

RUSSN-GA.2135
Reading Post-Socialist Russia

T 6:20-8:40
On Zoom

Prof. Eliot Borenstein
Russian & Slavic Studies
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by appointment)

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Course description: This course examines Russian culture after 1991, through film, fiction, and television, as well as through the growing scholarship on postsocialism. Particular attention will be paid to the discourses of sexuality, crime, catastrophe, and nostalgia, as well as to the impact of economic and political change on both mass and elite culture.

This course will give graduate students a greater familiarity with the various debates that are unfolding in contemporary scholarship, as well as a deeper understanding of the cultural dynamics of postsocialism in Russia.

Course requirements: It is essential that you keep up with the reading and viewing assignments and come to class prepared either to make observations or ask questions. Attendance is, of course, mandatory. All writing and class discussion will be in English.

Participation and presentations. This class will be conducted as a seminar. Class time will be devoted primarily to discussion, and every student will be responsible for presenting the material and leading discussion once during the semester.

The final class session will be devoted to student presentations of their research on their final paper.

Alternative assignments will be made available to anyone for whom in-class participation is a problem.

NYU Classes and the Internet. NYU Classes, which is accessible through the "Academics" tab of NYU Home, is an important part of course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, NYU Classes uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

Writing Assignments: Since this is a research seminar, you will be required to write a 20-page research paper, on a topic to be discussed with me in advance. The paper must have a thesis (an argument), which you will be defending with evidence.

You must turn in a one-page proposal by March 4, and first draft by April 8. I will also accept additional full or final drafts at any other point in the semester, should anyone wish to submit them.

The final paper must be turned in on **May 10**.

Electronic submission of written assignments. You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Do not send me .pdf files. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Post-Socialism Assignment" or "Goscilo Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Robski, the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Robski).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on *Brother*, then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Brother).doc". A final paper on Lipovetsky by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Lipovetsky).doc".

Finally, please note that I have multiple email accounts. Please do not send email to more than one account at a time ("cc"); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Participation & Leading class discussion :	25%
Class presentation:	20%
First Draft	20%
Final paper:	35%

**Required Texts,
NYU Classes**

- Baer, Brian. *Other Russias: Homosexuality and the Crisis of Post-Soviet Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Chapters 1 & 2.
- Balzer, "Routinization of the New Russians?" *Russian Review* 62.1 (2003): 11-36.
- Bassin, Marc. "Nature Is Nurture: Lev Gumilev and the Ecology of Ethnicity." *Slavic Review* 68.4 (Winter 2009): 872-897.
- Bernstein, Anya. "An Inadvertent Sacrifice: Body Politics and Sovereign Power in the Pussy Riot Affair." *Critical Inquiry* 40.1 (Autumn 2013): 220-241.
- Borenstein, Eliot. "Bad Taste, Revisited" *Russia's Alien Nations*, July 1, 2019.
<https://www.eliotborenstein.net/soviet-self-hatred/gmg6f84hitohpcrjq6cdfxur1gucrq>
- "Borders Unpatrolled: Imaginary Geographies and the Spaces of Performance in Russian Viral Video." Buckler, Julie Julie Cassidy and Boris Wolfson. *Russian Performances*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018. 139-147
- "Jokes and the New Russian Body" *Russia's Alien Nations*, June 24, 2019
<https://www.eliotborenstein.net/soviet-self-hatred/ggo8pcif99hp4bdc9tpixhthdlr22f>
- "Loved Labours Lost" *Russia's Alien Nations*, June 10 2019
<https://www.eliotborenstein.net/soviet-self-hatred/ed14gxu2i0do7i34vofd33btb0cphq>
- Overkill: Sex Violence, and Russian Popular Culture after 1991*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Pussy Riot: Speaking Punk to Power*. London: Bloomsbury Press, 2020)
- "Raspberry Jackets of the Rich and Loathsome" *Russia's Alien Nations*, June 27, 2019
<https://www.eliotborenstein.net/soviet-self-hatred/psizegcm8og4pcioc0tj9iktj4gs5b>
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Introduction, Chapters 1, 6, 8, 9.
- Cassiday, Julie A. and Emily Johnson, "A Personality Cult for the Postmodern Era: Reading Vladimir Putin's Public Persona." Goscilo, Helena (ed.). *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*. BASEES/Routledge, 2012. 37-64..
- Clowes, Edith W. *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. Introduction, Chapters 2 & 6.
- Collier, Stephen J. . *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. Chapter 1, 3-6, 9
- Denisova, Anastasia. *Internet Memes and Society: Social, Cultural, and Political Contexts*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Gabowitsch, Mischa. *Protest in Putin's Russia*. Cambridge: Polity, 2017.
- Goscilo, Helena. "Introduction: A Label Designed to Libel versus Mimetic Modeling and Parthenogenesis." *Russian Review* 62.1 (2003): 1-10.
- "New Members and Organs: The Politics of Porn." *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. 134-170.
- "Putin's Performance of Masculinity: The Action Hero and Macho Sex-Object." Goscilo, Helena (ed.). *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*. BASEES/Routledge, 2012. 180-207.
- Graham, Seth. "The Wages of Syncretism: Folkloric New Russians and Post-Soviet Popular Culture." *Russian Review* 62.1 (2003): 37-53.
- Healy, Dan. "Active, Passive, and Russian: the National Idea in Gay Men's Pornography." *Russian Review* 69.2 (2010): 210-230.
- Howanitz, Gernot. "Metro 2033 – More Than a Cinemachine?." *Digital Icons* (8).
<http://www.digitalicons.org/issue08/gernot-howanitz/>

