RUSSIAN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN STUDIES

REES 010 Central and Eastern Europe: Cultures, Histories, Societies
The reappearance of the concept of Central and Eastern Europe is one of the most fascinating results of the collapse of the Soviet empire. The course will provide an introduction into the study of this region - its cultures, histories, and societies - from the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire to the enlargement of the European Union. Students are encouraged to delve deeper into particular countries, disciplines, and sub-regions, such as Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, through an individual research paper and class presentations. Prerequisite: This course is one of two required core courses for the Russian and East European Studies (REES) major.
Taught by: Ghodsee
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: COML 010
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 026 Behind the Iron Curtain
This first-year seminar provides an introduction to the histories, cultures, and societies of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and the successor states of Yugoslavia. Through a selection of articles and essays written by anthropologists and sociologists and based on their extended fieldwork in the region, students will explore both the ethnographic method and the experience of everyday life during and after the communist era. Topics will include: popular music under socialism, food and wine, environmental concerns, the status of Muslim minorities, socialist aesthetics, public memory and cultures of commemoration, privatization, advertising, women's rights, gender and sexuality, emergent nationalisms, and the rise of income inequality and homelessness. All readings and assignments in English.
Taught by: Ghodsee
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ANTH 026
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 048 The Rise and Fall of the Russian Empire, 1552-1917
How and why did Russia become the center of the world’s largest empire, a single state encompassing eleven time zones and over a hundred ethnic groups? To answer this question, we will explore the rise of a distinct political culture beginning in medieval Muscovy, its transformation under the impact of a prolonged encounter with European civilization, and the various attempts to re-form Russia from above and below prior to the Revolution of 1917. Main themes include the facade vs. the reality of central authority, the intersection of foreign and domestic issues, the development of a radical intelligentsia, and the tension between empire and nation.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Nathans/Holquist
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: HIST 048
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

Out of an obscure, backward empire, the Soviet Union emerged to become the great political laboratory of the twentieth century. This course will trace the roots of the world’s first socialist society and its attempts to recast human relations and human nature itself. Topics include the origins of the Revolution of 1917, the role of ideology in state policy and everyday life, the Soviet Union as the center of world communism, the challenge of ethnic diversity, and the reasons for the USSR’s sudden implosion at the end of the century. Focusing on politics, sociology, culture, and their interaction, we will examine the rulers (from Lenin to Gorbachev) as well as the ruled (peasants, workers, and intellectuals; Russians and non-Russians). The course will feature discussions of selected texts, including primary sources in translation. For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Nathans/Holquist
Also Offered As: HIST 049
Activity: Recitation
1.0 Course Unit

REES 095 Universal Language: From the Tower of Babel to Artificial Intelligence
This is a course in European intellectual history. It explores the historical trajectory, from antiquity to the present day, of the idea that there once was, and again could be, a universal and perfect language among the human race. If recovered, it can explain the origins and meaning of human experience, and can enable universal understanding and world peace. The tantalizing question of the possibility of a universal language have been vital and thought-provoking throughout the history of humanity. The idea that the language spoken by Adam and Eve was a language which perfectly expressed the nature of all earthly objects and concepts has occupied the minds of intellectuals for almost two millennia. In defiance of the Christian biblical myth of the confusion of languages and nations at the Tower of Babel, they have over and over tried to overcome divine punishment and discover the path back to harmonious existence. By recovering or recreating a universal language, theologians hoped to be able to experience the divine; philosophers believed that it would enable apprehension of the laws of nature, while mystic caballists saw in it direct access to hidden knowledge. In reconstructing a proto-language, 19th-century Indo-Europeanist philologists saw the means to study the early stages of human development. Even in the 20th century, romantic idealists, such as the inventor of Esperanto Ludwik Zamenhof, strived to construct languages to enable understanding among estranged nations. For writers and poets of all times, from Cyrano de Bergerac to Velimir Khlebnikov, the idea of a universal and perfect language has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Today, this idea echoes in theories of universal and generative grammars, in approaching English as a global tongue, and in various attempts to create artificial languages, even a language for cosmic communication. Each week we address a particular period and set of theories to learn about universal language projects, but above all, the course examines fundamental questions of what language is and how it functions in human society.
Taught by: Verkholantsev
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 095, ENGL 219, HIST 056
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 111 Poetics of Screenplay: The Art of Plotting
This course studies screenwriting in a historical, theoretical and artistic perspective. We discuss the rules of drama and dialogue, character development, stage vs. screen-writing, adaptation of nondramatic works, remodeling of plots, auteur vs. genre theory of cinema, storytelling in silent and sound films, the evolution of a script in the production process, script doctoring, as well as screenwriting techniques and tools.
Taught by: Todorov
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 111, COML 118
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 113 Portraits of Old Russia: Myth, Icon, Chronicle
This course covers eight centuries of Russia's cultural, political, and social history, from its origins through the eighteenth century, a period which laid the foundation for the Russian Empire. Each week-long unit is organized around a set of texts (literary text, historical document, image, film) which examine prominent historical and legendary figures as they represent chapters in Russia's history. Historical figures under examination include, among others, the Baptist of Rus, Prince Vladimir; the nation-builder, Prince Alexander Nevsky; the first Russian Tsar, Ivan the Terrible; the first Emperor and Westernizer, Peter the Great; the renowned icon painter Andrei Rublev; the epic hero Ilya Muromets; and the founder of Muscovite monasticism, St. Three modern-day nation-states Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus share and dispute the cultural heritage of Old Rus, and their political relationships even today revolve around interpretations of the past. This constructed past has a continuing influence in modern Russia and is keenly referenced, sometimes manipulatively, in contemporary social and political discourse. (Recently, for example, President Putin has justified the annexation of Crimea to Russia by referring to it as the holy site of Prince Vladimir's baptism, from which Russian Christianity ostensibly originates.) The study of pre-modern cultural and political history explains many aspects of modern Russian society, as well as certain political aspirations of its leaders.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Verkholantsev
Also Offered As: COML 131, HIST 045, REES 613
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 119 Prague: The Making of a European Nation
Even though such 'supercities' as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, Boston, and San Francisco claim a special place in the minds and hearts of Americans, no American city plays as crucial a role in the formation of national identity among Americans as Prague does among the Czechs. One may even argue that the formation of a national identity associated with a nation's urban center is a European phenomenon. The focus of the proposed course is Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic and the geographical center of Europe. From the 14th century, when it became a seat of the Holy Roman Emperor, to the Hussite Revolution; from the 19th-century national revival and the birth of the independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, to the 'Prague Offensive,' the last major operation of the Soviet Army in World War II and the re-appearance of the Soviet tanks after the 'Prague Spring' in 1968, to the 'Velvet' Revolution in 1989, and on to the present day as an EU member, Prague has been the site of major European developments and is where the Czech national identity was forged. Today a popular tourist destination with a uniquely preserved historical center that is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List, Prague combines national character with an increasingly cosmopolitan flavor. Focusing on what makes Prague a national capital, we will note how the 'national' negotiates its place with the 'global.' As a cultural hub and political center, Prague is the repository of a cultural collective memory and of historical and emotional records. It thus presents an excellent case study of how a national identity could be formed around a single urban center. The study of the many layers of Prague's urban landscape allows us to observe how history is built into the physical environment, while the analysis of literary and artistic production reveals how the city has become perceived as a national shrine, embodied in word and image. Students will read the 'Prague text' as humanists, anthropologists, and historians. They will learn to apply methods of literary, cultural, and historical analyses, and will ask questions of what it means to be a Czech, a Central European, a European, and even, perhaps, an American. The travel component will further one of the key goals of this seminar: to develop cultural knowledge and sensitivity together with the appreciation of socio-cultural differences. Prerequisite: Application required through Penn Global: https://global.upenn.edu/pennabroad/pgs
Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 122
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
REES 123 RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Russia and the European Union (EU) are engaged in a battle for influence in Eastern Europe. EU foreign policy towards its Eastern neighbors is based on economic integration and the carrot of membership. With the application of this powerful incentive, Central and Southeastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Croatia have progressed rapidly towards integration with the EU (and NATO). Yet, given Russia’s opposition to the further enlargement, membership is off the table for the large semi-Western powers such as Russia itself and Turkey and the smaller countries inhabiting an emerging buffer zone between Russia and the EU, such as Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Belarus. These in-between countries find themselves subject to intense competition for influence between Eastern and Western powers. In this context, EU countries must balance their energy dependence on Russia and need for new markets and geopolitical stability with concern for human rights, democratic governance, and self-determination. What are the trade-offs implicit in the foreign policies of Russia, EU member states, and Eastern Europe? What are the best policy approaches? What are the main opportunities and obstacles?

