

RUT 3530 (section #7N53; class #19869): **Russia's Struggle with Nature: Legacies of Destruction and Preservation**  
Course Syllabus, Spring 2020

Time of class meetings: **MWF 6 (12:50–1:40)**  
Place of class meetings: **TURL 2303**  
Instructor: **Dr. James Goodwin**

Instructor e-mail: **jegoodwi@ufl.edu**  
Instructor office & phone: **252c Dauer Hall, (352) 273-3790**  
Office hours: **MW 2:00–3:00**

**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 knowledge of Russian literature and culture in the context of Russian environmental history;
2. To enhance 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 awareness of environmental / sustainability issues facing the planet's largest country (by land mass);
4. To strengthen 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]

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Regular attendance and engagement in all classroom discussions and presentations, where “engagement” means fully attentive to class discussions and *NOT* distracted by electronic devices, personal business, etc. See “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 day for which they are assigned) and be prepared to respond to questions about the texts in class. Our course quizzes and exams will require you to demonstrate knowledge of our course texts, so be sure to find time to complete the readings.
3. Completion of three exams and three “matter-of-fact” quizzes, based on required course readings, lectures, presentations & discussions. The exams and quizzes will be taken in class and will count for 80% of your course grade.

**EXAM & QUIZ FORMAT:** The required exams and quizzes will test your knowledge and assimilation of material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. The quizzes will include mostly factual data (identify important names, terms, events, dates etc.) covered in class lectures, readings and handouts. The exams typically include [1] a text recognition section (identify an excerpt from our readings and answer brief questions about it); [2] a brief short-answer section (identify characters, concepts, etc.); [3] a short essay (respond in detail to a broader question on course content). The second and third exams will cover (mainly) material introduced *since* the preceding exam. The essay on the third (final) exam may ask you to reference course themes discussed throughout the semester.

**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, *excluding* officially excused absences) [see “Attendance policy,” below]; + punctual completion of reading & discussion assignments; + involvement in classroom discussions & presentations). . . . . **10%**
- **Two fifteen-minute factual quizzes** (on **Wed. Jan. 29**; **Wed. Mar. 18**) . . . . . **20%**
- **Three in-class exams** (on **Wed. Feb. 12**; **Fri. Mar. 27**; **Wed. Apr. 29**) . . . . . **60%**

**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. U.F.’s “grade point” scale can be accessed at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

**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*. A second attendance percentage, which will ignore officially excused absences, will be factored into the “Course participation” grade.

**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**). 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. Individual assignments for extra credit will not be given to compensate for a missed test (or missed assignment, or missed classes).

**Cell phone / electronics policy:** Please keep cell phones **silent** (on “vibrate” mode, or off) for the duration of each class meeting. In the event of an emergency that requires your immediate use of your phone, please *exit the classroom quietly to do so*. Laptops or other electronic reading devices should be used in class *ONLY* for viewing our texts and/or taking notes. *Please do NOT use the internet OR read/write electronic messages during class*. Failure to respect this rule will result in a lower “Course Participation” score for the course.

All are required to adhere to U.F.’s **Student Honor and Conduct Codes**: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>.

**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](#).

**Course evaluation policy:** 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.ua.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 evaluation results are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**Weekly schedule of \*primary\* course texts, quizzes and exams.** *NOTE* that a more detailed daily reading schedule, including shorter (digital) texts, will be posted and updated regularly on [our course Canvas \(“e-learning”\) space](#).

- Week 01 (Jan. 6, 8, 10): Introduction and Survey. Geography of Russia.
- Week 02 (Jan. 13, 15, 17): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*
- Week 03 (Jan. 22, 24): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*
- Week 04 (Jan. 27, 29, 31): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*; **Matter-of-Fact Quiz № 1 (Wed. Jan. 29)**
- Week 05 (Feb. 3, 5, 7): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs*
- Week 06 (Feb. 10, 12, 14): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs*; **Exam № 1 (Wed. Feb. 12)**
- Week 07 (Feb. 17, 19, 21): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 08 (Feb. 24, 26, 28): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- ..... (Mar. 2, 4, 6): NO CLASSES (Spring Break)
- Week 09 (Mar. 9, 11, 13): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories);
- Week 10 (Mar. 16, 18, 20): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*; **Matter-of-Fact Quiz № 2 (Wed. Mar. 18)**
- Week 11 (Mar. 23, 25, 27): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*; **Exam № 2 (Fri. Mar. 27)**
- Week 12 (Mar. 30, Apr. 1, 3): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*
- Week 13 (Apr. 6, 8, 10): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*
- Week 14 (Apr. 13, 15, 17): [Readings on late/post-Soviet environmental themes and issues]
- Week 15 (Apr. 20, 22): [Readings on late/post-Soviet environmental themes and issues]
- Week 16: **Exam № 3 on April 29 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon in our regular classroom**