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**History 410/510 Soviet Culture: Intellectuals, Ideas, and the Arts from Stalin to Gorbachev**  
 MW 2:00 - 3:20 McKenzie 240b

**Course description:** This course will explore the intellectual and cultural history of Soviet Russia from Stalin's death in 1953 to Gorbachev's reforms in the late 1980s. During this period, Soviet life improved dramatically as material hardship receded and the Party repudiated the mass terror of the Stalin years. The cultural sphere, however, continued to be constrained. Policy oscillated between permissive and repressive approaches to culture; individual intellectuals were persecuted, imprisoned in psychiatric hospitals, sent to hard-labor camps in the far north, or, increasingly, simply ejected from the country. In this atmosphere, the intelligentsia's subculture became defined by opposition to official norms. The course will examine critically some of the myths of the intellectuals, who rarely recognized the extent to which they were privileged by the system, and it will also look at the structures of intellectual activity and changing intellectual trends. Themes include the binary oppositions high/low and official/unofficial in literature and the arts; science and scientific values; shifts in political thought, from liberal socialism to the varieties of Russian nationalism; sociability in the intellectual milieu; and the nature of dissent.

**Format:** Discussion with occasional lectures.

**Grades** will be based on:

- 6 unannounced quizzes on assigned readings (I'll drop the lowest grade) 30%.
  - 1 short paper (4-5 pages) on assigned topic. 20%.
  - 1 final research paper (10 pages; 12-15 for grad students). 50%.
- In addition, active, thoughtful participation may raise your grade one notch.

**Required texts available for purchase at UO Bookstore:**

Liudmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era*  
 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*  
 Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*  
 Valentin Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*  
 John McPhee, *The Ransom of Russian Art*  
 Course packet

Note: In addition, throughout the quarter we will be reading Vladimir Shlapentokh's *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era*, a book that has unfortunately gone out of print. I've purchased all of the reasonably priced copies advertised on the Internet, so that they would be available at the start of the term; you can buy a copy from me for \$17 (the average cost per volume, including shipping). There are also several copies available through Orbis and one on reserve at Knight.

**Class plan**

Mon., Jan. 6 Introduction: Russian intellectuals and Soviet power.

Handout: readings from *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*.

Wed., Jan. 8 The institutional contexts of intellectual life

Reading: Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, 3-29; Kiril Tomoff, "'Most Respected Comrade...': Patrons, Clients, Brokers, and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Musical World." *Contemporary European History*, 11, 1 (2001): 33-65 (this journal is available online through the library catalog - go to the first issue).

Mon., Jan. 13 Intellectuals' values and self-image

Reading: Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, 30-104.

Wed., Jan. 15 The Thaw: a literary event

Reading: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

Grad students (extra reading): spend a couple of hours reading or skimming either Edith Frankel, *Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-1958* (Knight reserve PG3021.F69); or Dina Spechler, *Permitted Dissent in the USSR: Novy mir and the Soviet Regime* (reserve DK 276.S63 1982), or V. Lakshin, *Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky, and Novy Mir* (Knight reserve PN 99.R9 L3413).

Mon., Jan. 20 **No class: Martin Luther King Day**

Wed., Jan. 22 Resistance and collaboration: real life meets the intellectuals' master narrative

Reading: Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, pp. 259-348 (Knight reserve ML 410.S53 W55 1994); Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Preface (pp. xi - xli) (Knight reserve ML 410.S53 A313).

Mon., Jan. 27 Intellectuals' sociability and activism

Liudmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, pp. 1-243.

Wed., Jan. 29 Joseph Brodsky: poetry and persecution. Guest lecturer: Prof. Julia Nemirovskaia (Russian and East European Studies).

**First paper due 2:00 Friday under my office door - McKenzie 351**

Mon., Feb. 3 Liberal socialism: Intellectuals in the 1960s and the rebirth of social science

Reading: Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, 105-171.

Wed., Feb. 5 Apotheosis of liberal socialism: Academician Sakharov

Reading: Andrei Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom* (Knight reserve CB 427.S2313 1968), pp. 23-90; Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *Thaw Generation*, 244-76.

Mon., Feb. 10 Lecture: Lysenkoist biology and the Soviet scientific complex

Reading: Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 1-22, 288-311.

Wed., Feb. 12 Students and environmentalism

Reading: Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 312-73.

Mon., Feb. 17 Environmentalism, cont. Guest lecturer: Prof. Douglas Weiner (University of Arizona).

Reading: Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 373-448.

Wed., Feb. 19 Soviet intellectuals in the 1970s: the nationalist turn

Reading: Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, 172-223; an article of your choice from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, ed., *From Under the Rubble* (Knight reserve DK274.I9413 1975); D. S. Likhachev, two essays (handout).

Mon., Feb. 24 Ecological awareness and humanistic nationalism: a literary approach.

Reading: Valentin Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*. Grads: also read Stephen Lovell and Rosalind Marsh, "Culture and Crisis: The Intelligentsia and Literature after 1953," in *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Knight reserve DK276.R87 1998), pp. 56-84.

Wed., Feb. 26 Film in Studio F of Media Services: *Stalker*, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky.

No reading for undergraduates. This is a good time to get moving on your final paper (I would strongly suggest that you come talk with me)! Grads: Julian Graffy, "Cinema," in *Russian Cultural Studies*, ed. Kelly and Shepherd, pp. 165-91; and Lynne Attwood, "Gender Angst in Russian Society and Cinema in the Post-Stalin Era," in *ibid.*, pp. 352-67.