For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Orenstein
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PSCI 257
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 133 Socialism
Socialism has become a hot topic in US politics. Some advocate it as an ideology that supports economic equality; others decry it as a path towards excessive state control. But what does the word socialism really mean? Why does it seem to mean different things to different people? What is the historical background of socialism? Are there meaningful differences between different forms of socialism or are they more or less the same thing? Which societies are socialist in practice, both past and present? What about the US? What are the different proposals US and other Socialists make today? What is their logic? How socialist are they? Are their policy ideas or bad? What effects would they have? This course will introduce students to socialism in theory and practice, with an emphasis on different models of Western social democracy and how they are impacting political discourse right now.

Taught by: Orenstein
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PSCI 112
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 134 Communism
The rise and fall of Communism dominated the history of the short twentieth century from the Russian revolution of 1917 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As a system of government, Communism is more or less dead, but its utopian ideals of liberation from exploitation and want live on. Communism remains the one political-economic system that presented, for a time, an alternative to global capitalism. In this course, students will gain an introduction to socialist and Communist political thought and explore Communist political and economic regimes their successes and failures, critics and dissidents, efforts at reform, and causes of collapse. We will learn about the remnants of Communism in China, North Korea, and Cuba and efforts of contemporary theorists to imagine a future for Communism.

For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Orenstein
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PSCI 144
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 135 Cold War: Global History
The Cold War was more than simply a military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union; it was the frame within which the entire world developed (for better or worse) for nearly five decades. This course will examine the cold War as a global phenomenon, covering not only the military and diplomatic history of the period, but also examining the social and cultural impact of the superpower confrontation. We will cover the origins of the conflict, the interplay between periods of tension and detente, the relative significance of disagreements within the opposing blocs, and the relationship between the ‘center’ of the conflict in the North Atlantic/European area and the global ‘periphery’.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Nathans
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: HIST 135
Activity: Recitation
1.0 Course Unit

REES 136 PORTRAITS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY: ART, FICTION, DRAMA
This course covers 19C Russian cultural and social history. Each week-long unit is organized around a single medium-length text (novella, play, memoir) which opens up a single scene of social history/birth, death, duel, courtship, tsar, and so on. Each of these main texts is accompanied by a set of supplementary materials—paintings, historical readings, cultural-analytical readings, excerpts from other literary works, etc. The object of the course is to understand the social codes and rituals that informed nineteenth-century Russian life, and to apply this knowledge in interpreting literary texts, other cultural objects, and even historical and social documents (letters, memoranda, etc.). We will attempt to understand social history and literary interpretation as separate disciplines yet also as disciplines that can inform one another. In short: we will read the social history through the text, and read the text against the social history.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Platt
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: HIST 047
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: No prior language experience required.
REES 145 Masterpieces of 19th Century Russian Literature
A bronze monument to an all-powerful emperor comes to life and pursues a poor everyman through the streets, driving him to his death. A studious young man kills an old woman as a philosophical experiment. A young woman at the height of aristocratic society abandons her husband and young son to devote herself to her lover. These and other tales from the classics of nineteenth-century Russian literature will touch and delight you, get under your skin, and even attempt to show you how to live. We will read these tales in order to understand how books can become events in their own right, how Russian literature gained such power and prestige, and what it can still teach us today. Authors include Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Pavlova, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and others.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Kim
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 155 Masterpieces of 20th Century Russian Literature
"Only in Russia is poetry respected. They kill you for it," famously quipped the poet Osip Mandelstam, who died in Joseph Stalin's concentration camps. Russia is a society that takes literature seriously—one in which the pen is assumed to have direct historical consequences. In this course, we will study how twentieth century Russian literature actively participated in war, revolution, totalitarian dictatorship, and resistance. The masterworks we will study open windows into worlds of revolutionary rapture, moral uplift in the face of tyranny, courageous subversion of the repressive state, and historical reflection on its failures. Our readings will range from an avant-garde play intended to rewire your mind, to an epic representation of revolutionary social transformation, to surreal and absurdist representations of a world gone mad. In other words: fasten your seatbelts low and tight across your waist; turbulence ahead!
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Platt
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 159 Population and Public Health in Eastern Europe
Since the collapse of communism in 1989 in Eastern Europe (and 1991 in the Soviet Union), many of the countries in the region have experienced public health crises and demographic catastrophe. Below replacement fertility rates and massive out migration have decimated the populations of these countries even as populations age and place unsustainable strains on pension systems and medical services. The demographic collapse has also been accompanied by falling male life expectancy and the rise of alcoholism, depression, domestic violence, and suicide. The economic exigencies of the transition from communism to capitalism dismantled welfare states at the exact moment when health services were most needed, leaving charities and nongovernmental organization to try to fill in the gaps. Through a combination of readings from the fields of epidemiology, demography, and medical anthropology, this course examines the public health implications of poverty and social dislocation in post-communist states. All readings and assignments are in English.
Taught by: GHODSEE
Also Offered As: ANTH 159, SOCI 159
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 160 Sex and Socialism
This seminar examines classic and current scholarship and literature on gender and sexuality in contemporary Eastern Europe, and examines the dialogue and interchange of ideas between East and West. Although the scholarly and creative works will primarily investigate the changing status of women during the last three decades, the course will also look at changing constructions of masculinity and LGBT movements and communities in the former communist bloc. Topics will include: the woman question before 1989; gender and emerging nationalisms; visual representations in television and film; social movements; work; romance and intimacy; spirituality; and investigations into the constructed concepts of ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights.’
