

HA 291 Nation, Identity, and Resistance in Russian and Soviet Art

Spring 2021



Andrei Rublev, *The Virgin of Vladimir*, 1406; Valentin Serov, *Girl with Peaches*, 1887; Natalia Goncharova, *Peasant Woman from Tula Province*, 1910; Semion Chuikov, *A Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzia*, 1948.

Michigan State University
College of Arts and Letters
Department of Art, Art History, and Design
Instructor: Prof. Yelena Kalinsky

Course Description: This course will introduce students to the history of art in Russia and the Soviet Union from the pre-Petrine period (prior to ca. 1700) to the present day. The course will proceed chronologically and follow artistic developments in imperial Russia, the Soviet period, and since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Throughout, we will focus on particular themes that seem to recur again and again in Russian cultural life, including the role of the artist in society; the national character of Russian art and its relationship to the West; the connection between art and politics; the role of art in modernizing and transforming Russian and Soviet society; and the importance of institutions, networks, and associations—official and unofficial—in creating, sustaining, and at times hindering artistic life.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Develop and refine skills of visual analysis through in-class discussions of key works and monuments of Russian and Soviet art.
2. Develop and refine analytic and synthetic reading skills by responding to and generating discussion questions and participating in class discussions.
1. Develop and refine analytic and synthetic writing skills in art history through a series of short reading responses, unit reviews, and a semester-long research paper on a chosen topic.
2. Informed by course lectures and required readings:
 - a. Identify and characterize changes in Russian and Soviet cultural life of the 18th-21st centuries.
 - b. Discuss Russian artists' changing relationship with their publics.
 - c. Discuss Russian artists' changing relationship to their Western counterparts.
 - d. Discuss the relationship of Russian and Soviet art to social and political contexts.

Course Delivery Mode and Structure:

This is a synchronous remote-learning course delivered via Zoom and in the D2L learning management system. We will meet as a group on Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and all assignments will be posted and submitted via the D2L course site. Students should be mindful of the course schedule and due dates by reading the syllabus carefully. All deadlines are indicated in the syllabus below.

The course is broken up into **five chronological and thematic units** with a series of topics and associated readings for each day. You are responsible for completing the **reading** by class time on the day it is listed on the schedule. Some of the readings will have an associated **quiz** or **reading response**, which you should complete in D2L prior to the start of class. You may attempt the quiz as many times as you like before the deadline. The topics for your reading responses are listed on the syllabus. Reading responses can be written (approximately 150 words) or submitted as an audio file (3-5 minutes). There are six quizzes and six reading responses listed on the syllabus; you may drop one quiz and one reading response.

Each meeting will consist of a mix of lecture, discussion, and small group work in break-out rooms. Due to the challenges of staying engaged in an online learning environment, I will ask you to take active **notes** during class and upload them to D2L immediately after (either as a Word document or a photo if you take notes by hand). These will help you to stay engaged and me to get a sense of what you are taking away from the class meetings (and modify course delivery, if necessary). You will receive ½ point for each set of notes submitted, but they will not be graded for content. Attendance will not otherwise be recorded, but please let me know in advance if you become regularly unable to join class meetings, so that we can arrange for an alternate way for you to submit class notes. Each day's **PowerPoint slides** will be uploaded to D2L the day after each class.

You will notice on the syllabus that each unit begins with a series of **open-ended questions** to think about as we make our way through the reading. At the end of each unit, you will need to review your readings and class notes and submit a **unit review** addressing what you thought were the main points of the unit. Your unit review should address the unit questions (or other questions) by making reference to at least **two readings** and **two works of art** covered in the unit. Out of the five unit reviews, you may drop one.

Finally, this course will have **two creative assignments** and a **short (6-pg) research paper** on a topic of your choosing. These assignments will introduce you to the tools of art history, including formal analysis, and teach you basic research and writing skills. More detailed descriptions and grading rubrics will be posted in D2L. All students must complete both creative assignments and final paper. This class will **not** include slide exams or memorization.

How to Succeed in this Course:

- Attempt all assigned readings, even if you don't get through them, and mark them up.
- Attend all lectures and have a Word file or notebook ready to take active notes.
- Minimize distractions during class by turning off email and social media notifications and closing other browser tabs.
- Be courteous, respectful, and thoughtful in discussions; listen to your classmates and contribute your thoughts.
- Keep an eye on deadlines. This course has many low-stakes opportunities to practice your reading, writing, and art historical analysis skills throughout the semester, but you must complete them on time if you don't want to get behind.
- Make sure you understand the goals of the assignments and ask for clarification if necessary.
- Proofread and edit assignments carefully; your writing will improve through practice.

