatar-Mongol yoke."

Monday, September 2

No Class – Labor Day

1. *A Hero of Our Time* I: "Preface," "Bela" **for 9/4**.

2. Preliminary research topic proposal **due 9/4**.

Wednesday, September 4

1. *A Hero of Our Time* I: "Preface," "Bela."

2. **Preliminary research paper topic proposal due.**

Friday, September 6

1. *Advanced Russian through History (ARH)*: Татаро-Монгольское иго
Chapter 2, pp.9-13.

WEEK 4 SEPTEMBER 9-13

A Hero of Our Time; Reader Response Theory; "The Uncanny Frontier;" semiotics; self-fashioning; the Decembrists: personality as political rebellion

Monday, September 9

1. *A Hero of Our Time* II: "Maxim Maximych," "Pechorin's Journal," "Taman."
2. "The Uncanny Frontier of Russian Identity," pp.65-79.

Wednesday, September 11

1. "The Decembrist in Daily Life," pp.95-149.

Friday, September 13

1. *ARH: Декабристы*, Chapter 9, pp.51-56.

WEEK 5 SEPTEMBER 16-20

Russian Formalism; the Society Tale; Catherine II

Monday, September 16

1. "Art as Device," pp.1-14

Wednesday, September 18

1. "The Queen of Spades," pp.227-260.

Friday, September 20

1. *ARH: Екатерина II: Формирование и развитие российской империи*, Chapter 7 pp.41-44.

WEEK 6 SEPTEMBER 23-27

Narratives of national identity: Greenfeld's concept of resentment; Figs on Eastern influence; Alexander I

Monday, September 23

1. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, pp.191-273.

Wednesday, September 25

1. *Natasha's Dance*, pp.358-429.

Friday, September 27

1. *ARH: Александр I и победа над Наполеоном*, Chapter 8, pp.45-49.

WEEK 7 SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 4

Russia and the Caucasus: Prisoner of the Mountains: Pushkin, Tolstoy, Bodrov

Monday, September 30

1. In-class viewing of «Кавказский пленник»/“Prisoner of the Mountains.”
2. "A Prisoner in the Caucasus:" Pushkin poem, Tolstoy short story for **10/4**.
3. Response Paper #1 due **10/4**.

Wednesday, October 2

1. In-class viewing of «Кавказский пленник»/“Prisoner of the Mountains.”

2. "A Prisoner in the Caucasus:" Pushkin poem, Tolstoy short story for **10/4**.
3. Response Paper #1 due **10/4**.

Friday, October 4

1. Discussion of «Кавказский пленник»: film, poem, story
2. "A Prisoner in the Caucasus:" Pushkin poem, Tolstoy short story.
3. **Response Paper #1** due.
4. Paper topic proposal due **10/7**.

WEEK 8 OCTOBER 7-11

Russian émigré writing; Russian-American identity

Monday, October 7

1. "Good Readers and Good Writers;" *Pnin* pp.7-58.
2. **Paper topic proposal** due.

Wednesday, October 9

Research Workshop, Library West

Friday, October 11

1. *Pnin*, pp.59-109.

WEEK 9 OCTOBER 14-18

Nabokov as émigré writer and formalist; the contemporary Russian-American writer.

Monday, October 14

1. *Pnin*, pp.109-191.

Wednesday, October 16

1. Selected short stories: Vapnyar, Shteyngart, Iossel

Friday, October 18

No Class – Homecoming.

WEEK 10 OCTOBER 21-25

More national narratives: Alexander Sokurov's Russian Ark.

Monday, October 21

1. In-class viewing of *Russian Ark*.
2. "Introduction to *Russian Ark*."
3. Response Paper #2 due **10/25**.

Wednesday, October 23

1. In-class viewing of *Russian Ark*.
2. "Introduction to *Russian Ark*."
3. Response Paper #2 due **10/25**.

Friday, October 25

1. Discussion of *Russian Ark*.
2. **Response Paper #2** due.

WEEK 11 OCTOBER 28-NOVEMBER 1

Careers with Russian, research paper consultations.

Monday, October 28

Careers with Russian.

Wednesday, October 30

1. Required: paper consultations

Friday, November 1

1. Barthes' *Mythologies* (selections), pp. 11-99

WEEK 12 NOVEMBER 4-8

Locations of culture, cultural mythologies, scholarly text as memoir; mythologies in/of the built environment: kommunalka, dachas, khrushcheby

Monday, November 4

1. Boym, "Living in Common Places: The Communal Apartment," pp.121-67.
2. Utekhin, *Kommunalka* Virtual Museum.

Wednesday, November 16

1. "The Villas of the New Russians."

Friday, November 8

1. Paper workshop

WEEK 13 NOVEMBER 11-15

Monday, November 11

No Class – Veterans' Day observed

Wednesday, November 13

1. Research Presentation #1

Friday, November 15

1. Research Presentation #2

WEEK 14 NOVEMBER 18-22

Monday, November 18

1. Research Presentation #3

Wednesday, November 20
No Class [ASEEES Conference]

Friday, November 22
No Class [ASEEES Conference]

WEEK 15 NOVEMBER 25-29

Monday, November 25
No Class – Thanksgiving

Wednesday, November 27
No Class – Thanksgiving

Friday, November 29
No Class – Thanksgiving

WEEK 16 DECEMBER 2-4

Monday, December 2
1. Optional office hours, paper consultation/workday.

Wednesday, December 4
1. **Research paper** due.