Taught by: Ghodsee
Also Offered As: ANTH 160, GSWS 160, REES 560
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 164 Russian and East European Film from the October Revolution to World War II
The purpose of this course is to present the Russian and East European contribution to world cinema in terms of film theory, experimentation with the cinematic language, and social and political reflex. We discuss major themes and issues such as the invention of montage, the means of revolutionary visual propaganda and the cinematic component to the communist cultural revolutions, party ideology, and practices of social-engineering, cinematic response to the emergence of the totalitarian state in Soviet Russia before World War II.
Taught by: Todorov
Also Offered As: CIMS 164
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 165 Russian and East European Film after World War II
The purpose of this course is to present the Russian and East European contribution to world cinema in terms of film theory, experimentation with the cinematic language, and social and political reflex. We discuss major themes and issues such as means of visual propaganda and the cinematic component to the communist cultural revolutions, party ideology and practices of social-engineering, cinematic response to the emergence of the totalitarian state in Russia and its subsequent installation in Eastern Europe after World War II.
Taught by: Todorov
Also Offered As: CIMS 165
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
REES 171 The Socialist City
This course will explore the ideology and politics of the socialist city in the Soviet Union, East Europe, and the Second World. We will focus on how design professionals, politicians, and residents realized utopian socialist values in the face of national design traditions, local politics, and limited resources. Beginning with the Soviet case, the course will consider how planners and architects addressed modernization, multi-family housing, and neighborhood units in new city plans. We will consider capitals, like Moscow, as well as less well-known regional centers that had strong local identities, such as Tashkent, Belgrade, and Prague. We will examine the state’s use of public spaces for commemorations and preservationists’ reinterpretation of existing historic sites. In addition, we will consider how everyday residents experienced the socialist city, such as multi-family housing, shopping centers, and subway systems. We will address how citizens circumvented official state channels to obtain state housing and illegally build homes for themselves, sometimes in a folk style. The course will center on Soviet and East European cities, but also address socialist cities in Cuba and Africa whose design was influenced by transnational exchanges. Most broadly, this course explores the question, what was the socialist city? How did its planners, architects, and politicians understand it, and what did they intend to construct? And, what resulted? In the past fifteen years, North American scholars have begun to take seriously the study of the socialist city, and this course draws on the emerging scholarship on this exciting, cross-disciplinary topic. How do scholars understand the socialist city today? We will examine the shared legacies that socialist cities across East Europe shared with their Western European counterparts, as well as the particularities of design that have sparked North American scholars’ debates on what distinguished the socialist city from ones that emerged in a capitalist context. In our discussions, we will seek to understand how socialist design professionals understood their work and the emerging cities at the time, as well as how North American scholars view the socialist city today. Disciplinarily, the focus of the call will fall at the intersection of architectural history and politics. Taught by: Aplenc
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: URBS 171
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 187 Portraits of Soviet Society: Literature, Film, Drama
How can art and literature open a window on Russian lives lived over the course of the tumultuous twentieth century? This course adopts a unique approach to questions of cultural and social history. Each week-long unit is organized around a medium-length film, text or set of texts by some of the most important cultural figures of the era (novella, play, memoir, film, short stories) which opens up a single scene of social history: work, village, avant-garde, war, Gulag, and so on. Each cultural work is accompanied by a set of supplementary materials: historical readings, paintings, cultural-analytical readings, excerpts from other literary works, etc. We will read social history through culture and culture through history. Prerequisite: All readings and lectures in English. For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S Taught by: Platt
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: HIST 046
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: All readings and lectures in English

REES 189 Soviet and Post-Soviet Economy
The course will cover the development and operation of the Soviet centrally planned economy—one of the grandest social experiments of the 20th century. We will review the mechanisms of plan creation, the push for the collectivization and further development of Soviet agriculture, the role of the Soviet educational system and the performance of labor markets (including forced labor camps—GULags). We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system and the causes of its collapse. Privatization, called by some ‘piratization,’ will be one of the central issues in our consideration of the transition from central planning to a market economy in the early 1990s. Even though our main focus will be on the Soviet economy and post-Soviet transition, we will occasionally look back in time to the tsarist era and even further back to find evidence to help explain Soviet/Russian economic development. Taught by: Vekker
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 191 Putin’s Russia: Culture, Society and History
Winston Churchill famously said that Russia ‘is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. Strikingly, today many informed Russians would agree: no one can provide definitive answers concerning what has driven Russian public life and politics over the past three years, as it ricocheted from the mass protests of 2011 and 2012, into the Pussy Riot scandal, then the Olympics, and most recently to the intense patriotism driving the Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine. In this course we will examine how Russians themselves communicate about and represent Russia and what this reveals about this complex society and its development. We will consider print journalism, novels, films, televised media, and the internetpaying close attention both to particular representations and to social institutions for their production, dissemination and consumption. Topics of special concern will include: conspiracy theories, representations of Russian history, collective identity and patriotism, intellectuals and elites, gender and sexuality, consumption and wealth. Putins Russia is an introductory level course for which no prior knowledge Russian history, culture or society is required. All readings and screenings will be in English. Prerequisite: No prior knowledge of Russian is required. For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S Taught by: Platt
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: No prior knowledge of Russian is required.
REES 193 War and Representation
This class will explore complications of representing war in the 20th and 21st centuries. War poses problems of perception, knowledge, and language. The notional ‘fog of war’ describes a disturbing discrepancy between agents and actions of war; the extreme nature of the violence of warfare tests the limits of cognition, emotion, and memory; war’s traditional dependence on declaration is often warped by language games—‘military intervention,’ ‘nation-building,’ or palpably unnamed and unacknowledged state violence. Faced with the radical uncertainty that forms of war bring, modern and contemporary authors have experimented in historically, geographically, experientially and artistically particular ways, forcing us to reconsider even seemingly basic definitions of what a war story can be. Where does a war narrative happen? On the battlefield, in the internment camp, in the suburbs, in the ocean, in the ruins of cities, in the bloodstream? Who narrates war? Soldiers, refugees, gossips, economists, witnesses, bureaucrats, survivors, children, journalists, descendants and inheritors of trauma, historians, those who were never there? How does literature respond to the rise of terrorist or ideology war, the philosophical and material consequences of biological and cyber wars, the role of nuclear state? How does the problem of war and representation disturb the difference between fiction and non-fiction? How do utilitarian practices of representation—propaganda, nationalist messaging, memorialization, xenophobic depiction—affect the approaches we use to study art? Finally, is it possible to read a narrative barely touched or merely contextualized by war and attend to the question of war’s shaping influence? The class will concentrate on literary objects—short stories, and graphic novels—as well as film and television. Students of every level and major are welcome in and encouraged to join this class, regardless of literary experience.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Irele
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 150, ENGL 085
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 196 Russian Short Story
This course studies the development of 19th and 20th-century Russian literature through one of its most distinct and highly recognized genres – the short story. The readings include great masters of fiction such as Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Solzhenitsyn, and others. The course presents the best works of short fiction situating them in a larger cultural-political context. The students learn about the historical formation, poetic virtue, and thematic characteristics of major narrative modes such as sentimentality, romanticism, utopia, realism, modernism, and socialist realism. We study literary devices, styles, and trends of storytelling such as irony, absurd, satire, grotesque, anecdote, etc. Main topics include culture of the duel; the role of chance; the riddle of death; anatomy of madness; imprisonment and survival.
