

Fall 2012

Russ/Litr 435: **Introduction to Russian Film**

Instructor: Evgenii (Zhenya) Bershtein.

T, TH 2:40–4:00 PM, Vollum 116

Screenings: M, W 7:30 PM, Vollum 116.

The instructor's office: Vollum 128.

Office Hours: M, W 2-3 PM and by appointment.

Full course for one semester. Conference. The course provides an introduction to the history and poetics of Russian film from the double perspective of Russian cultural contexts and the development of cinema as artistic medium. While studying the classics of Russian film, we will pay special attention to silent cinema, from early melodramas (Bauer) to the masterpieces of Soviet montage (Kuleshov, Vertov, and Eisenstein). The landmarks of Russian cinematic style will be considered in detail, especially the works and aesthetic positions of Sergei Eisenstein, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Aleksandr Sokurov. As we study Russian film history, we will also be learning and employing the fundamental notions of film analysis. To achieve these aims, our reading will focus on the works of both film theory and film history. Workload: careful watching of all films and the attendance of discussion sections are required; extensive reading; five short papers (about 3 pages each) and a final paper (5 to 10 pages); presentations in class. Prerequisite: students who wish to take the course for Russian credit must have completed Russian 220 or obtain the consent of the instructor. An additional weekly meeting will be scheduled for students who take this class for Russian credit. In the Russian section, a number of cinematic, literary and critical texts will be studied and discussed in the original Russian. Your evaluation will be based on your contribution to the conference and written submissions.

In case you have to miss a screening, all films are available from the IMC reserve. Books for this class are available in multiple copies from the library reserve. Students are expected to bring the required texts in class.

Books to buy (available from the Reed bookstore):

Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*. Required.

Eisenstein, *Film Form*. Required.

Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*. Required.

Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible*. Required.

Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (8th edition). Recommended.

Taylor and Christie, eds., *The Film Factory: The History of Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896 – 1939*. Recommended.

Leyda, *Kino: A History of Russian and Soviet Film*. Recommended

Beumers. *A History of Russian Cinema*. Recommended.

Beumers and Condee, eds., *The Cinema of Aleksandr Sokurov*. Recommended.

The comprehensive bibliography of scholarly literature on Russian and Soviet film can be found at http://www.pitt.edu/~slavic/video/cinema_biblio.html.

Syllabus

Topic One: Early Russian Film (Week 1-2)

T: August 28: Introduction

W, August 29, 7:30 PM. Screening: “Silent Witnesses” (Evgenii Bauer, 1914).

TH, August 30

Reading: Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia*, 1-77;
Film Art, 112-161 (The Shot: Mis-en-Scene)

T, September 4

Reading: Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia*, 78-161;
Film Art, 162–217 (The Shot: Cinematography).

W, September 5: Screening: “The Dying Swan” (Evgenii Bauer, 1917).

TH, September 6.

Reading: Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia*, 162–218.

Writing assignment #1: The Shot in “The Dying Swan” (3 pages).

Topic Two: Film Avant-Garde vs. Tradition in the Soviet 20s (Week 3–5).

M, September 10, 7:30 PM Screening: “Battleship “Potemkin” (Sergei Eisenstein, 1926).

T, September 11.

Reading: Reading: *Film Art*, 218-263 (Editing), 453-456 (Soviet Montage).

TH, September 13.

Reading: Reading: *Film Factory*, 87-89, 139–150; Eisenstein’s “Methods of Montage” in *The Film Form*, 72-83, “Film Language” in *The Film Form*, 108-121.

Writing assignment #2: The Effects of Montage in “Battleship “Potemkin”” (3 pages).

Monday, September 17, 7:30. Screening: “Bed and Sofa” (Abram Room, 1927) 9/17

T, September 18

Read: *Film Art*, 318–337 (Film Genres).

W, September 19, 7:30 PM. Screening: “Man with a Movie Camera” (Dziga Vertov, 1929)

TH, September 20

Reading: *Film Art*, 410–413; Vertov's essays in *The Film Factory*, 69-72, 89-94, 112-114, 129-131, 150-151, 200-203, 299-305, 335-337.

Additional study material: Yuri Tsivian's commentary on the extra soundtrack on the DVD of *Man with the Movie Camera*.

