The Making of Modern Russia

Fall 2018, MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm; SN2036
Instructor: Alec Brookes

Course Description

Drawing on the history of new and old media (including literature, film and web-based media) “The Making of Modern Russia” takes a geographical approach to show how these media have shaped Russia as an “imagined community.” The course is divided into subunits on northern spaces, southern spaces, urban spaces, outer space, and cyberspace.

Students of Russian 1050 will develop competency in the history and geography of modern Russian culture, develop skills for:

- the critical interpretation of new and old media from aesthetic and politicized perspectives;
- a cultural-historical perspective on contemporary Russia;
- using clear and compelling writing to share views on modern Russian culture with public and academic audiences.

Course Schedule

You can download the following schedule in Google Calendar, with a day-by-day breakdown of readings and assignments. You should also consult with the course BrightSpace, where readings are posted in “Course Content.” Please note that the schedule is subject to change, depending on class cancellations due to weather or illness. Any change to this schedule will be announced on BrightSpace.
Northern Spaces

September 5-10
Mark Bassin, “Inventing Siberia.”
John McCannon, “Tabula Rasa in the North.”

September 12-17
Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Ivan Denisovich, 1962 (novella; available at MUN bookstore)

September 19-24
Andrei Zviaginstev, Leviathan, 2014 (film)

Southern Spaces

September 26
Alexander Pushkin, “Prisoner of the Caucasus,” 1822 (narrative poem; see BrightSpace)
Susan Layton, “Pushkin’s Mountaineer” in Russian Literature and Empire (see BrightSpace)

September 28-October 1
Christoph Zurcher, “Wars Over Chechnya” in The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict and Nationhood in the Caucasus
Sergei Bodrov Sr., Prisoner of the Mountains, 1996 (film)
Suggested viewing: Leonid Gaidai, Kidnapping, Caucasian Style, 1967 (film)

City Spaces

October 10-15
Nikolai Gogol, “The Nose,” “The Overcoat,” 1836; 1842 (short stories)

October 17-22
Anton Chekhov, Three Sisters, 1900 (drama)

October 24-29

October 31-November 5 The City from Below: Voina and Pussy Riot art collectives
David Harvey, “Right to the City,” 2008 (article)
Emily Channel, “Is Sextremism the New Feminism: Perspectives from Pussy Riot and Femen.”

Outer & cyberspaces

November 7-14 Inventing Outer Space (Soviet, pre-Soviet)

November 16-21 Inventing Outer Space (Post-Soviet)

November 23-28 Cyber Space

Week 13: Review

**Method of Evaluation**

**Engagement:** 15% Includes active participation and contribution to either online or in-real-life components of the class, including engagement in weekly breakout groups. 5% of this mark will be given before the drop date.

**Op-Eds:** 40% (2 x 20%) Two Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) pieces (600-1000 words). One Op-Ed is due on or before **October 12**, and the other is due between October 12 and **November 30**.

Op-eds must be **600-1000** words as a **strict guideline**. They must tie some issue raised in class (or in the readings/viewings) to something newsworthy. News may or may not have to do with Russia, or Russian-American/Russian-Canadian relations. The purpose of the experience is to gain valuable experience in sharing your opinion about culture, how culture informs our understanding of the current moment generally, and how examples of Russian cultural production specifically can shed light on various political, social and economic realities. **Late penalties:** 3% per day.

Here are several guides on writing effective op-eds (you are encouraged to consult other sources as well if you wish):


Queens University: [http://www.queensu.ca/universityrelations/communications/oped](http://www.queensu.ca/universityrelations/communications/oped)


(note links at bottom)

Here are three examples of relatively recent blog entries or think pieces that drew from Russian culture (NB many of these are too long, but they give a good idea of how old cultural production is made relevant for the current moment):

Jennifer Wilson, “Was ‘Lolita’ About Race?: Vladimir Nabokov on Race in the United States,” [https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/was-lolita-about-race-vladimir-nabokov-on-race-in-the-united-states/](https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/was-lolita-about-race-vladimir-nabokov-on-race-in-the-united-states/) (LARB is a good resources for examples of this kind of writing about cultural production)


**Academic Paper:**

The purpose of this assignment is to give you a good grounding in the process of developing an academic paper.

- **Stage 1 (10%)**: Approximately 250-word proposal that includes the questions that you will attempt to answer and why those questions are compelling. Include a bibliography. Due date: **October 5** (by 5pm in BrightSpace Dropbox).

- **Stage 2 (15%)**: Maximum 500 words, includes a question you will attempt to answer in your paper, and how you will attempt to answer it (i.e. what will be the structure of your answer to this question?) Due Date: **October 31** (by 5pm in BrightSpace Dropbox).

