

RUT 3530 (sections 06H7, 116G): **Russia's Struggle with Nature: Legacies of Destruction and Preservation**
Course Syllabus (Spring 2017)

Time of class meetings: **MWF 7 (1:55–2:45)**
Place of class meetings: **LIT 121**
Instructor: **Dr. James Goodwin**

Instructor e-mail: **jegoodwi@ufl.edu**
Instructor office & phone: **252c Dauer Hall, (352) 273-3790**
Office hours: **W 3:00–5:00**

COURSE CONTENT:

This course will explore modern Russia's relationship with the natural world as reflected in works of literature and visual art from the late nineteenth century through the present. In light of Russia's conflicting desires both to exploit and conserve its vast resources, we will examine enthusiastic Russian attempts to transform the natural world between 1917 and 1991, as well as more recent reactions to some Soviet-era policies and their negative environmental consequences (rapid industrialization under Stalin, agricultural experimentation under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and others). By the end of the course we will also review some of the formidable cultural and environmental challenges facing Russia in the 21st century as it confronts the world's pressing demand for sustainability.

Our readings and viewings will combine fictional, documentary (geographical/biological) and historical perspectives on Russia's interaction with nature. Topics will include and integrate issues of ecology and environmental history, but they will be considered mainly through the lens of Russian thought and experience. Thus while we will inevitably need to review the more essential facts behind specific incidents (e.g. the shrinking of the Aral Sea, the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the pollution of Siberian lakes and rivers, etc.), we will focus largely on Russian cultural responses to such problems by well-known Russian writers and thinkers, as well as through some Russian visual art. Writings by specialists on a particular topic will provide essential background and contextual material.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To expand your knowledge of Russian literature and culture in the context of Russian environmental history;
2. To enhance your understanding of the extent to which dramatic changes and transformations in Russia's natural world over the past century have affected — and been affected by — ecological ideas, values and motifs in Russian culture;
3. To raise your awareness of environmental issues facing the world's largest country (Russia) by surface area;
4. To broaden your perspective on sustainability and Russia's critically important role in preserving it;
5. To strengthen your critical reading and thinking skills through close analysis of our course texts and images.

REQUIRED BOOKS & TEXTS:

- Arseniev, Vladimir. *[Dersu the Trapper](#)*. Tr. M. Burr. N.Y: McPherson & Co., 1996. [ISBN #0929701496]
- Bulgakov, Mikhail. *[The Fatal Eggs](#)*. Tr. by Michael Karpelson. Translit Publishing, 2010 [ISBN # 0981269524]
- Platonov, Andrei. *[Soul and Other Stories](#)*. Tr. R.&E. Chandler. N.Y.: NYRB Classics, 2007 [ISBN # 159017254X]
- Rasputin, Valentin. *[Farewell to Matyora](#)*. Tr. A. Bouis. Evanston IL: Northwestern U Pr, 1991 [ISBN # 0810113295]
- Selected texts in electronic formats, available either on our “e-learning” site, on “Course Reserves,” or elsewhere online.
- Selected texts and excerpts from books on reserve at Library West (“Course Reserves”).

OPTIONAL but recommended (both books will be available at Library West through Course Reserves):

- Josephson, Paul (et al). *[An Environmental History of Russia](#)*. Cambridge U Pr, 2013 [ISBN # 0521689724]
- Blinnikov, Mikhail S. *[A Geography of Russia and its Neighbors](#)*. N.Y.: Guilford Pr., 2011 [ISBN #1606239201]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Regular attendance and active participation in all classroom activities, where “active” means fully attentive to the day's presentations and *NOT* engaged by electronic devices or other personal activities. See also “Attendance policy,” below.
2. Thorough and punctual completion of all reading assignments. Everyone will be expected to complete the assigned readings prior to the class during which they will be discussed. Our course exams will require that you demonstrate your knowledge of our assigned readings, so be sure to make time to complete the readings!

3. Completion of three exams (two midterms in class, one take-home final) based on required course readings, class lectures, presentations and discussions. The exams will account for 75% of your course grade.
4. One five-to-ten-minute oral summary and analysis of an assigned supplementary reading of relevance to a weekly course topic (to be presented in class on an assigned day). Will count in the “course participation” percentage.
5. One 1000-word original written (typed and printed) review and analysis of a selected supplementary book, which will comprise part of your take-home final exam. Further details about the book review will be explained in class.
6. One five-to-ten-minute oral summary of your book critique, to be presented during the final weeks of class.

