RUSS 4302 RUSSIAN AND SOVIET CINEMA

University of Texas at Arlington

Fall 2008, T/TH 11:00–12:20

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Office hours: T/Th 2–3

Course blogs:

http://russ4302.wordpress.com

http://utarussian.wordpress.com

UTA Russian homepage:

http://russian.uta.edu

Course goals

This course surveys the Russian cinematic tradition from its beginnings through the first decade and a half following the disintegration of the USSR. Special attention is paid to the avant-garde film and theory of the 1920s; the totalitarian aesthetics of the 1930s–40s and the ideological uses of film art; the “New Wave” of the 1950s–60s; and cinema as medium of cultural dissent and witness to social change.

Students acquire basic skills of film analysis through reading assignments, classroom discussions and written tasks. The course is taught in English; all films are in Russian with English subtitles. No prior knowledge of Russian language and culture is required. Students of Russian will complete language tasks in lieu of analytical essays (see below).

Course format
The course will meet twice a week for 80 mins per session. It is important to be punctual, since our time for viewing and discussing the films is limited. The first meeting of each week will be devoted to screening and preliminary analysis. The second meeting will be devoted to follow-up analysis of that week’s film in the context of assigned readings. Reading assignments are to be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned, and students should be prepared to discuss them in connection with the films we have viewed.

Evaluation

Students will complete two short written assignments and one final research paper.

The written assignments, which must be at least 4–5 pages in length, are based on the weekly readings and on the films analyzed in class.

In place of written assignments, students of Russian will work on language tasks from Cinema for Russian Conversation, Vol. 1.

The final paper must be 10–12 pages in length. Students will receive a choice of topics and will be expected to do additional research beyond the assigned readings.

The final exam will test your cumulative knowledge of formal film analysis acquired through course readings, lectures, viewings and written assignments. The final exam for students of Russian will also include a language component.

The breakdown of grades is as follows:

Class participation (attendance, preparation, discussion) 10%

Written assignments or language tasks 30%

Final Research Paper 35%

Final Exam 25%

The FILMS

All films are available for viewing in the Language Acquisition Center (LAC), TH 3rd floor.

Excerpts from the 10 vol. collection, Early Russian Cinema:
Vladimir Romashkov, *Stenka Razin* (1908)

Wladyslaw Starewich, *The Dragonfly and the Ant* (1913)

Yakov Protazanov, *Queen of Spades* (1916)


Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)

Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Grigorii Aleksandrov, *Circus* (1936)

Sergei Eisenstein, *Ivan the Terrible* Part 1 (1944)

Mikhail Kalatozov, *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957)

Grigorii Chukhrai, *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959)


Aleksandr Askol'dov, *Commissar* (1967)

Vladimir Menshov, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979)


**Required READINGS**

For purchase, available at the UTA bookstore (if acquired elsewhere, please be sure to purchase the *Eighth Edition*).

**Students of Russian will also purchase the following, available at the UTA bookstore:**


**Coursepacks with required reading for everyone are also for purchase at the bookstore.**

Readings are excerpted from the texts listed below, as are selected recommended readings mentioned in the weekly schedule. Most of the following books are available in the Central Library and are recommended sources for your research papers:


**Weekly SCHEDULE and READING assignments**

**T 26 August**

Introduction: Early Russian Cinema.

**Featured Films:**

Vladimir Romashkov, *Stenka Razin* (1908) [*Early Russian Cinema* Vol. 1, Ch. 3]

Vladislav Starevich, *The Dragonfly and the Ant* (1913) [*Early Russian Cinema* Vol. 3, Ch. 1]

**Th 28 August**

Early Russian Cinema, cont.

**Film Excerpts:**

Yakov Protazanov, *Queen of Spades* (1916) [*Early Russian Cinema* Vol. 8, Chs. 7, 12, 16, 19]


**Reading Assignment:**

Bordwell & Thompson, *Film Art*. Chapter 4: “The Shot: Mise-en-Scene” (112–161).


**T 2 September**

**Feature Film:**

Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925; 64 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**
Bordwell & Thompson, *Film Art*. Chapter 6: “The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing” (218–263).


**Th 4 September**

**Reading Assignment:**


“Resolution of Thirteenth Party Congress on Cinema” (*The Film Factory*, 111).


**T 9 September**

**Feature Film:**

Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929; 70 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**


*Film Art*, “Documentary Form and Style. *Man with a movie camera*” in Chapter 11 (410–413).


Dziga Vertov, “The *Cine-Pravda*” (*The Film Factory*, 84).


