

Prof. Julie Hessler  
[hessler@uoregon.edu](mailto:hessler@uoregon.edu)

Office: MCK 351

Office hours: Tues. 12:30 – 2:30

### **HIST 407/507 Seminar: Soviet Culture**

Fridays, 1:00-3:50 MCK 375

**Course description:** There are many ways of using the term “culture.” It can be used to describe the arts, in a highbrow or classical sense; it can be used for popular culture; it can be used for any form of self-expression, ideas, or mentalities; and it can be used for the artifacts, activities, social relations, and rituals of daily life. This seminar takes a broad view of culture, both in the assigned readings and in the range of permissible paper topics. If you can make a case that something that is centered on the Soviet Union fits under any of these definitions of culture, you are welcome to research it for your paper.

**Learning objectives:** This course is intended to bring together many of the skills you have learned as a history major. You will test your skills in these areas:

- Defining a research topic and question for a large-scale historical research paper
- Locating and reading primary and secondary sources related to your topic
- Articulating an argument in relation to your research question
- Writing a paper based on your argument that skillfully integrates narrative, evidence, and analysis
- Submitting your paper with properly formatted citations
- Summarizing your major findings in a brief presentation

At the same time, you should gain a fair amount of knowledge of Soviet culture.

**Grading:** I grade seminars very differently from other classes. I feel that seminar grades should assess the quality of the research paper – the capstone project for the History major – above all. I therefore treat the research paper grade as the base grade but say that failure to complete or to engage fully with other class requirements (above all, completion of assigned readings and participation in discussion) will lower the grade. The same goes for unexcused absences. This class meets just once a week, so attendance at every session is required unless you have a serious reason to miss. You are expected to come prepared to participate in discussion by taking notes on reading assignments and thinking of some questions in advance that you might like to discuss. I know that students are not all equally comfortable talking in class. If you feel that your engagement and preparation are not fully expressed by your contributions to class discussion, please see me.

With all that in mind, grades will be calculated as follows:

- Research paper: 80% of final grade. Failure to turn in a rough draft of at least 13 pages by the rough draft deadline + 1.5 days’ grace period will mean an automatic deduction of a full letter grade from your final paper grade.
- Cultural figures feasibility project: 5%
- Topic proposal: 5%

- Peer review: 5%.
- Presentation: 5%.
- Class discussion, preparation for class, and on-time completion of all assignments are expected. Failure to put in a good faith effort to prepare for class and participate in class may lower your grade.

**Late work policy:** Different assignments are governed by different policies. If you are sick or in quarantine or have to miss class for some other excused reason, you can get credit for class discussion by sending Prof. Hessler an email with some thoughts on the reading – things you found interesting, questions you would have liked to discuss with your thoughts on those. The presentation is also an in-class assignment. Again, exceptions can be made for legitimate reasons, but in general, failure to submit a slide beforehand or to make a presentation in class will mean a zero on this assignment. The rough draft is due at 11:59 Friday night. I will accept it late up until noon Sunday, after which it will lower your final paper grade by one letter grade. Peer review is due by the time of our Week 10 class period, with a grace period of 1 day; your fellow students need to be able to read your comments when they start working on revisions. The final paper is due 11:59 Thursday of finals week. That’s about as long as I can give you and actually finish my grading on time. I will accept late papers until noon Sunday, but with a substantial grade penalty of 3 points per day.

**Research paper:** The major assignment for this course for undergraduates is a research paper of roughly 20 pages. This paper should be framed around a research question or set of questions, and it should rest on substantial primary and secondary source research. More information will be on Canvas and in class.

**Grading policy:** This course adheres to the basic grading policy of the History Department. Thus, grades for submitted work can be understood as follows:

A+: Work of unusual distinction; awarded rarely.

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards, but which exhibits some engagement with the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

**Covid policy and attendance:** The course follows standard university policies (see the class Canvas page on Covid policies, mental health, and other health issues). Please do not come to class if you are sick, and please contact the professor!

**Classroom behavior:** The course also adheres to standard expectations for classroom behavior. You have a right to be treated with respect from the professor and your fellow students. It is also your obligation to treat everyone in the class with respect and to help create an atmosphere that is welcoming and inclusive.

**Academic integrity:** You are responsible for making sure that everything you turn in is your own work. Plagiarism on your final paper will result in an automatic F on the paper and in the course.

**Accessible education:** All written assignments are untimed and open for many days, so in most cases, AEC accommodations are not relevant to assignments for this class. That said, if you experience any disability-related barriers to your participation in this course, please talk to me. I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all students and will try to work with you on increasing accessibility.

**Inclement weather:** The class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. In that event, you will receive an official notification of the closure as well as a message from the instructor about how we will adapt our schedule.

**Books available at the bookstore:**

Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia*  
Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*

Week 1.

Friday, Jan. 7. The Russian Revolution and culture

- Reading: Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams* (to p. 164 – Introduction and Parts I and II). This is available as an eBook on the library website.
- Assignment: Come to class with notes for discussion. Specifically, 1) make sure to be able to talk about at least one thing you found interesting in the first three chapters of the book and at least one thing you found interesting in chapters 4-7. 2) bring at least one question to raise for discussion relating to each of those two sets of chapters (1-3, 4-7), along with your own thoughts about that question.