- Humphrey, *The Unmaking of Everyday Life: Everyday Economies after Socialism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. Chapters 3-6, 9.
- Laurrelle, Marlene. *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. Introduction, Chapter 2, 4, Conclusion.
- Ledeneva, Alena V. *How Russia Really Works : The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006. Chapters 1, 5, 7.
- Lipovetsky, Mark. "New Russians as a Cultural Myth." *Russian Review* 62.1 (2003): 54-71.
- "Post-Sots: Transformations of Socialist Realism in the Popular Culture of the Recent Period." *Slavic and East European Journal* (48.3): 356-377.
- Match, Olga. "Mobsters' Gravestones in 1990s Russia." *Global Crime* 7.1 (2006): 79-104.
- McMichael, Polly. "Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media." *Digital Icons* (9).
- Mikhailova, Tatiana. "Putin as the Father of the Nation: His Family and Other Animals." Goscilo, Helena (ed.). *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*. BASEES/Routledge, 2012. 65-81.
- Muller, Martin. "Goodbye, Postsocialism!" *Europe-Asia Studies* 71.4 (2019): 533-550
- Oushakine, Serguei. *The Patriotism of Despair*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- "We're nostalgic, but we're not crazy: Retrofitting the Past in Russia." *The Russian Review* (66.3): 451-482.
- Patico, Jennifer. *Consumption and Social Change in a Post-Soviet Middle Class*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Chapters 1 & 2.
- Roesen, Tine. "www.snob.ru: A Social Network Site for the Elite." *Digital Icons* (6). <http://www.digitalicons.org/issue06/tine-roesen/>
- Rogers, Douglas. "Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons." *Slavic Review* 69.1 (Spring 2010): 1-15.
- Ryazanova-Clark, Lara. "The Discourse of Spectacle at the End of the Presidential Term." Goscilo, Helena (ed.). *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*. BASEES/Routledge, 2012. 104-132.
- Shevchenko, Olga. *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Strukov, Vlad. "Possessive and Superlative: On the Simulation of Democracy and Nationhood in Russia" *Digital Icons* (1). <http://www.digitalicons.org/issue01/issue1/vlad-strukov.php?lng=Englis>
- "Pussy Riot: From Local Appropriation to Global Documentation." *Digital Icons* (9).
- Verdery, Katharine. *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996
- Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs. The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. Chapters 1-3.
- Voronina, Olga G. "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer on Trial Online and in Court." *Digital Icons* (9).
- Wiggins, Bradley E. "Crimea River: Directionality in Memes from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict, *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016): 451-585
- Yurchak, Alexei. "Post-Post Communist Sincerity Pioneers." Lahusen, Thomas and Peter H. Solomon, Jr. (eds). *What Is Soviet Now? Identities, Legacies, Memories*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008. 258-276.