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GRADING CRITERIA and EXAM DATES:

Final course grades will be based on the following percentages:

- **Total attendance** (= total number of class meetings attended) [see “Attendance policy,” below]. **10%**
- **Course participation** (= attendance percentage [not including officially excused absences — see “Attendance policy,” below]; + punctual completion of assignments; + involvement in classroom activities; + two oral presentations). . . . **12%**
- **Midterm exam № 1** in class on **Fri., Feb. 10.** **26%**
- **Midterm exam № 2** in class on **Wed., Mar. 29.** **26%**
- **Take-home final exam** (+ book review) due *in my hands* (printed out) *no later than* **2:30 p.m.** on **Thurs., Apr. 27.** . **26%**

The dates for the two in-class exams will not be changed except in case of an official cancellation of U.F. academic activity on those days, so be sure to attend on those dates!!

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Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale: **A** = a final course percentage of 93-100; **A-** = 90-92; **B+** = 87-89; **B** = 83-86; **B-** = 80-82; **C+** = 77-79; **C** = 73-76; **C-** = 70-72; **D+** = 67-69; **D** = 63-66; **D-** = 60-62; **E** = less than 60. (Note that the University of Florida issues grade points according to the following scale: A: 4.0 grade points; A-: 3.67; B+: 3.33; B: 3; B-: 2.67; C+: 2.33; C: 2.0; C-: 1.67; D+: 1.33; D: 1.0; D-: .67; E: 0; WF: 0; I: 0; NG: 0; S-U: 0.)

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Attendance policy: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with UF policies (see catalog: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Although there is no penalty for officially excusable absences (as defined by university policy), please *NOTE* that *the number of class meetings attended* counts for 10% of the course grade. Thus if a class is missed, even for officially acceptable reasons, then an attendance point will not be gained for that day. The attendance score will equal the percentage of meetings actually attended, so *be sure to sign the attendance list daily*.

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Make-up policy: Except in the case of a certified illness or other officially approved reason (e.g. U.F.-assigned travel), there will be no make-up option for missed tests (**контрольные**). Please do NOT request an individual assignment for extra credit in place of a missed test (or missed assignment, or missed classes)! If/when unavoidable, a make-up test should be arranged in person with me *prior* to an anticipated absence. In case of certified illness, you should contact me immediately following your return to classes.

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Classroom accommodation: Students requesting classroom or exam accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. That office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide it to me when requesting accommodation. **Students with physical, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities** will be accommodated in accordance with UF policies.

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All must adhere to U.F.’s **Student Honor Code**: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>.

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Course evaluation policy: Students are expected to provide online feedback on the quality of instruction in this course at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

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Weekly schedule of primary course readings and exams

(NOTE: a more detailed schedule will be posted on our “e-learning” space):

- Week 01 (Jan. 4, 6): Introductory remarks and presentations.
- Week 02 (Jan. 9, 11, 13): Arseniev, *Dersu Uzala*
- Week 03 (Jan. 18, 20): Arseniev, *Dersu Uzala* [NO CLASS Mon., Jan. 16 (holiday / MLKing Day)]
- Week 04 (Jan. 23, 25, 27): Arseniev, *Dersu Uzala*
- Week 05 (Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 3): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs* [NO CLASS Fri., Feb. 3 (instructor absence)]
- Week 06 (Feb. 6, 8, 10): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs*. **Midterm Exam № 1 (Fri. Feb. 10)**
- Week 07 (Feb. 13, 15, 17): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 08 (Feb. 20, 22, 24): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 09 (Feb. 27, Mar. 1, 3): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories); Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (1976)
- Week 10 (Mar. 13, 15, 17): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (1976)
- Week 11 (Mar. 20, 22, 24): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (1976)
- Week 12 (Mar. 27, 29, 31): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora* (1976). **Midterm Exam № 2 (Wed. Mar. 29)**
- Week 13 (Apr. 3, 5, 7): Selected readings on late/post-Soviet environmental issues + oral summaries of book reviews.
- Week 14 (Apr. 10, 12, 14): Selected readings on sustainability issues + oral summaries of book reviews.
- Week 15 (Apr. 17, 19): Distribution of take-home final exam. Oral summaries of book reviews. Conclusions.