Taught by: Todorov
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 197 Madness and Madmen in Russian Culture
Is ‘insanity’ today the same thing as ‘madness’ of old? Who gets to define what it means to be ‘sane,’ and why? Are the causes of madness biological or social? In this course, we will grapple with these and similar questions while exploring Russia’s fascinating history of madness as a means to maintain, critique, or subvert the status quo. We will consider the concept of madness in Russian culture beginning with its earliest folkloric roots and trace its depiction and function in the figure of the Russian ‘holy fool,’ in classical literature, and in contemporary film.
Readings will include works by many Russian greats, such as Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Bulgakov and Nabokov.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S
Taught by: Peeney
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 197
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 201 Dostoevsky and His Legacy
This course explores the ways Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) portrays the ‘inner world(s)’ of his characters. Dostoevsky’s psychological method will be considered against the historical, ideological, and literary contexts of mid- to late 19th-century Russia. The course consists of three parts: External World (the contexts of Dostoevsky), ‘Inside’ Dostoevsky’s World (the author’s technique and ideas) and The World of Text (close reading of Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov).
Students will write three essays on various aspects of Dostoevsky’s ‘spiritual realism.’
Also Offered As: COML 207
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 202 Tolstoy
Few authors have ever been able to combine their moral and artistic visions as closely as Tolstoy. Over the course of the semester, we will plot how Tolstoy’s ethical concerns changed over the course of his life and how this was reflected in works, which include some of the greatest prose ever written. We will begin by surveying the majestic and far-reaching world of his novels and end with some of Tolstoy’s later works that correspond with the ascent of ‘Tolstoyism’ as virtually its own religion.
Taught by: Todorov
Also Offered As: COML 204
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 211 Literature of Dissent: Art as Protest in 20th-Century Poland and Czechoslovakia
Eastern and Central Europe was the site of monumental political changes in the twentieth century, including the disillusionment of monarchial empires in the First World War and the expansion of Soviet-style communism. At every point, artists have taken part in political debates, sometimes advancing radical agendas, sometimes galvanizing movements, sometimes simply shouting into the void to register their own dissatisfaction. In this course, we will consider texts including literature, political philosophy and film that pushed back against the dominant political norms. In so doing, we will investigate Aesopian language, the mechanics of censorship, the repercussions of dissent, performativity, samizdat and the rise of an alternative culture. We will contextualize our readings of literature with the sociological and historical work of Benedict Anderson, Tony Judt, Jonathan Bolton, Shana Penn, Alexei Yurchak and the series Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe. As well as becoming familiar with major thinkers and movements in Eastern and Central Europe, students will develop a sense of art as a tool of political protest.
Taught by: Weil
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 211
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 213 Saints and Devils in Russian Literature and Tradition
This course is about Russian literary imagination, which is populated with saints and devils, believers and religious rebels, holy men and sinners. In Russia, where people’s frame of mind had been formed by a mix of Eastern Orthodox Christianity and earlier pagan beliefs, the quest for faith, spirituality, and the meaning of life has invariably been connected with religious matters. How can one find the right path in life? Is humility the way to salvation? Should one live for God or for the people? Does God even exist? In ‘Saints and Devils’ we read works of great masters of Russian literature and learn about the historic trends that have filled Russia’s national character with religious and mystical spirit. We start with old Russian fanciful stories and legends of crafty demons and all-forbearing saints. The master of fantastic writing, Nikolai Gogol, will teach us how to triumph over the devil. Together with Anton Chekhov and Leo Tolstoy, we contemplate an ambivalent cultural image of woman as a victim or a sinful agent of the devil. Immersed in the world of Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, we follow the characters in their search for truth, faith, and love. In The Master and Margarita, Mikhail Bulgakov will tell us his fantastic and devilish story of Pontius Pilate and we will see for ourselves that ‘A man will receive his deserts in accordance with his beliefs.’ In sum, over the course of this semester we will talk about ancient cultural traditions, remarkable works of art, and the great artists who created them. (No previous knowledge of Russian Literature necessary. All readings are in English.)
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 213, RELS 218
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 217 Russian Politics
This course will present an in-depth examination of political, economic and social change in post-Soviet Russia within a historical context. After a brief discussion of contemporary problems in Russia, the first half of the course will delve into the rise of communism in 1917, the evolution of the Soviet regime, and the tensions between ideology and practice over the seventy years of communist rule up until 1985. The second part of the course will begin with an examination of the Gorbachev period and the competing interpretations of how the events between 1985 and 1991 may have contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. We will then proceed to make sense of the continuities and changes in politics, economics and society in contemporary Russia. Important topics will include the confrontations accompanying the adoption of a new constitution, the emergence of competing ideologies and parties, the struggle over economic privatization, the question of federalism and nationalism, social and political implications of economic reform, and prospects for Russia’s future in the Putin and post-Putin era.
Taught by: Sil
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PSCI 217, PSCI 517
Activity Recitation
1.0 Course Unit

REES 220 Russia and the West
This course will explore the representations of the West in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian literature and philosophy. We will consider the Russian visions of various events and aspects of Western political and social life Revolutions, educational system, public executions, resorts, etc. within the context of Russian intellectual history. We will examine how images of the West reflect Russia’s own cultural concerns, anticipations, and biases, as well as aesthetic preoccupations and interests of Russian writers. The discussion will include literary works by Karamzin, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Leskov, and Tolstoy, as well as non-fictional documents, such as travelers’ letters, diaries, and historiosophical treatises of Russian Freemasons, Romantic and Positivist thinkers, and Russian social philosophers of the late Nineteenth century. A basic knowledge of nineteenth-century European history is desirable. The class will consist of lectures, discussion, short writing assignments, and two in-class tests.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science Sector
Also Offered As: COML 220, HIST 220
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 222 Imagining Asia: Russia and the East
This course examines the important role of the East in Russian literature and nationalism. Focusing specifically on the Caucasus, Central Asia, Iran, and Turkey, this course will analyze how Russian writers connected the East to Russian identity, and how their approaches implicate different artistic periods (Romanticism, Realism, Socialist Realism, Post-Modernism) and different political atmospheres (Tsarist Russia, Soviet Union, Post-Soviet). Students will also ascertain how Russian literature on the East has affected and influenced literature and political movements produced in the East. In particular, students will analyze how Soviet Central Asian writers, Iranian Socialists, and contemporary Turkish writers were influenced by Russian literature and Soviet ideology. Ultimately, this course examines the impact of Russian cultural and political history in 20th century Central Asia and the Middle East. Readings will include works by: Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Platonov, Chingiz Aitmatov, Sadek Hedayat, Orhan Pamuk, and others. All readings in English.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 240 Napoleonic Era & Tolstoy
In this course we will read what many consider to be the greatest book in world literature. This work, Tolstoy's War and Peace, is devoted to one of the most momentous periods in world history, the Napoleonic Era (1789-1815). We will study both the novel and the era of the Napoleonic Wars: the military campaigns of Napoleon and his opponents, the grand strategies of the age, political intrigues and diplomatic betrayals, the ideologies and human dramas, the relationship between art and history. How does literature help us to understand this era? How does history help us to understand this great novel? This semester marks the 200th anniversary of Napoleons attempt to conquer Russia and achieve world domination, the campaign of 1812. Come celebrate this Bicentennial with us! Because we will read War and Peace over the course of the entire semester, readings will be manageable and very enjoyable.