Week 2.

Friday, Jan. 14. Stalin-era culture and intellectual life.

- Reading: Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, pp. 165-255 (Parts III and IV); Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp. 1-59. Again, please come with at least one topic that you would be interested in discussing from each book.
- Assignment: Cultural figures feasibility project – due 11:59 Sunday, Jan. 16. Insert four entries into our collaborative feasibility study of Soviet cultural figures. You are required to select one person from each of four different sections of the “List of Soviet cultural figures” posted on Canvas. Go to the Cultural Figures Feasibility Project Page on Canvas and put your name down for each of your five people. Your job is to write a very short blurb identifying the person (1-3 sentences) and then do some investigation to see what sources might be available for a final research paper centered on this person. We are posting our findings on the Cultural Figures

Feasibility Project Page. It may be that one or more person you choose doesn't have many sources available. That's fine – you just have to show that you have checked the person out in all of the required places (Wikipedia – a good place for finding the basic information for your identification of the person, but also follow up on any links; general Google search; UO Library; YouTube – for performances, film screenings, interviews; Net-film Russian Film Archive (same); UO Library – Eastview Universal Database (you can find this through Databases A to Z) – Current Digest of the Soviet Press to see if you can find out anything about your person. Summarize what you found in each of these locations and assess the feasibility of a paper centered on this person. A warning: There can be a number of different ways of transliterating Russian names, so don't worry if something comes up with a different spelling from the spelling I used on the list.

### Week 3.

Friday, Jan. 21. Popular culture: focus on music, 1950s-1980s. Each of you will be assigned to lead discussion on one of these readings.

- David MacFadyen, *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song* (chapters on Edita P'iekha and Alla Pugacheva – from library eBook). Look up YouTube videos of these two performers from the 1950s or 1960s (P'iekha) or 1960s or 1970s (Pugacheva).
- Sergei Zhuk, “Popular Culture, Identity, and Soviet Youth in Dniepropetrovsk” (Canvas)
- *Seventeen Moments* 1961: Bulat Okudzhava; 1973: Rock Goes Russian. Look at all the materials connected to these topics (video, audio, etc.)

### Week 4

Friday, Jan. 28. Intellectual life during the Thaw. Undergraduates will be released early today.

- Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp. 60-192. As always, bring some ideas and topics for discussion to class.
- Assignment: Topic proposal due on Canvas at 11:59 p.m. Sunday
- Grad students: Read Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*.

### Week 5

Friday, Feb. 4 The strange case of Dmitri Shostakovich.

- Introduction to Solomon Volkov, ed., *Testimony*
- Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, pp. 199-348.

### Week 6

Friday, Feb. 11. Intellectual life after 1962

- Reading: *Zhivago's Children*, 193-364.
- Work on your papers.
- Grad students: obtain Kristin Roth-Ey's *Moscow Prime Time* for our discussion in Week 8 (at least one of you will need to order it from Summit).

Week 7.

Friday, Feb. 18. No class – work on your papers!

Week 8.

Friday, Feb. 25. Popular culture: focus on cinema and television. Again, we'll assign students to lead discussion of specific topics. Undergraduates will be released early today; the final hour will be grad students only.

- Look up all the cinema and television entries on *Seventeen Moments*. For cinema, you can bring them all up by clicking on the “By Theme” tab and going to the Film theme. The television entries are 1973: KVN Canceled and 1973: Seventeen Moments in Spring.
- Look up the journal *Kritika* on the library website. To do this, put in “Kritika” as your search term, then narrow the search to journals by clicking on Resource type – Journals. The issue 2010 vol. 10, no. 4 is a special issue on the history of Soviet cinema. Read one article from this issue.
- Grad students: Read a couple of articles from the *Kritika* issue and read Kristin Roth-Ey's history of Soviet television, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War*.
- Work on your papers!

Week 9

Friday, Mar. 4. No class. Rough drafts are due on Canvas by 11:59 pm Friday. Rough drafts should be at least 13 pages long. There is a grace period until noon Sunday. This is a major part of your course grade: if you do not submit a rough draft of at least 13 pages by noon Sunday, a penalty of one full letter grade will be applied to your final paper.

Week 10

Friday, Mar. 11 Presentations and rough draft discussion

- Assignment: Peer review. Use the rubric to comment extensively on the rough drafts you were assigned to read. Make sure that you give both a numeric grade for each attribute in the rubric and substantive comments and suggestions. Submit the peer review by the class period Friday. Time permitting, we will give you a chance to talk to the people whose papers you read.
- Assignment: Presentation. The format will be one used by UO and other universities for a grad student presentation competition called the “three-minute thesis.” The presentation should include one slide, which you will need to submit on Canvas beforehand (this is to facilitate projection). This slide should include one or more images and some words – but not so many that it will overwhelm the audience. Think of the best lecture slides you have seen. The slide will be the backdrop to a three-minute presentation of the topic, research question, interesting information, conclusions, and significance of your project. You will be cut off at exactly three minutes, so make sure that you practice this presentation beforehand. UO gives a \$1000 prize for the winner of the grad student competition. Alas, we can't do the same, but you might get lucky and win a cheesy medal...

**Final drafts are due Thursday, March 17, at 11:59 pm.**