- Take advantage of office hours, talk to your classmates, or email me if you have any questions or think you may be falling behind.
- Really, take advantage of office hours. I am happy to talk to you about class, your assignments, career options, or anything else.
- Be kind to yourself. Online learning during a pandemic is difficult for everyone. Please reach out if you need help.
- *No knowledge of Russian or previous art history courses are required.*

Late Work Policy:

→ All due dates are indicated on the syllabus with an arrow and the three larger assignments and six unit reviews are **highlighted in yellow**. Please look ahead and mark them on your calendar so they do not sneak up on you. Late work due to oversight of the due date will not be accepted; you may drop one quiz, one reading response, and one unit review to account for this. You will also notice that the total point possible in this course is 103/100. This should also help offset any oversights of the schedule. However, emergencies do arise, especially during this very challenging pandemic time. **If you are finding it difficult to complete work on time or anticipate a difficulty meeting the course requirements, please email me as soon as you can (or even after the due date) and we will work out an accommodation.**

How We Will Communicate:

Course-related questions should be posted in the General Questions Forum in D2L. For personal/private issues, please email me directly; **please allow 24-48 hours for an email reply**. All instructor correspondence will be sent to your MSU email account via D2L. Please plan on checking your MSU email regularly for course-related messages. If you need technical assistance, MSU has a helpful website with FAQs and a phone number you can call for any D2L and tech-related issues: <https://help.d2l.msu.edu/>.

Title IX statement:

Michigan State University is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu.

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities:

MSU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD on online at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (VISA) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (i.e. assignment due date). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Texts: All readings will be made available as pdfs or links to outside sources in the course site on D2L. You will be asked to rent two films to screen on your own.

Assignments and Grading:

Assignment	Due date	Weeks due	Points
IN CLASS:			
Participation (take class notes and email them to me after class)	Immediately after class.	all	13 (½ pt. each)
READING:			
Quizzes (6x, drop one)	By class time on day of class.	3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13	10 (2 pts. each, drop 1)
Introductory Reflection Assignment, 250 words	Tues. 1/19 by noon.	2	3
Reading Responses (6x, drop one). 150 words, or 3-5 mins. audio	Post to D2L by class time on day of class.	2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13	15 (3 pts. each, drop 1)
Unit Reviews (5x, drop one). 250 words	Mon. 2/01, Mon. 2/22, Mon. 3/15, Fri. 4/02, Mon. 4/19	4, 7, 10, 12, 15	16 (4 pts. each, drop 1)
CREATIVE ASSIGNMENTS:			
Formal Analysis (<i>Izoizoliatsiia</i>) Assignment, 1 image and 200 word reflection.	Fri. 2/19 by 10pm.	6	9
Revolutionary Art Assignment, 1 image and 250 words.	Fri. 4/09 at 10pm.	13	9
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER:			
Paper proposal, 150 words.	Mon. 2/08 by 10 pm.	5	3
Annotated bibliography, 3 scholarly sources.	Mon. 3/08 by 10pm.	8	5
First draft for peer review.	Tues. 4/20 in class	15	ungraded, but required
Final Paper, 1,200 words	Wed. 4/28 by 10pm.	Exam week	20
Total writing: ~3,800 words or ~15 pages			103 pts. total

Grading scale:

93-103	4	73-77	2
88-92	3.5	68-72	1.5
83-87	3	60-67	1
78-82	2.5	below 60	0

Course Outline:

Weeks 1-2	Reading, Reviewing, and Reflection; Introduction to the Course
Weeks 2-3	Unit 1 [17c-18c] Sacred Art, the Petrine Revolution, and the Academy of Arts
Weeks 4-6	Unit 2 [19c] Development of a Russian School of Painting
Weeks 7-9	Unit 3 [19c-20c pt.1] The Rise of Modernism and the Early Avant-Garde
Weeks 10-13	Unit 4 [20c pt.2] Art in the Service of the Revolution
Weeks 13-14	Unit 5 [20c-21c] Late-Soviet Art and Politics

Weeks 15	Catch-Up & Review
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Schedule:

This is a tentative schedule of topics and readings. As we go through the course, we may linger or veer a bit, depending on student interest and pace. An updated syllabus and readings will always be posted to D2L. Any changes will be announced, but please check the online syllabus prior to each class to make sure you are on track.

Week 1Tuesday 1/12, Thursday 1/14: Reading, Reviewing, and Reflection Period

- Watch *The Desert of Forbidden Art* (2010, dir. Amanda Pope and Tchavdar Georgiev)
- Complete **Introductory Reflection Assignment** by Tuesday 1/19 at noon.