- **Stage 3 (20%)**: Approximately 1500 words (5 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-pt or Palatino Linotype 11-pt, 1-inch margins all around). This is the execution of the argument you laid out in the previous stage, and includes evidence that persuasively supports your claims. Papers are marked for style, clarity, originality, strength of your argument, and overall ability to respond to feedback from the previous two stages. Due Date: **November 30** (by 5pm in BrightSpace Dropbox).
Late penalties (for all stages): 3% per day.

Papers will not be accepted after December 5.

**Texts**


- All other texts, except for films, fall under the fair-dealing, educational exception or are public domain, and will therefore be provided or else linked to by the instructor at the beginning of the semester on the course BrightSpace page. With regards to the required films, see below.

**Screenings**

All screenings will be held on **Mondays** in **Chemistry 2026 at 3pm** except on October 22nd, when it will begin at 3:30.

For those of you who cannot attend the screening, copies of each required film will be put on reserve at **QEII library**. Please ask at the circulation desk.

- September 17: Leviathan
- September 24: Prisoner of the Caucasus
- October 1: Thief
- October 22: Brother
- November 19: Dreaming of Space

**POLICIES**

**Missed Testing and Late Policies**

For university policy on missed testing and late policies, please see 6.7.5 in the University Calendar [www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=REGS-0601#REGS-0615](http://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=REGS-0601#REGS-0615)

**Class Cancellations**

If I need to cancel a class because of illness or some other reason, I will notify students through BrightSpace as soon as possible.

**Email Policy**

I aim to return emails within one business day. abrookes@mun.ca
Accommodation of Students with Special Needs
Memorial University is committed to facilitating and promoting an accessible, inclusive, and mutually respectful learning environment. Students requiring special accommodation are asked to communicate firstly with the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre (www.mun.ca/blundon) at the earliest opportunity. University policies and procedures pertaining to accommodations for students with disabilities can be found at www.mun.ca/policy/site/policy.php?id=239

Classroom Etiquette
Treat your fellow classmates with respect, and if you have a problem with someone in the class, feel free to approach me about it. Treat everyone with respect.

As far as cellphones and computers are concerned, I object to you coming to class and then distracting yourself with Facebook or solitaire. It will affect the mark I give you for in-class work, but I will only tell you to put it away if it’s distracting to me or I feel it’s distracting others in the classroom. You can bring food and beverages in to class according to university policy, but please be quiet.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism
Cheating includes but is not limited to allowing another student to copy from your work, presenting someone else’s work as your own including through failure to credit the source of ideas, consulting electronic devices such as mobile phones or MP3 players and/or interacting with others while a test is ongoing. Any submission in this course that is similar to another author’s work, beyond chance, will be treated as plagiarism. Information about procedures and penalties for academic misconduct is outlined in the University Calendar. See section 6.12.4 of the University Calendar on Academic Misconduct (www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=REGS-0748).

CAMPUS SUPPORT

The Digital Learning Centre (SN-4030) supports the use of technology to enhanced teaching and learning of all disciplines in the Faculty of Arts. Students may often drop in to use computers for course-related work. The online textbook can be used in this room when available. See DLC schedule for availability here: mun.ca/DLC/hours/sn4030.php

The Writing Centre (SN-2053) is a free, drop-in facility for students and helps them become better writers and critical thinkers.

The Academic Advising Centre (SN-4053) provides academic guidance to students in their first year of study. Students seeking advice about a specific Major or Minor should contact the designated undergraduate advisor in that department.

The Commons (QEII library) provides access to print, electronic and technology resources.

The Counselling Centre (UC-5000) helps students develop their personal capabilities, ranging from study strategies to assisting distressed students.
**Student Affairs and Services** (Answers, UC-3005) answers questions about such things as courses, housing, books, financial matters and health.

**The Glenn Roy Blundon Centre** (UC -4007) serves students whose disabilities involve conditions affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning (disabilities), chronic illness, or mental health; support is also provided to students with documented temporary illnesses and injuries.

**Sexual Harassment Office** (ER 6039) Sexual Harassment is a violation of human rights and is not tolerated at Memorial University. The university is committed to ensuring a respectful and harassment free environment on all its campuses. The Sexual Harassment Office provides information and education sessions to students, faculty and staff on how to identify and prevent harassing behaviors and also provides advice, information and support to any person who has experienced sexual harassment. If you want to learn more, please contact the Sexual Harassment Advisor at 864-2015 or the Sexual Harassment Office at 864-8199.