RUW 4341: Russian Media Culture
Professor Michael Gorham, UF Russian Studies
Dept. of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of Florida
Fall 2016

Meeting times: T 7, R 7–8   Office: 261 Dauer Hall
Location: Matherly 51   Phone: 273-3786
Section: 03A3   mgorham@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1–3 PM (or by appointment)

Description and Goals
In "Russian Media Culture" we will engage in a collaborative, in-depth study of the Russian mass media and web-based technology, and their impact on culture and society today. Some of the questions we will explore:

- How has the Russian mass media evolved since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and how have the Soviet and post-Soviet media cultures influenced popular attitudes, official policies, and technical architectures?
- What are the dominant trends and challenges currently facing "old" mass media – in particular, newspapers, periodicals, and television – and how effectively have they embraced new media technologies?
- What is the ".ru" internet domain, or "Runet," and how "Russian" is it?
- How have new media tools such as texting, blogging, microblogging (Twitter, etc.) and social networks influenced the way Russians communicate, key notions of friendship and community, and creative self expression?
- What impact, positive and negative, have mass and new media had on the formation of new democratic, civic, entertainment and consumer cultures, spaces and opportunities in Russia?
- To what extent are the challenges and opportunities – and the responses to them – unique to Russia and to what extent are they shared on a more global scale?

The course is organized modularly. It begins with an historical and structural overview of print, visual and digital media (mainly newspapers, television and the Runet domain of the internet) and then shifts to a thematic focus, examining topics central to understanding the place and impact of the mass media and new technologies in Russia today. Although subject to change depending on the interests of participants and current events in Russia and the new media world, these themes will likely include:

- Free speech and oppositional culture
- The State and civil society
- Entertainment and mass media

- Consumer culture and mass media
- Hacker culture
- Propaganda & "Information wars"

To promote the independent use of all things Russian beyond the walls of the classroom, the course will help you develop the linguistic, cultural, and technological skills needed to function effectively in what is fast becoming an overwhelming sea of tools, networks and information.

Graded work for the course will consist of regular (weekly) activities designed to promote hands-on engagement in the media and themes under examination. **In-class contributions** will include brief, but prepared presentations ("доклады") on pre-assigned topics and active participation in lectures, debates, discussions, and group case analyses. **Online contributions** will include regular blog posts, informed comments in assigned discussion forums, and brief annotations to high-quality links for the "Russian Media Culture" website. (For specifics on number, length and language for each of these, see "Course Policies" below.) You will also have the chance to pursue an **independent study project** on a theme of personal and/or professional interest to you, culmination in the production of an online learning module of your own.

Course Policies, Requirements and Grading

Language use. Russian will be the normal language of operation during class meetings, unless otherwise specified. Some assigned readings will be in English, as will the annotated website overviews, but most everything else will happen in Russian. Unauthorized use of English will be taken into account in the assessment of in-class performance.

Final grades will depend on your performance in the following areas:
- Attendance, homework, effort (30%)
- 3 in-class tests (40%)
- In-class contributions (reports, presentations) (20%)
- Final independent projects (10%)

There will be no final exam for the course.

Attendance, homework, effort: 30%
Because maximizing contact hours is so critical to foreign language learning, **attendance** for this course is mandatory and will be graded on a straight percentage basis (i.e. 100% attendance = A+, 90% attendance = A-, etc.). Absences may be excused if for a legitimate, well-documented reason. Beginning the second week of classes, all written **homework**, unless otherwise noted, should be typed and submitted on the day under which the assignment is listed. Homework turned in one meeting session late will be eligible for half-credit. Beyond showing up for class and completing assignments on time, the level of **preparation and effort** you demonstrate in class discussions and activities will also be factored into your grade for this portion of the course. It is to be expected that you won't always know answers, understand passages, clips, etc.; indeed, sometimes you may feel utterly lost. But it is important that you give 100% effort in trying and speak up (in or outside of class) when you are having trouble. Assessments of your effort will be provided periodically; if you have any questions about how you are faring, feel free to come by office hours.

Tests: 40%
Three 50-minute tests will assess your mastery of the vocabulary, readings, and other materials studied over the preceding weeks. They may contain reading, writing, listening and/or speaking components.

In-class presentations: 20%
You will regularly get to prepare and conduct **in-class presentations** (доклады) on media, websites, themes, etc. relating to the theme of the week. Presentations will be oral and brief (around 3 minutes), but must be prepared, proofed and practiced in advance. **Questions or issues for in-class debate and discussion** will also be assigned and evaluated as regular homework; responses and commentaries on these, too, should be prepared in advance and rehearsed. **Measurement/evaluation:** In-class presentations will be evaluated using a 10-point scale based on a relatively equal assessment of the following criteria

- Thoroughness/completion of task;
- incorporation and understanding of relevant course issues and materials;
- originality, critical thinking and thoughtfulness;
- accuracy (both factual and grammatical).

In assessing all in-class contributions, quality will be weighed more heavily than quantity and your relative proficiency level will be taken into account. You should expect to make between 7 and 10 presentations over the course of the semester. The lowest presentation score will be dropped, with the remaining scores averaged and converted into a percentage at the end of the semester.s

Independent Projects: 10%
In addition to group assignments, you will have the chance to pursue and prepare independent projects and presentations on topics relating to their personal and/or academic interest. See separate handout for details.

Independent Project – Preliminary Deadlines
- Deadline 1: Preliminary Consultations (Week 3 – Student-teacher conference)
- Deadline 2: Confirmation of Topic (Week 6 – Electronic submission)
- Deadline 3: Progress Report (Week 9)
- Deadline 4: Final Rough Draft (Week 14–15)
- Deadline 5: Final Presentation (Week 15–16)

Grading percentages
Grades based on percentages will be determined according to 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%	

Make-up policy*:* Make-up presentations and tests will be permitted only in the case of legitimate conflicts well-documented in advance. Please contact me as early as possible if you think you have a scheduling conflict.

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 me when requesting accommodation. For details, please consult the Disability Resource Center website at: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/.

Academic Honesty
All students must be familiar with and will be held accountable to the University's "Student Conduct & Honor Code" explained in full at: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/. Please review these guidelines and contact me with any questions or concerns.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: *http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/*

Course Materials and Technology Requirements
- To reduce course fees, I have tried to make all course readings available in electronic form. You may be asked to subscribe to fee-based online services, though these fees will be considerably less than what you normally pay for textbooks.
- We will use the Canvas E-learning system of the University of Florida for much of our online activities. To get into the system, you will need your Gatorlink ID and password to log on at https://lss.at.ufl.edu. If you have trouble with the online format of this course, please see me in my office hours.
- You will also need access to a computer capable of reading and writing in Russian for word processing and internet use.