

RUW 4341: Russian Media Culture
Professor Michael Gorham, UF Russian Studies
Dept. of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of Florida
Fall 2019



Meeting times: MWF 7th
Location: CBD 234 (M/W), 238 (F)
Section: 21919
Office Hours: MW 10–11 AM (or by appointment)

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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:

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| • Trends in media use and trust | • Entertainment and mass media |
| • Media coverage of contemporary events | • Consumer culture and mass media |
| • Censorship and state regulation | • 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.

For a detailed schedule of weekly topics and assignments, go to “[Weekly Assignments](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/377498/pages/weekly-assignments)” page in Canvas (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/377498/pages/weekly-assignments>).

Graded work for the course will consist of regular (weekly) activities designed to promote hands-on engagement with 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. You will also have the chance to pursue an **independent study project** on a theme of personal or professional interest to you.

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 (25%)
- Tests (45%)
- In-class contributions (reports, presentations) (20%)
- Independent project (10%)

There will be no period-long tests in the course, nor will there be any final exam.

Attendance, homework & effort: 25%

Because maximizing contact hours is so critical to foreign language learning, **attendance (10%)** 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 (10%)**, 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, in the **effort (5%)** 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. I will provide regular, written assessments, based on an “excellent/good/needs work” scale, and assign a final grade for this rubric accordingly.

Tests: 45%

Three 40-50 minute tests will be used to measure your mastery of material covered in recent class meetings. They will focus on a mix of vocabulary, content-based factual knowledge, and more conceptual knowledge regarding issues and ideas covered in recent class meetings. I will notify you in advance about both the format and content of tests.

Preliminary test dates: September 18, October 18, and November 18.

In-class presentations: 20%

You will have regular opportunities to prepare and conduct in-class presentations (доклады) on media, websites, issues, etc. relating to recent course content. 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 4-6 formal presentations over the course of the semester. The lowest presentation score will be dropped, and the remaining scores averaged and converted into a percentage at the end of the semester.

Independent Project: 10%

In addition to group assignments, you will have the chance to pursue and prepare an independent project on a topic relating to a personal or academic interest. See separate handout for details.

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.

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%	

For information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

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 with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Academic Honesty

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 Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Student Evaluations

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 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/>.