M, September 24, 7:30 PM. Screening: "By the Law" (Lev Kuleshov, 1929)

T, September 25

Reading: *Film Art*, 74-107 (Narrative).

W, September 26, 7:30 PM. Screening: "Earth" (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1930)

TH, September 27.

[Clips from "The Old and the New" [Eisenstein, 1929] to be screened in class].

Reading: Elizabeth Papazian, "Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's Earth," *Russian Review* 2003: 62 (3), 411–428 (Moodle).

Topic 3: Stalinist Cinema (Week 6-7)

T, October 2 (Screening in Class): "Circus" (Grigorii Aleksandrov, 1936)

Reading: *Film Art*, 264–303 (Sound in the Cinema); *Film Factory*, 234-235, 280–282, 305–311, 358–369, 371–377.

TH October 4: discussion of "Circus"

Reading: *Film Factory*, 358-369, 373-377.

Writing assignment # 3: "A Cinema for the Millions": What Does This Slogan Mean in "Circus"? (3 pages).

M, October 1, 7:30 PM: Screening: "Ivan the Terrible. Part 1" (Sergei Eisenstein, 1944)

T, October 9.

Reading: Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible* (begin reading).

W, October 11, 7:30 PM. Screening: "Ivan the Terrible. Part 2" (1946)

TH, October 12.

Reading: Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible* (finish reading); "Stalin, Molotov and Zhdanov on *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two*," in *The Eisenstein Reader*, 160-166 (Moodle).

FALL BREAK

Topic 4: Cinema of the Thaw (Week 8)

M, October 22, 7:30 PM: “The Cranes Are Flying” (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957)

T, October 23: Guest Instructor Professor Michael Kunichika '99 (NYU).
Reading : TBA

W, October 24, 7:30 “Wings” (Larisa Shepitko, 1966)

TH, October 25

Writing assignment #4: Women in the Cinema of the Thaw (3 pages).

SPECIAL SCREENING: “Faust” (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2012). NWFC, Sunday, October 28, 4:30 PM, (alternative screening is on Saturday, October 27 at 7 PM) These screenings are sponsored by Reed College, and the entry is free for all members of the Reed community.

T, October 30.

Reading: find on the web and summarize three reviews of “Faust”. In class, we will discuss Sokurov’s “Faust” with the guest instructor, Professor Michael Taylor (German department).

W, October 31, 7:30PM. Screening: “Ivan Vasilyevich Changes Career” (Leonid Gaidai, 1973)

TH, November 1

Reading: Aleksandr Prokhorov, “Cinema of Attractions versus Narrative Cinema: Leonid Gaidai's Comedies and El'dar Riazanov's Satires of the 1960s,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), 455-472 ([Moodle](#)).

Topic 5: Tarkovsky and Lyrical Cinema (Week 10)

M, November 5, 7:30 PM: “Mirror” (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1974)

T, November 6

Reading: Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 82-163.

TH, November 8

[Clips from “Nostalgia” and “Sacrifice” to be screened in class]

Reading: Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 202–241.

Topic 6: Post-Soviet Film: Balabanov and Sokurov (week 11-14).

M, November 12, 7:30 PM. Screening: “Brother” (Aleksei Balabanov, 1998)

T, November 13. Discussion of “Brother”

Writing Assignment #5: “What is the Genre of “Brother”, and Is It Important to Figure It Out?” (3 pages).

TH, November 15

Screening in class: “On Freaks and Men” (Aleksei Balabanov, 1998)

T, November 20. Discussion of “On Freaks and Men.”

TH November 22: THANKGIVING DAY. NO CLASS.

M, November 26, 7:30 PM. Screening: “Russian Ark” (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002).

T: November 27

Reading: Beumers, “And the Ark Sails On...” in *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, 176–187.

W, November 29, 7:30 PM. Screening: “Alexandra” (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2008)

TH, November 30

Reading: Nancy Condee, “Endstate and Allegory,” *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, 188-199.

T, December 4: Summing-Up.

Final papers, containing a comprehensive analysis of a single film, are due in Prof. Bershtein’s office (Vol 128) by **noon on Tuesday, December 11**. Electronic submissions are not accepted.