Dziga Vertov, “Fiction Film Drama and the Cine-Eye” (*The Film Factory*, 115–116).


Victor Shklovsky, “Where is Dziga Vertov Striding?” (The Film Factory, 151–152).

Esfir Shub, “The Manufacture of Facts” (The Film Factory, 152).

**Th 11 September**

**Reading Assignment:**

Film Art, Chapter 10: “Documentary, Experimental, and Animated Films” (338–381).


**T 16 September**

**Feature Film:**

Grigorii Aleksandrov, Circus (1936; 98 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

Film Art, Chapter 7: “Sound in the Cinema” (264–303).


Boris Shumyatsky, “Perfecting Our Mastery” (The Film Factory, 373–377) [handout].

**Th 18 September**

**Reading Assignment:**


Peter Kenez, “Censorship, 1933–1941,” “Socialist Realism, 1933–1941” (Cinema and Soviet Society, 127–164) [handout].

**T 23 September / First written assignment handed out in class**

**Feature Film:**

Sergei Eisenstein, *Ivan the Terrible* Part 1 (1944; 96 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**


Joan Neuberger, excerpts from *Ivan the Terrible: The Film Companion* [handout].

**Recommended reading:** Richard Taylor, “Propaganda and Film” (*Film Propaganda: Soviet Russian and Nazi Germany*).

**Th 25 September**

**Reading Assignment:**


Sergei Eisenstein, “My Worthless and Viscious Film” (Coursepack).


**T 30 September**

**Feature Film:**

Mikhail Kalatozov, *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957; 95 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art*, Chapter 2: “The Significance of Film Form” (54–73).

Peter Kenez, “Film Hunger, 1945–1953” (*Cinema and Soviet Society*, 187–204) [handout].

**Th 2 October**

**Reading Assignment:**


**T 7 October / First written assignment due in class**

**Feature Film:**

Grigorii Chukhrai, *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959; 88 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art*, Chapter 3: “Narrative as a Formal System” (74–109).


**Th 9 October**

Guest lecture: Joan Neuberger, UT Austin Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. Date subject to change, TBA.

**Reading Assignment:**


**T 14 October**

**Feature Film:**
Andrei Tarkovskii, *Andrei Rublev* (1966; 185 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art,* “Duration of the image: The Long Take” in Chapter 5 (207–213).


**Th 16 October**

Screening of *Andrei Rublev*, cont.

**Reading Assignment:**


**T 21 October / Second written assignment handed out in class**

**Feature Film:**

Aleksandr Askol’dov, *Commissar* (1967; 105 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art,* “The Classical Narrative Cinema,” “Narrative Alternatives to Classical Filmmaking” in Chapter 11 (385–410)


**Th 23 October**

**Reading Assignment:**


**Recommended reading:** Ann Lawton, “Off the Shelf” (*Kinoglasnost*, 111–137).

**T 28 October**

**Feature Film:**

Vladimir Men’shov, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979; 150 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art*, “Form, Style and Ideology” in Chapter 11 (419–426).


**Th 30 October**

**Reading Assignment:**


**T 4 November / Second written assignment due in class**

**Feature Film:**

Vasilii Pichul, Little Vera (1988; 110 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

**Th 6 November**

**Reading Assignment:**

Andrew Horton, Michael Brashinsky, “We Are Your Children’: Soviet Youth, Cinema, and Changing Values” (*The Zero Hour*, 67–98) [handout].


**T 11 November / Topics for final research papers handed out in class**

**Feature Film:**

Pavel Chukhrai, *The Thieif* (1997; 93 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**


**Th 13 November**

**Reading Assignment:**


**T 18 November**

**Feature Film:**

Alexei Balabanov, *Brother* (1997; 96 mins)

**Reading Assignment:**

*Film Art*, Chapter 8: “Style as a Formal System” (304–316).

“Russian Cinema – National Cinema? Three Views” (*Russia on Reels*, 43–53) [handout].

**Th 20 November**
Reading Assignment:

Birgit Beumers, "To Moscow! To Moscow? The Russian Hero and the Loss of the Centre" (*Russia on Reels*, 76–87).

**T 25 November**

Feature Film:

Alexander Sokurov, *Russian Ark* (2001; 96 mins)

Reading Assignment:


**Th 27 November. THANKSGIVING BREAK, no classes**

**T 2 December**

Feature Film:

Anna Melikyan, *Mermaid* (2007; 115 mins)

No reading assignment. Work on research papers.

**Th 4 December FINAL CLASS / Final research papers due in class**

No reading assignment.

**T 9 December FINAL EXAM 11:00–1:30**