Films:

Balabanov, Alexei (dir.) *Brother*
Balabanov, Alexei (dir.) *Cargo-200* (2008)
Balabanov, Alexei (dir.) *Dead Man's Bluff*
Bekmambetov, Timur (dir.) *Night Watch*
(2008)

Lungin, Pavel (dir.) *Tycoon*. (2002)
Pozdorovkin, Maxim (dir.) *Pussy Riot – A
Punk Prayer* (2013)

CLASS SCHEDULE

February 2 (T) Introduction

February 9 (T) Post-Socialism: Theorizing the Ad Hoc

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Verdery (Intro, Chapters 1) (3-38)
- ☺ Read Collier (Chapter 1)
- ☺ Read Rogers, "Postsocialism Unbound"
- ☺ Read Muller, "Goodbye, Postsocialism"

February 16 (T) It's the Economy: Money, Labor, Consumption

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Ledeneva Chs 1-4
- ☺ Read Patico Ch 1 & 2
- ☺ Read Collier, Chs 6-7
- 📺 Watch *Tycoon*

February 23 (T) New Russians and Conspicuous Consumption

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Goscilo, "Introduction"
- ☺ Read Balzer, "Routinization"
- ☺ Read Graham, "Wages"
- ☺ Read Lipovetsky, "New Russians"
- ☺ Read Humphrey, Ch. 9
- ☺ Read Borenstein, "Loved Labours Lost," "Jokes and the New Russian Body," "Raspberry Jackets of the Rich and Loathsome," "Bad Taste Revisited"
- 📺 Watch *Dead Man's Bluff*

March 2 (T) The Russia We Have Lost: Nostalgia

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 6, Chapter 8, Chapter 9)
- ✪ Read Oushakine "We're Nostalgic"
- ✪ Read Oushakine (Chapter 2)
- 📺 Watch *Cargo-200*

March 4 (Th) Paper Proposal Due

March 9 (T) The Discourse of Crisis

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Shevechenko
- 📺 Watch *Night Watch*

March 16 (T) Violent Crime for Fun and Profit

- ☺ Read Humphrey (Chapter 5)
- ☺ Read Volkov (Chapters 1-3)
- ☺ Read Borenstein, *Overkill* (Chapters 5-7)
- ☺ Read Matich, "Mobsters Gravestones"
- 📺 Watch *Brother*

March 23 (T) Sex and Its Metaphors

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪ Read Goscilo, "New Members"
- ✪ Read Baer Chapters 1 & 2
- ☺ Read Healey, "Active, Passive"
- ✪ Read Borenstein, *Overkill* Chapters 1-3

March 30 (T) Russian and Other Ideas

- ▼ For Today:
- ✪ Read Lipovetsky, "Post-Sots"
- ✪ Read Bassin, "Nurture Is Nature"
- ☺ Read Laruelle (Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Conclusion)
- ✪ Read Clowes (Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 6)

April 6 (T) Putin & Putinism

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Gabowtisch (Chapters 1 & 2)
- ✪ Read Cassidy and Johnson, "A Personality Cult"
- ☺ Read Mikhailova, "Putin as the Father"
- ☺ Read Gorham, "Putin's Language"
- ☺ Read Ryazanova-Clark "The Discourse of Spectacle"
- ☺ Read Goscilo "Putin's Performance of Masculinity"

April 8 (Th) First Draft of Paper Due

April 13 (T) Memes and the Internet

- ☺ Read Howanitz, "Metro 2033"
- ✪ Read Rosen, www.snob.ru
- ✪ Read Strukov, "Possessive and"
- ✪ Read Wiggins, "Crimea a River"
- ✪ Read Denisova, Chapter 5

✪ Read Borenstein, "Borders Unpatrolled"

📺 Watch *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*
FINAL PAPER DUE

April 20 (T) Pussy Riot

- ◆ For Today:
- ☺ Read Bernstein, "An Inadvertent Sacrifice."
- ☺ Read Borenstein, *Pussy Riot* Chapters 5-8, 10
- ☺ Read McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically"
- ☺ Read Strukov, "Pussy Riot"
- ☺ Read Voronina, "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer"

April 27 (T) Ukraine
Readings TBA

May 4 (T) Presentations

May 10 (M) Final Paper Due