UNIT 1: [17c-18c] From Sacred to Secular, the Petrine Revolution, and the Academy of Arts

Questions to consider: *What was the role of sacred art in Russian culture prior to the 18th century? How were internal and external worlds represented in icons, parsonage, and portraiture? How did Peter the Great's reforms change the way Russians conceived of themselves in relation to the rest of the world and of other cultures in relation to themselves?*

Week 2Tuesday 1/19: Introduction to the Course and Film Discussion

- Milner-Gulland, "Icons," in *Icon and Devotion: Sacred Spaces in Imperial Russia* (2002), pp. 10-13
- Florensky, "Orthodox Services and the Icon," in *Iconostasis* (1922), pp. 59-69
- Optional: Salmond et al., "Eternity in Low Earth Orbit: Icons on the International Space Station," *Religions* 11 (2020), pp. 1-16.
- Optional: Watch Tretyakov Gallery video on Andrei Rublev's *Trinity* <https://youtu.be/3QJAoJt9YxE> (Turn on closed captions [CC] for English)

Thursday 1/21: Sacred and Secular Art in Pre-Petrine Russia

- Hughes, "From Tsar to Emperor: Portraits of Aleksei and Peter I," in *Picturing Russia* (2008), pp. 51-56.
- Submit Reading Response 1 in D2L by class time. *Look closely at the two images illustrated in Hughes. Which aspects of each portrait (both the attributes of the sitter and the formal characteristics of the painting) relate to religious themes and which to secular themes?*

Week 3Tuesday 1/26: The Petrine Revolution

- Leigh, "Russian Occidentalism: The Hybrid Self in 18th-Century Russian Portraiture," *CIHA* (2019), pp. 655-659.

Thursday 1/28: Academic Art in the 18th Century

- Blakesley, "Pride and the Politics of Nationality in Russia's Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, 1757-1807," *Art History* (Dec 2010): 800-835.

→ Complete Quiz 1 in D2L by class time.

Week 4

→ Unit 1 Review due Mon. 2/01 at 10pm

UNIT 2: [19c] Development of a Russian School of Painting

Questions to consider: *How do Russian artists in the 19th century begin to conceive of a distinctly Russian school of painting? How are the increasing professionalization of artists, the changing conditions of serfs, and the rise of the intelligentsia reflected in history, genre, and landscape painting? How do artists respond to the rise of progressive politics in the second half of the 19th century?*

Tuesday 2/02: Russian Artists Abroad

- Sarabianov, *Russian Art: From Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, pp. 57-85.
 - Watch: Leigh, "Alexander Ivanov: Painting, Desire, and the 19th-Century Male Nude": https://youtu.be/flx8epQm_al?t=1 (Lecture starts around 5:20 and goes to 41:35.)
 - Optional: Watch Tretyakov Gallery video on Ivanov's *Appearance of Christ to the People* - <https://youtu.be/xFTqDa8mZEI> (turn on closed captioning [CC] for English)
- Submit Reading Response 2 in D2L by class time. *What do you think is the relationship between Ivanov's homoeroticism, as discussed by Leigh, and the ideals of neo-classical academic painting?*

Thursday 2/04: Russian Art in Russia

- Gray [Blakesley], "The Real and Ideal in the Work of Aleksei Venetsianov," *Russian Review* 58 (October 1999): 655-75.
- Gray [Blakesley], *Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 133-51.

Week 5

→ Paper Proposal due Mon. 2/08 at 10pm

Tuesday 2/09: Critical Russian Realism in the Age of Reform

- Sarabianov, *Russian Art: From Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, pp. 102-110.
 - Chernyshevsky, "The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality" (1853), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/chernyshevsky/1853/aesthetics-reality.htm>.
- Complete Quiz 2 in D2L by class time.

Thursday 2/11: The "Old Russian Style" and Historical Nostalgia [CAA Conference – NO SYNCHRONOUS CLASS MEETING TODAY].

- Watch: Salmond, "The Old Russian Style and the Arts of Nostalgia," <https://youtu.be/6tzQBoGZbPo>. [More info below...]
 - Lampolsky, "The St. George's Ribbon and National Insanity" blog post, NYU Jordan Center, May 28, 2015, <https://jordanrussiacenter.org/news/st-georges-ribbon-national-insanity/>
- Submit Reading Response 3 in D2L by class time. *What does Lampolski have to say about the idea of "collective memory"? How do you think this concept might be applied to the Old Russian Style as it was deployed in Imperial Russia, which Salmond discusses?*

Week 6

Tuesday 2/16: The Wanderers, Repin, and the Realist Debate

- Stasov, "Repin's Painting *The Volga Barge Haulers*" (1873)
- Brunson, "Wandering Greeks: How Repin Discovers the People," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2012), pp. 83-111.
- Optional: Sarabianov, *Russian Art: From Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, pp. 111-132.