Taught by: Holquist/Vinitsky
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 236, HIST 333
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 250 Andrei Tarkovsky: Cinema, Spirit and the Art of the Long Take
Andrei Tarkovsky is universally acknowledged to be the greatest Soviet filmmaker of the last half of the twentieth century. Kurosawa claimed that Tarkovsky had 'no equal among film directors alive now.' Bergman called his work 'a miracle.' His films are beautiful, intellectually challenging, and spiritually profound. They also represent a prolonged exploration of the potential of the long take - unusually extended, continuous shots. Tarkovsky's works range from 'Ivan's Childhood', a study of wartime experience through the eyes of a child; to 'Solaris', a philosophical essay in the form of a science-fiction thriller; to 'Andrei Rublev', an investigation of the power of art and spirituality. In this course, we will study Tarkovsky's films and life, with attention to his formal and artistic accomplishments, his thought and writings, and the cultural and political contexts of his work. Each student will learn to analyze film form and content and write two short and one longer paper on some longstanding aspect of Tarkovsky's work of the student's choice.
Taught by: Platt
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 250
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 251 Europe: From an Idea to the Union
Employing the methods from the humanities and social sciences this interdisciplinary seminar will explore the variety of factors that contributed to dividing and uniting Europe. The continent will be considered as a geographical and cultural space and the construction of its identity will be examined through several historical periods from the Middle Ages to Modernism - comprising the rich layer of pan-European civilization across the ethnic or national borders. Finally, the structure of the European Union will be scrutinized including its institutions, decision-making mechanism, monetary union, collective security, the Grexit, and Europes changing relationship with Russia. Participants will be encouraged to select a particular topic in European studies and research it through assigned readings, film, literature, and other media.
Taught by: Steiner
Also Offered As: COML 250
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 275 Russian History in Film
This course draws on fictional, dramatic and cinematic representations of Russian history based on Russian as well as non-Russian sources and interpretations. The analysis targets major modes of imagining, such as narrating, showing and reenacting historical events, personae and epochs justified by different, historically mutating ideological postulates and forms of national self-consciousness. Common stereotypes of picturing Russia from 'foreign' perspectives draw special attention. The discussion involves the following themes and outstanding figures: the mighty autocrats Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great; the tragic ruler Boris Godunov; the brazen rebel and royal impostor Pugachev; the notorious Rasputin, his uncanny powers, sex-appeal, and court machinations; Lenin and the October Revolution; images of war; times of construction and times of collapse of the Soviet Colossus.
Taught by: Todorov
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 275
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 401 Russian Culture Through Art and Architecture: From Fin de Siecle to Perestroika
This course offers a general introduction to the history of Russian visual art and material culture. It surveys styles, traditions, and fashions in Russian visual culture from the Middle Ages to Perestroika, considering them in the context of Russian social and political history. The course examines the very important role played by visual art in the history of Russian culture, and seeks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the relationship between visual media and key aspects and events of Russian civilization, such as Orthodoxy, Westernization and Nationalism, Communist utopia and political protest.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 402 Soviet Childhood
This course examines "Soviet childhood" as a changing historical and political concept, beginning with its incipient notions in the pre-revolutionary period and moving through the Soviet and post-Soviet eras in Russia. We will access the viewpoints of children and adults at various points in time, while engaging with educational theory and practices, legislation, societal norms, and cultural rituals associated with Soviet childhood. This course relies on the close study of literature, songs, films, artifacts of mass production, as well as documentary resources (diaries, recorded interviews, drawings, etc.), in addition to relevant scholarship.
Taught by: Alley
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 408 Reading Russian History
The course explores defining episodes, concepts, and figures in Russian history, from the earliest time to the present day, and their reception in today's scholarship and society. Students learn about Russian historical heritage through the reading of primary sources and analytical essays, as well as examining how this history is used in the present socio-political and ideological discourse. Work on language focuses on matters of style, sentence structure, and vocabulary building.
Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 410 Russian Folk and Literary Tale
This course offers a general introduction to the history of Russian folklore, song and musical culture. Students will explore the history of song in Russia and various song genres including folk songs, cabaret, war songs, Soviet ideological songs, and Russian rock and pop music. We will discuss ritual functioning of songs in Russian calendar rites, examine the aesthetic properties of song lyrics and music, and analyze the educational, community-building and ideological roles of song in Russian society. Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Bourlatskaya
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 413 Twentieth-Century Russian Literature, Film and Culture: Utopia, Revolution and Dissent
This course continues developing students' advanced skills in Russian, and introduces students to major movements and figures of twentieth-century Russian literature and culture. We will read the works of modern Russian writers, and watch and discuss feature films. The course will introduce the first Soviet films and works of the poets of the Silver Age and beginning of the Soviet era as well as the works from later periods up to the Perestroika and Glasnost periods (the late 1980s). Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Bourlatskaya
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 416 Business and Democracy in the New Russia
This course continues developing students' advanced skills in Russian, and is designed to familiarize students with contemporary Russian society, its historical background and its present political and economic structure, and to develop functional proficiency in speaking, writing, reading and listening. The course will focus on a variety of issues central to Russian society since the fall of the Soviet Union, including changing values, political parties and movements, the business climate and businessmen, various nationalities within Russia, women in the family and at work. Course materials will include interviews, articles, essays by leading Russian journalists and statesmen, and contemporary Russian movies. Prerequisites: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Bourlatskaya
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 419 Russian Song and Folklore
This course offers a general introduction to the history of Russian folklore, song and musical culture. Students will explore the history of song in Russia and various song genres including folk songs, gangster songs, cabaret, war songs, Soviet ideological songs, and Russian rock and pop music. We will discuss ritual functioning of songs in Russian calendar rites, examine the aesthetic properties of song lyrics and music, and analyze the educational, community-building and ideological roles of song in Russian society. Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Bourlatskaya
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: All lectures and readings in Russian
REES 420 Contemporary Russia Through Film
This course continues developing students’ advanced skills in Russian. Language work will be combined with an examination of the life and creative work of one of Russia’s greatest writers, Anton Chekhov. Chekhov’s prose and drama will be analyzed using the political, social and literary currents of his time as the background. This course will introduce students to the literary technique, poetics, and deeply humane worldview of Chekhov. Course materials will include short stories and drama, as well as some background readings. The advanced study of Russian language will have an emphasis on improving pronunciation, significantly expanding the vocabulary, mastering complicated grammatical and syntactic structures, and learning the basic conventions of academic discourse. As part of this course, students will be asked to write short response papers and some pieces of creative writing. Students will also produce a short film and stage a scene from a play. All class discussions and primary sources will be in Russian. Some secondary readings will be in English. Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 421 The Life and Art of Anton Chekhov