Mon., Mar. 3 Discuss film.

Wed., Mar. 5 Underground culture: sots-art and the roots of Soviet post-modernism.

Reading: John McPhee, *The Ransom of Russian Art*. Extra for grads: an essay of your choice from Mikhail Epshtein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism in Contemporary Russian Culture* (Knight reserve DK 510.32 .E67 1995).

Mon., Mar. 10 Alexander Zinoviev and the satirical tradition; emigration

Reading: Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *Thaw Generation*, 277-317; Alexander Zinoviev, excerpt from *The Yawning Heights* (library electronic reserves).

Wed., Mar. 12 Glasnost'.

Reading: Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, 224-87.

**Final paper due at 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 19, under my office door - McKenzie 351**

Assignment for first paper (due under my office door by 2:00 p.m., Friday, January 31). Write a short essay (4-5 pages) on one of the following topics.

1. When and how did Solzhenitsyn become an "unofficial" writer? Using documents from *The Solzhenitsyn Files* (Knight reserve PG3488.O4 Z8864 1995) and/or *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* (Knight reserve PG3488.O4 Z74 1973), discuss the regime's changing reaction to Solzhenitsyn after the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. From what you can tell, did this change in his status reflect any change in his own ideas or writing?

2. In 1947, the top Party official for cultural affairs condemned the humorous writings of Mikhail Zoshchenko for portraying the Soviet people as "lazy, unattractive, stupid, and crude." Of course, this did not mean that no humor was permissible. Using the 1949 book edited by Peter Tempest, *Soviet Humour: Stories and Cartoons from Crocodile* (Knight reserve PN 6222.R8 K75) discuss the range of acceptable humor in the late Stalin period. Judging either from later compilations of jokes (Knight reserve PN 6231.C65; PN 6210.B47; NC 1576.M5), or from the case of satirical writer Vladimir Voinovich, how did these limits change in the 1950s-70s?

3. According to Liudmilla Alexeyeva, Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *The Thaw*, which gave its name to an era, was in fact a routine socialist realist work. Using her description of the novel, the novel itself (Knight reserve), and critical discussions of socialist realism (e.g. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel* or Abram Tertz/Andrei Siniavsky, "On Socialist Realism," in his *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism* - Knight reserve PG 3476.S539 S913 1982), evaluate Alexeyeva's view of the book. If you agree with her assessment, please indicate why the novel was nonetheless influential.

4. Choose one of the following institutions and analyze its role in Soviet intellectual life: the thick journal (especially *Novy mir*); the union of writers, artists, composers, etc.; the special school; the Academy of Sciences; the scientific institute; the university; the state publishing house (Gosizdat). This paper will require a bit of research on your part (try to find two books that were not assigned for class), and in addition, you will probably want to refer to some of the course readings. Try to evaluate the ways in which your chosen institution facilitated intellectual life as well as ways in which it may have stifled it.

Assignment for final paper (due under my office door by 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 19). The final paper should be roughly ten pages in length (fifteen for graduate students), and should fit one of the following topics:

1. a study of a single person in Soviet intellectual or cultural life (1950s-80s). For this paper, you must read (or listen to, view, etc.) some of your subject's work. Your aim will be to write an interpretive essay that relates the individual's creative output to some relevant political, cultural, social, or intellectual context, as defined by you. Biographical information will be a good place to start, but you should not stop there.

2. a study of a particular intellectual or cultural movement in the 1950s-80s. Again, where possible, you should work with primary sources, and you should try both to interpret the origins and dynamics of the movement as a whole, and to identify possible fissures within it (e.g. in the environmental movement, differences between hands-on student activists and highly-placed scientists, or between the scientists and the Russian nationalists). As in the first case, your aim is both to describe the movement and to make an argument about its relations to some larger context.

3. for readers of Russian only: a study of one of the major intellectual journals, *Novyi mir*, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, or a specialized journal (history, ethnography, etc.) over the course of a decade or two. Your aim should be to characterize and interpret the changes in content and editorial stance in the period that you have chosen.

General instructions (for both papers): Papers should be typed and double-spaced, with footnotes or endnotes and a separate

bibliography. I will not accept papers as email attachments. Grades on the final paper will be based on three equal parts: 1) argument (its clarity, persuasiveness, and sophistication); 2) research (the degree of thoroughness with which you investigated your subject, the relationship of the evidence to the argument); and 3) organization, format and writing (including grammar and spelling, as well as effectiveness of language and structure). With respect to format, the most difficult part will probably be footnote and bibliography citations, since every discipline seems to do these differently. Historians do not use the MLA approach, which becomes unwieldy as the number of works cited increases. Instead, use the following format (applicable in any history course):

*For first citation in a footnote or endnote:*

a. book - page 54.

Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 54.

b. article - page 54.

Kiril Tomoff, "Most Respected Comrade...!: Patrons, Clients, Brokers, and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Musical World," *Contemporary European History*, 11, 1 (2001): 54.

*For the second footnote in a row to the same source (book or article)*

Ibid., 65.

*For all subsequent citations, use a shortened form of the title, without publication information:*

Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, 69.

Tomoff, "Most Respected Comrade'," 34.

*For the bibliography:*

Shlapentokh, Vladimir. *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Tomoff, Kiril. "Most Respected Comrade...!: Patrons, Clients, Brokers, and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Musical World." *Contemporary European History*, 11, 1 (2001): 33-65.