Now more than ever, contemporary Russia is the subject of much debate. It is an extraordinary prism through which to study culture.

This paper covers the period from Gorbachev’s Perestroika to the collapse of the USSR and the tumultuous 1990s to the early Putin years to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine. It looks at contemporary Russian culture as having been shaped by the coexistence of two ostensibly opposing discourses, the official and the dissident, which have interacted throughout the late- and post-Soviet period in different and often contradictory ways. The paper covers different media, focusing particularly on cinema and literature, with excursions into drama, painting, and performance art. The paper is divided into four topics and two set texts. Each of the topics engages a broad array of sub-topics, including those of identity, nationalism, gender, sexuality, trauma, memory, and nostalgia.
SECTION I. SET TEXTS

Set Text 1

Primary Sources


Secondary Literature


Primary Sources


Secondary Literature


II. SECTION B: TOPICS

Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Prose
Nina Andreeva, “Ne mogu postupat’sa printsipami” (letter to Soviet Russia, 1988)
Liudmila Petrushevksaya, “Gigiena” (1990)

Poetry

Films
Tengiz Abuladze, Pokaianie (1986)
Vasilii Pichul, Malen’kaia Vera (1988)
Rashid Nugmanov, Igla (1988)

Visual Arts
Sots-Art; Komar and Melamid

Additional Texts:

Prose
Marina Palei, Kabiriia s Obvodnogo Kanala (1991)

Films
Vitaly Kanevsky, Zamri–Umri–Voskresni! (1990)
Georgii Danelia, Kindza–dza (1986)
Petr Todorovsky, Interdevochka (1989)

Visual Arts:
Moscow Conceptualism
**Secondary Literature**

**General**

**On Postmodernism**

**On cinema**


On literature


On Visual Art


Topic 2: The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Prose
Svetlana Alexievich, Vremia Secondhand (2013, selections) and the Nobel Prize acceptance speech

Films
Nikita Mikhalkov, Burnt By the Sun (1994)
Aleksei Balabanov, Brother (1997)
Aleksandr Sokurov, Russian Ark (2002)

Additional Texts:

Prose
Aleksandr Prokhanov, Gospodin Geksogen (2001)
Tatiana Tolstaya, Kys’ (2000)

Films
Aleksei German, Khrustalev, Mashinu! (1998)
Aleksei Balabanov, Brat 2 (2000)

Secondary Literature

General


On Alexievich

On Nationalism
On Nostalgia
Oushakine, Serguei Alex. “‘We’re Nostalgic but We’re Not Crazy’: Retrofitting the Past in Russia.” Russian Review 66, no. 3 (2007): 451–82.

On Film

On Trauma
On Reactionary Postmodernism (The Slynx and Mr Hexogen)
Topic 3: Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Drama
Yelena Gremina, Mikhail Ugarov, Sentiabr’.doc (2005)
Vasilii Sigarev, Plastilin (2000)
Presnyakov Brothers, Terrorism (2002)

Poetry
Kirill Medvedev, “Konets Peremiria” (2005);

Films
Aleksei Balabanov, Gruz 200 (2007)
Andrei Zvyagintsev, Leviathan (2013)
Vasilii Sigarev, Strana Oz (2015)

Performance: Voina, Pussy Riot, Petr Pavlensky,

Additional Texts:

Drama
Vasilii Sigarev, Chernoe Moloko (2001)

Prose
Zakhar Prilepin, San’kia (2006)

Film
Natalia Meschaninova, Kombinat “Nadezhda” (2014)
Aleksandr Sokurov, Aleksandra (2006)

Pussy Riot, “Osvobodi Bruschatku” and other songs.
Secondary Literature

On New Drama

---------

On cinema


**On poetry**


**On Gender, Sexuality, and the Rise of Biopolitics**


**On violence and abjection:**


**On Protest Culture:**


**On San’kya**


Topic 4. After Crimea: From New Zastoi to Bucha

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Poetry
Lidia Yusupova, Prigovory (selections, 2020)
Roman Osminkin, “omonovets v balaklave” (2015)
Dmitry Kuzmin, “Neskol’ko Slov o Metro i o Gei-identichnosti” (2013)

Films
Kirill Serebrennikov, Uchenik (2016) and Petrovy v Grippe (2021)
Kantemir Balagov, Tesnota (2017)

Anti-war Activism and Performance:
Aleksandra Skochilenko
Katrin Nenasheva
Anonymous, “Bucha=Moscow” (2020)
Anti-war graffiti
DOXA closing speeches

Responses to War:
Maria Stepanova, “The War of Putin’s Imagination” in Financial Times
Mikhail Shishkin, “Neither Nato nor Ukraine can de-Putinise Russia. We Russians must do it ourselves” in The Guardian
Vladimir Sorokin, “Vladimir Putin Sits Atop a Crumbling Pyramid of Power” in The Guardian

Additional Texts:

Prose
Serhii Zhadan, Internat (2020)
Linor Goralik, Found Life (2017)

Poetry
Polina Barskova, Vozdushnaya Trevoga (selections, 2021)
Galina Rymbu, “Moia Vagina” (2020)

Film
Kantemir Balagov, Dylda (2019)
Andrei Konchalovsky, Dorogie Tovarishchi! (2020)
Il’ia Khrzanovsky, Dau (selections, 2020)
Aleksei Fedorchenko, Angely Revolutsii (2014)

Graphic Journalism:
Victoria Lomasko, Other Russias (2017)

Secondary Literature

General

On poetry
On Film


On Gender and Sexuality:


On Protest Culture


On Zhadan
LECTURE SCHEDULE

Michaelmas Term:

Week 1 – Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State
Week 2 – Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State

Week 3 – Topic 2. The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism
Week 4 – Topic 2. The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism

Week 5 – Set text 1: Homo Zapiens
Week 6 – Set text 1: Homo Zapiens

Week 7 – Seminar on Topics 2 and Set text 1

Week 8 – Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Lent Term:

Week 1 – Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Week 2 – Set text 2: Day of the Oprichnik
Week 3 – Set text 2: Day of the Oprichnik

Week 4 – Seminar on Topic 3 and Set Text 2

Week 5 – Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Nostalgia, and Dissent

Week 6 – Topic 4. After Crimea: From New Zastoi to Bucha
Week 7 – Topic 4. After Crimea: From New Zastoi to Bucha

Week 8 – Seminar on Topic 4.
SUPERVISION SCHEDULE

Michaelmas Term:

Week 2 – Supervision on Topic 1
Week 4 – Supervision on Topic 2
Week 6 – Supervision on Set Text 1
Week 8 – Supervision on Set Text 1

Lent Term:

Week 2 – Supervision on Topic 3
Week 4 – Supervision on Set Text 2
Week 6 – Supervision on Set Text 2
Week 8 – Supervision on Topic 4