This course continues to develop students’ advanced skills in Russian. Language work will be combined with an examination of the life and creative work of one of Russia’s greatest writers, Anton Chekhov. Chekhov’s prose and drama will be analyzed using the political, social and literary currents of his time as the background. This course will introduce students to the literary technique, poetics, and deeply humane worldview of Chekhov. Course materials will include short stories and drama, as well as some background readings. The advanced study of Russian language will have an emphasis on improving pronunciation, significantly expanding the vocabulary, mastering complicated grammatical and syntactic structures, and learning the basic conventions of academic discourse. As part of this course, students will be asked to write short response papers and some pieces of creative writing. Students will also produce a short film and stage a scene from a play. All class discussions and primary sources will be in Russian. Some secondary readings will be in English. Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 426 Chekhov: Stage & Screen
What’s so funny, Mr. Chekhov? This question is often asked by critics and directors who still are puzzled with Chekhovs definition of his four major plays as comedies. Traditionally, all of them are staged and directed as dramas, melodramas, or tragedies. Should we cry or should we laugh at Chekhovian characters who commit suicide, or are killed, or simply cannot move to a better place of living? Is the laughable synonymous to comedy and the comic? Should any fatal outcome be considered tragic? All these and other questions will be discussed during the course. The course is intended to provide the participants with a concept of dramatic genre that will assist them in approaching Chekhovs plays as comedies. In addition to reading Chekhovs works, Russian and western productions and film adaptations of Chekhovs works will be screened. Among them are, Vanya on 42nd Street with Andre Gregory, and Four Funny Families. Those who are interested will be welcome to perform and/or direct excerpts from Chekhovs works.
Taught by: Zubarev
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 365
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 430 Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Film
This course studies the cinematic representation of civil wars, ethnic conflicts, nationalistic doctrines, and genocidal policies. The focus is on the violent developments that took place in Russia and on the Balkans after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and were conditioned by the new geopolitical dynamics that the fall of communism had already created. We study media broadcasts, documentaries, feature films representing the Eastern, as well as the Western perspective. The films include masterpieces such as ‘Time of the Gypsies’, ‘Underground’, ‘Prisoner of the Mountains’, ‘Before the Rain’, ‘Behind Enemy Lines’, and others. Taught by: Todorov
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 430
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 432 Fate and Chance in Literature and Culture
In Fate and Chance in Literature and Culture, we will explore these two interrelated concepts in comparative perspective over a broad historical range. As a result, the students will learn how the philosophy of fate and chance has been reflected in works of different Russian authors and in different cultural and political environments. In Russian as well as western systems of belief fate and chance represent two extreme visions of the universal order, or, perhaps, two diametrically opposed cosmic forces: complete determinism, on the one hand, and complete chaos or unpredictability, on the other. These visions have been greatly reflected by various mythopoetic systems. In this course, we will investigate religious and folkloric sources from a series of Russian traditions compared to other Indo-European traditions (Greek, East-European). Readings will include The Song of Prince Igor’s Campaign, The Gambler by Dostoevsky, The Queen of Spades by Pushkin, Vij by Gogol, The Black Monk by Chekhov, The Fatal Eggs by Bulgakov, and more.
Taught by: Zubarev
Also Offered As: CIMS 432, COML 196
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 434 The Life and Art of Anton Chekhov
This course continues developing students’ advanced skills in Russian. Language work will be combined with an examination of the life and creative work of one of Russia’s greatest writers, Anton Chekhov. Chekhov’s prose and drama will be analyzed using the political, social and literary currents of his time as the background. This course will introduce students to the literary technique, poetics, and deeply humane worldview of Chekhov. Course materials will include short stories and drama, as well as some background readings. The advanced study of Russian language will have an emphasis on improving pronunciation, significantly expanding the vocabulary, mastering complicated grammatical and syntactic structures, and learning the basic conventions of academic discourse. As part of this course, students will be asked to write short response papers and some pieces of creative writing. Students will also produce a short film and stage a scene from a play. All class discussions and primary sources will be in Russian. Some secondary readings will be in English. Prerequisite: RUSS 312
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 453 Fathers and Sons: an Encyclopedia of Generational Conflict in 19 cent. Russia
This course offers a close reading of one of the most exquisitely narrated novels of the Russian realist canon, Turgenev's Fathers and Sons. Written in the early 1860s, the novel is set in an era of transition when progressive, enlightened liberalism of the Russian landed gentry clashed with the new revolutionary ideas espoused by young radicals. A simple tale of a generational conflict becomes a mirror in which the key social and political questions of the time are reflected and enlarged. The purpose of the course is to expand students' knowledge of political and cultural history of the 19th century Russia through a close reading of the novel aided by an array of historical and literary sources, such as memoirs, literary fragments and journalism of the era.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 455 The Living & the Dead: The Great Patriotic War in Russ Cultural Imagination
This course is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War, 1941-45. Students will explore the cultural myth of the war, created in the 1960-80s. The materials will include literary texts, documentaries, photographs, and films. We will focus on three major themes of this myth: 1. moral strength and courage; 2. respect for Russia's military past; and 3. the rise of national consciousness.
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 457 Masterpieces of Soviet Propaganda
The subject of this course is the history and evolution of Soviet propaganda and propaganda art from the Communist Revolution to Stalinism, World War II, and the Cold War. We will investigate major propaganda myths and rituals, and study different styles of propaganda art in a broad historical and political context, in particular, looking at historical events, government policies and political ideas that are associated with their creation and dissemination. We will also examine the impacts of the artistic culture of both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian avant-garde on the origin of the language and imagery of Soviet propaganda. Finally, we will compare methods and styles of Soviet propaganda and capitalist advertising.
Taught by: Nazyrova
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 459 Not by Bread Alone: Food in Russian History and Culture
The subject of this course is food culture in various eras of Russian and Soviet history. We will look at historical practices of food preparation and consumption, investigate the history of several important ingredients, and study the origin and history of Russian traditional dishes, while also discussing changes in tastes and attitudes to food over centuries. We will also examine how production, consumption and distribution of food reflected social and cultural distinctions, class hierarchies, and gender roles. Last but certainly not least, the students will get hands-on experience preparing a number of popular contemporary Russian dishes. The readings for this course range from fairy tales and myths to classical literature, from culinary journalism and advertising posters to excerpts from autobiographical writings and memoirs.