Thursday 2/18: Painting the Motherland: Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century

- Ely, "The Origins of Russian Scenery: Volga River Tourism and Russian Landscape Aesthetics," *Slavic Review* (Winter 2003), pp. 666-682.
- Complete Quiz 3 in D2L by class time.

→ Formal Analysis (*Izoizoliatsiia*) Assignment due Fri. 2/19 at 10pm

Week 7

→ Unit 2 Review due Mon. 2/22 at 10pm

UNIT 3: [19c-20c pt.1] The Rise of Modernism and the Early Avant-Garde

Questions to consider: *How do the rapid social and political changes at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century contribute to new conceptions of Russian art? How do different Modernist and avant-garde movements in Russia position themselves in relation to European modernism and native Russian traditions? What are the different sources and aims of the turn to abstraction by different artists in Russia?*

Tuesday 2/23: Looking West: The World of Art/*Mir Iskusstva* and the *Ballets Russes*

- Bowlt, "The World of Art: Sergei Diaghilev and His Circle," "The Ballets Russes," and "The Business of Culture," in *Moscow & St. Petersburg, 1900-1920* (2008), pp. 160-199; 222-249; 268-275. (Don't worry about length—these are very image-heavy!)

Thursday 2/25: Slavic Revival and the Rise of Modernism

- Hilton, "Artistic Renewal" and "Folk Art and New Languages of Art," in *Russian Folk Art* (1995), pp. 227-244; 245-248.
 - Bowlt, "The Style Moderne: Russian Refractions of Art Nouveau," in *Moscow & St. Petersburg, 1900-1920* (2008), pp. 128-159.
- Complete Quiz 4 in D2L by class time.

Week 8Tuesday 3/02: Break Day – NO CLASSThursday 3/04: The Early Avant-Garde: Futurism, Rayonism, Primitivism

- Manifestos: Burliuk, Kruchenykh, Mayakovsky, and Khlebnikov, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" (1912), pp. 51-52; Zdanevich and Larionov, "Why We Paint Ourselves: A Futurist Manifesto" (1913), pp. 79-83; Larionov and Goncharova, "Rayonists and Futurists: A Manifesto" (1913), pp. 87-91.
- Background: Sharp, "The Revolutionary Art of Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov," in *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism* (2012), pp.170-204.

- Submit Reading Response 4 in D2L by class time. *Carefully read the three manifestos. What kind of world do the different authors strive for? Describe the literary/poetic/narrative strategies do they use to imagine that world.*

Week 9

→ Annotated Bibliography due Mon. 3/08 at 10pm

Tuesday 3/09: Kandinsky and the Spiritual in Art

- Wassily Kandinsky, excerpts from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), pp. 83-89.
- Taroutina, "Vasily Kandinsky's Iconic Subconscious and the Search for the Spiritual in Art," in *The Icon and the Square: Russian Modernism and the Russo-Byzantine Revival* (2018), pp. 137-177.

Thursday 3/11: The Birth of Abstraction: Malevich and Tatlin

- Chlenova, "0.10," in *Inventing Abstraction* (2012), pp. 206-208.
- Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting," pp. 118-135.

Week 10

→ Unit 3 Review due Mon. 3/15 at 10pm

UNIT 4: [20c pt.2] Art in the Service of the Revolution

Questions to consider: *How do artists in the new Soviet Union envision using art in the service of building the new communist society? What is the relationship between radical forms, new media, and radical politics? How does the return to realism in the 1930s rely on or depart from the critical realism of the 19th century?*

Tuesday 3/16: Art of the Revolution

- Bowlt, "Apocalypse Now: War, Revolution, and the Cultural Centrifuge," in *Moscow & St. Petersburg, 1900-1920* (2012), pp. 346-373
- Punin, "The Monument to the Third International" (1920), pp. 311-315.
- Evreinov, "The Storming of the Winter Palace" (1924), pp. 50-54.