Taught by: Nazyrova
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 460 Post-Soviet Russia in Film
This course is intended for students who have spoken Russian at home and seek to improve their capabilities in formal and professional uses of the Russian language. Film is arguably the most powerful medium for reflecting changes in modern society. This course will examine Russia's transition to democracy and market economy through the eyes of its most creative and controversial cinematographers. The course will focus on the often agonizing process of changing values and attitudes as the country moves from Soviet to Post-Soviet society. Russian films with English subtitles will be supplemented by readings from contemporary Russian media sources. The course provides an excellent visual introduction to the problems of contemporary Russia society.
Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Bourlatskaya
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 463 Fantasy, Science Fiction and Fantastic Imagination in Russian Culture
Explores masterpieces of Russian fantastic imagination from folklore and 19th century classics to 20th and 21st century dystopia, magic realism and science fiction. Readings include works by Nikolai Gogol, Mikhail Bulgakov, the Strugatsky brothers, and Victor Pelevin. Discussions focus on 1) the philosophical quest of Russian fantastic authors and their ideas about humanity, the meaning of existence, and human relationship with nature; 2) the texture of fantasy, including the absurd and surreal, the grotesque humor, and macabre irony. Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 466 Russian Revolution
This course is a content-based course intended for students who speak Russian at home and seek to improve their command of formal and professional registers of the Russian language. Paying tribute to the centennial of the Russian Revolution, the course examines the sociopolitical milestone of the 20th century through the works of literature, art, music, film, and material culture that both refracted the revolutionary situation and responded to the revolutionary change. The course’s primary sources include works of Russian symbolist poets (e.g. Blok) and realist writers (e.g. Korolenko, Chekhov, Gorky, Andrei Platonov), the music of modernist composers, Soviet montage films, and the Soviet architecture of the International Style. The specific attention will be on the relationship between sociopolitical transformation and the raise of avant-garde movements in visual arts and poetry known as the artistic revolution (e.g. Khlebnikov, Maiakovskii, Kandinskii, Goncharova, Malevich, Chagall).
Prerequisite: All lectures and readings in Russian.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: All lectures and readings in Russian
REES 467 Classic Russian Literature Today
This course is intended for students who have spoken Russian at home and seek to improve their capabilities in formal and professional uses of the Russian language. A study of classic Russian literature in the original. Readings will consist of some of the greatest works of 19th and 20th-century authors, such as Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Bulgakov. Students will examine various forms and genres of literature, learn basic techniques of literary criticism, and explore the way literature is translated into film and other media. An additional focus of the course will be on examining the uses and interpretations of classic literature and elitist culture in contemporary Russian society. Observing the interplay of the 'high' and 'low' in Russian cultural tradition, students will develop methodology of cultural analysis. Prerequisite: All lectures and reading in Russian.
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

REES 472 Moscow and Moscovites in Russian History and Literary Imagination
This course is intended for students who have spoken Russian at home and seek to improve their capabilities in formal and professional uses of the Russian language. Moscow is not only a city with rich history, but also a cultural myth, similarly to Rome, St. Petersburg or Paris. The memories of historical events and literary narratives, real and fictional biographies, existing and lost landmarks imbue the image of the city with multiple layers of meanings and symbolism. This course will examine the key components of Moscow myth: historical events and fictional stories that left their traces on the cultural map of Moscow throughout its history. We will also explore the material culture of the city: historic places, buildings, artifacts and locations that anchor historical memories and urban legends alike. The readings will include excerpts from Moscow chapters of such Russian classics, as Leo Tolstoy’s War and Peace, Mikhail Bulgakov's Master and Margarita and Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, along with the work of contemporary Russian authors Victor Pelevin and Maya Kucherskaya.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 473 Everyday Life in the Soviet Union
This course is intended for students who have spoken Russian at home and seek to improve their capabilities in formal and professional uses of the Russian language. The course focuses on the history of everyday life in the Soviet Union during the twenty year period before the collapse of the communist system (1960s-1980s). We will examine experiences, practices and material culture related to various spheres of Soviet life including living arrangements, food, housekeeping, work and leisure, education and health. We will also study emotions and etiquettes associated with romantic, matrimonial and generational relationships and everyday communications. Finally, we will explore how ideas and practices of socialist living continue to influence younger generations of former Soviet families that have never lived under socialism. Course readings include films, literary texts, memoirs and history documents, social journalism and publications on statistics and social anthropology.
Taught by: Nazyrova
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 474 Anton Chekhov: Love and Death in Russian Culture
Taught by: Nazyrova
Prerequisite: RUSS 361
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 500 History of Literary Theory
Over the last three decades, the fields of literary and cultural studies have been reconfigured by a variety of theoretical and methodological developments. Bracing and often confrontational dialogues between theoretical and political positions as varied as Deconstruction, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Feminism, Queer Theory, Minority Discourse Theory, Colonial and Post-colonial Studies and Cultural Studies have, in particular, altered disciplinary agendas and intellectual priorities for students embarking on the professional study of literature. In this course, we will study key texts, statements and debates that define these issues, and will work towards a broad knowledge of the complex rewriting of the project of literary studies in process today. The reading list will keep in mind the Examination List in Comparative Literature. We will not work towards complete coverage but will ask how crucial contemporary theorists engage with the longer history and institutional practices of literary criticism.
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CLST 511, COML 501, ENGL 601, GRMN 534
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 501 Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Film
This course studies political violence, terrorism, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and genocidal policies as represented in the social media, cable news, documentaries, feature films. We discuss various techniques and strategies of the propaganda wars, post-truth media environment, etc. The regions of interest are Former Soviet Union, Russia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, US homegrown political violence, and the Middle East. The students are expected to develop and demonstrate a critical approach to different aspects of the cinematic, news, and social media representation of ethnic conflict. We focus on the violent developments that took place in Russia and the Balkans after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, conditioned by the geopolitical dynamics that the fall of communism had created. We study media broadcasts, documentaries, feature films representing both, the Eastern and the Western perspective.
Taught by: Todorov
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 501
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 518 Old Church Slavonic
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 518
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
REES 519 History of Russian Literary Language and Culture
This course examines the linguistic, literary, and social history of the Russian language from the medieval period to the modern day. Course topics include: the creation of the Slavic alphabets and the first literary language of the Slavs, Old Church Slavonic; the beginnings and development of writing and literacy in Old Russia; the evolution of the Russian literary language, its styles, and registers; grammatical categories of Russian; features of Russian lexicography; the social history and politics of language use; analysis of texts. Taught in Russian; readings in Russian & English; advanced language proficiency required. Prerequisite: Any RUSS 400-level course or comparable proficiency. Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 549 Stalinist Culture
In the Soviet Union in the late 1920s the dynamic cultural life of the revolutionary era, characterized by avant-gardism, experimentation, and diversity, gave way to a new organization of Soviet cultural life—one dominated by the newly formulated official style of 'Socialist Realism' and bureaucratic institutions such as the Soviet Writers Union. In this course we will study the conditions that gave rise to this new era, its institutional realities, and masterworks in film, photography and literature of official art, including those by Kavelin, Pasternak and Eisenstein. We will also examine the social phenomena of cultural resistance and non-conformism of this period and its works written for the drawer or for non-official consumption, such as those of Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Bulgakov, Kharms and Druskin.