Thursday 3/18: Constructivism in the Laboratory and in Production

- Statements: Rodchenko and Stepanova, "Programme of the First Working Group of Constructivists," pp. 317-318; Gan, *Constructivism*, pp. 214-225; Brik, "Into Production!," (1923), pp. 37-38; Brik, "From Pictures to Textile Prints," (1924), pp. 244-249.
 - Bowlt, "5x5=25? The Science of Constructivism," in *Aesthetic Revolutions and Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Movements* (2015), pp. 42-79.
- Complete Quiz 5 in D2L by class time.

Week 11

Tuesday 3/23: Guest Speaker: Karen Kettering on Soviet Porcelain and the Decorative Arts

- Kettering, "Reading Revolutionary Types: Natalia Dan'ko and the Traditions of Russian Porcelain" (2008)
- *Do a quick online image search for "Natalia Dan'ko" to preview the kinds of objects Dr. Kettering will be speaking about and prepare one question you can ask Dr. Kettering about Soviet porcelain.*

→ Please submit your question as Reading Response 5 in D2L by class time.

Thursday 3/25: Photography, Photomontage, Factography

- Brik, "Photography versus Painting" (1926), pp. 454-457.
- Rodchenko, "Against the Synthetic Portrait, for the Snapshot" (1928), pp. 250-254.
- Klucis, "Photomontage as a New Problem in Agit Art" (1931), pp. 489-490.
- October – Association of Artistic Labor Declaration (1928), pp. 273-279.

Extra Credit: 3/25 at 6pm – Moscow Conceptualism Poetry Reading & Roundtable on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgBdBclRwO4>. To claim 1 point extra credit, watch and email me one idea, reflection, or take-away you had from the reading/roundtable.

Week 12

Tuesday 3/30: Socialist Realism & Art Under Stalin

- Bowlt, "The Stalin Style: The First Phase of Socialist Realism," in *Sots Art* (1986), pp. 16-23.

Thursday 4/01: In-Class Work Day – Revolutionary Art Assignment

Prepare by reviewing assignment description in D2L. You will submit the final draft to D2L by Fri. 4/09.

→ Unit 4 Review due Fri. 4/02 at 10pm

Week 13

Tuesday 4/06: Bringing the Revolution to Soviet Central Asia

- Watch: *The First Teacher* (1965, dir. Andrei Konchalovsky).
 - Northrop, "Envisioning Empire: Veils and Visual Revolution in Soviet Central Asia," in *Picturing Russia* (2008), pp. 162-167.
- Submit Reading Response 6 in D2L by class time. *In what ways did the desire to bring social and economic progress Central Asia support or contradict the Soviet policies of anti-imperialism and emancipation for all peoples?*

UNIT 5: [20c-21c] Late-Soviet Art and Politics

Questions to consider: *How did the Cold War condition how Soviet audiences understood Western art and how the West saw Soviet art? How did unofficial Soviet artists use the language of Socialist Realism to undermine its totalizing authority? How did unofficial Soviet artists create alternative modes of making and experiencing art outside the official Soviet art system.*

Thursday 4/08: Politics and Abstraction in the Thaw

- Interviews with Elia Belitina, Vladimir Nemukhin, Lydia Masterkova, Oskar Rabin from *Soviet Dissident Artists: Interviews after Perestroika*, pp. 36-43; 53-9; 84-9; 94-105.

→ Revolutionary Art Assignment due Fri. 4/09 at 10pm

Week 14

Tuesday 4/13: Sots Art

- Tupitsyn, "Sots Art: The Russian Deconstructive Force," in *Sots Art* (1986), pp. 4-15.
 - Kabakov, "Not Everyone Will Be Taken into the Future," (1983), pp. 57-59.
- Complete Quiz 6 in D2L by class time.

Thursday 4/15: Moscow Conceptualism

- "Pivovarov's Story"; "Kabakov's Story"; action descriptions, in *Collective Actions: Audience Recollections from the First Five Years* (2012), pp. 1-10; 63-69.
- Kalinsky, "Invisible Exhibitions: Performance & the Archive in Moscow Conceptualism," *Galerija Nova Newspapers* (2010), pp. 31-33.

Extra Credit: Friday, 4/16, 5pm— MSU College of Arts and Letters Signature Lecture: Ann Hamilton. I will share the zoom link when I have it. To claim 1 point of extra credit, email me one idea, thought, or take-away that came to you during this conversation.

Week 15

→ Unit 5 Review due Mon. 4/19 at 10pm

Tuesday 4/20 – Peer Review Day.

→ *Bring a draft of your paper to class for peer review. I will be available for consultation if you don't have a draft ready.*

Thursday 4/22: Study Day – NO CLASS

Exam Week (There is no exam in this course.)

→ Final Paper due Wed. 4/28 at 10pm