Taught by: Platt/Staff
Also Offered As: COML 550
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 555 Terrorism
This course studies the emergence of organized terrorism in nineteenth-century Russia and its impact on public life in the West, the Balkans, and America. We investigate the political and cultural origins of terrorism, its conspiratorial routine, structures, methods, manuals, and manifestoes. Historical and cultural approaches converge in the discussion of intellectual movements that forged the formula of terrorism and influenced the professionalization of the underground, such as nihilism, anarchism, and populism. We discuss the stern terrorist personality, self-denial, revolutionary martyrdom, and conspiratorial militancy. The theatricals of terrorism are of particular interest, its bombastic acts, mystification, and techniques of spreading disorganizing fear in the global media environment. We trace the creation of counterterrorism police in late imperial Russia and its methods to infiltrate, demoralize, and dismantle the terrorist networks, and reengineer their social base. First Red Scare and the formation of the FBI constitutes a unique case of managing rampant political violence and countering the asymmetrical threat of terrorism.
Taught by: Todorov
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: CIMS 555
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 560 Sex and Socialism
Also Offered As: ANTH 160, GSWS 160, REES 160
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 574 Russian History in Film
The course draws on the cinematic/fictional representation of the Russian/Soviet history based on Russian as well as non-Russian sources. The analysis targets major modes of imagining, staging and reenacting history, construction of images that satisfy dominant political, cultural and ideological stereotypes, and help create national identities. Bias, eye-witness accounts, propaganda uses and abuses of history, forgeries and the production of alt-facts become topics of particular interest. The discussions involve nation builders, iconic heroes and charismatic antiheroes, great commanders and revolutionaries such as Alexander Nevsky, Ivan the Terrible, Rasputin and the Fall of the Romanovs, Lenin and the October Revolution, Stalin and the construction of the Soviet Colossus, the Storming of the Winter Palace, the Civil War, the Great Purge, the Red Scare in the US, etc.
Taught by: Todorov
Also Offered As: CIMS 575
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 575 Slavic Literary Theory in Western Context
This course will compare selected theoretical concepts advanced by Russian Formalists, Prague Structuralists, and the Bakhtin group (e.g., defamiliarization, aesthetic sign, dialogue) with similar or analogous notions drawn from Western intellectual tradition.
Taught by: Steiner
Also Offered As: COML 579
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 605 Modern Literary Theory and Criticism
This course will provide an overview of major European thinkers in critical theory of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will pay particular attention to critical currents that originated in Eastern European avant-garde and early socialist contexts and their legacies and successors. Topics covered will include: Russian Formalism and its successors in Structuralism and Deconstruction (Shklovsky, Levi-Strauss, Jakobson, Derrida); Bakhtin and his circle, dialogism and its later western reception; debates over aesthetics and politics of the 1930s (Lukacs, Brecht, Adorno, Benjamin, Radek, Clement Greenberg); the October group; Marxism, new Left criticism, and later lefts (Althusser, Williams, Eagleton, Jameson, Zizek).
Taught by: Platt
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: COML 605, ENGL 605, FREN 605, GRMN 605
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 613 Portraits of Old Russia
Also Offered As: COML 131, HIST 045, REES 113
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
REES 616 Approaches to Literary Texts
Most seminars focus on literary texts composed during a single historical period; this course is unusual in inviting students to consider the challenges of approaching texts from a range of different historical eras. Taught by a team of literary specialists representing diverse periods and linguistic traditions and conducted as a hands-on workshop, this seminar is designed to help students of literature gain expertise in analysis and interpretation of literary works across the boundaries of time, geography, and language, from classic to modern. Students will approach literature as a historical discipline and learn about key methodological issues and questions that specialists in each period and field ask about texts that their disciplines study. The diachronic and cross-cultural perspectives inform discussions of language and style, text types and genres, notions of alterity, fictionality, literariness, symbolism, intertextuality, materiality, and interfaces with other disciplines. This is a unique opportunity to learn in one course about diverse literary approaches from specialists in different fields. Master classes are taught by Kevin Brownlee, Linda Chance, Eva del Soldato, Huda Fakhreddine, Scott Francis, Nili Gold, Bridget Murnghan, Deven Patel, Kevin Platt, Michael Solomon, Emily Steiner, Julia Verkholantsev, and Emily Wilson. Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CLST 636, COML 616, EALC 715, ENGL 616, ROML 616
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 618 Cultural History of Medieval Rus’ (800-1700)
Taught by: Verkholantsev
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 619 East & West in Medieval Europe: Bohemia as Center in the Age of the Luxemburgs
The seminar will examine a range of topics in Medieval Studies viewing European medieval civilization as encompassing the whole (‘global’) geographic and cultural space of Europe and ignoring reference to contemporary socio-political division of Europe into ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern.’ As a case study, the course focuses on the 14th-century Holy Roman Empire from Henry VII to the Emperor Sigismund, and particularly on the reign of Charles IV, in a context in which Prague becomes the imperial capital and Bohemia a center of Europe. Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 619, FREN 619, HIST 619
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 653 Topics in Russian and Soviet Cultural History
Course is topical. Please see department for most recent description. Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 653, ENGL 591
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 666 Collective Violence, Trauma, and Representation
This seminar is organized as a laboratory space for graduate students and faculty working in a number of adjacent fields and problems. Seminar discussions will be led not only by the primary instructors, but also by a number of guests drawn from the Penn faculty. For the first weeks of the course, we will focus on seminal works in the interlinked areas of history and memory studies, cultural representations of collective violence, trauma studies, and other related topics. Beginning with the Xth week of the course, we will turn to case studies in a variety of geographic, cultural and historical contexts. Additionally, some later sessions of the course will be devoted to a presentation and discussion of a work in progress of a Penn graduate student, faculty member or a guest lecturer. Taught by: Platt
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: COML 683, ENGL 791, LALS 683
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

REES 683 Topics in Criticism & Theory
Topic for Spring 2021: Cultures of Reading in Imperial Russia What did it mean to be a reader in imperial Russia? What did people read, and to what ends? How was literacy cultivated, and what were the social implications? In this course, students will read several canonical works of nineteenth-century Russian literature that thematize and foreground the act of reading: as a pursuit undertaken for the betterment of self, society, nation, and world; as a light pastime for the bored or underemployed; but also as an enterprise fraught with potential for moral or civic ruin. In addition to closely investigating allusions to the specific texts and authors read by literary characters, we will also examine the reading habits of our own authors as both consumers and producers of literary culture. We will consider these dynamics against a backdrop of constant fluctuations in educational policies, the book market, and the circulation of texts within and beyond Russia as we work together to develop an understanding of the imperial Russian reading public(s). Taught by: Kim, Brian
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ARTH 573, CIMS 515, COML 570, ENGL 573, GRMN 573
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit