RUS 160: Russian/Soviet Jews: Dual identities in text, image and music

Шиффман 123: Mondays and Wednesdays 17:00 – 18:20
Schwartz Hall 110

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Время для консультаций: пон, ср, чет 13.00 – 14.00 или по договоренности

Course Description
The course introduces students to a number of Russian Jewish artists (writers, poets, film makers, visual artists and actors) who created in the Russian language and who made significant contributions to the 20th and 21st-century Soviet and Russian literature, cinema, theater, and music. Through analyses and discussions of texts, images and music created by Soviet Jews, students will explore the role Russian-speaking Jews played in shaping the Soviet and modern Russian culture, and the duality of their personal and creative identities. Students will also explore some works created by non-Jews about Jews in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia.

This course aims to help students sharpen their analytical and critical thinking skills in Russian through participation in class discussions and writing assignments. In addition, the course is taught as an oral intensive: students will practice and hone their public speaking skills as a result of several practice and one final presentations on a chosen topic. Advanced level of proficiency, as defined by the ACTFL scale [link], in the Russian language is required.

Texts
Students will be provided with copies of literary works or excerpts from larger works on LATTE. Course videos will be uploaded on LATTE.
Course Objectives
- to engage with works by several prominent Russian/Soviet Jewish writers, poets, film makers and artists as well as with works about Jews by non-Jewish authors;

- to understand the role these cultural figures played in shaping Russian culture of the 20th century (and to some extent, of the 21st century);

- to improve public speaking skills and develop oral Russian skills necessary to participate in debates in the Russian language;

- to increase vocabulary to the level necessary to understand complex interplay of linguistic and cultural factors found in the works of literature and film;

- to improve written skills (both generally and specifically in Russian).

Course Requirements
- Completion of assigned readings
- Participation in class discussions
- Completion of all pre- and post-reading/viewing assignments
- Acceptable midterm paper (at 90% level)
- Successful final presentation

Grading
- Class participation 30%
- Homework (incl. online lexical work) 20%
- Short presentations 10%
- Vocabulary quizzes 10%
- Midterm paper: one analytical writing piece 15%
- Final presentation 15%

Attendance is mandatory. More than 2 absences from class will result in the lowering of your final grade. Please note: There is no difference between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Exceptions to this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Attendance does not equal participation. In order to earn a respectable grade in this class, you need to be prepared to discuss texts, films and images and actively participate in class discussions. If you are merely present, your grade in the category "participation" will be 2 out of 5.
Part of your class participation responsibility is the completion of a daily short dictation work. This exercise will serve as a warm-up for every lesson this semester and will focus on a word or a phrase that is particularly colorful or descriptive. If you miss a class, you won’t be able to make-up for this activity.

**Homework** will consists of several components. You are expected

- to complete all assigned readings and viewings ahead of the class with time to spare in order to...
  - to post 2-4 discussion questions on LATTE which will be used to guide our discussions in class. Your questions need to be open-ended and thought-provoking. In preparing your questions, think about answers to them (you must be prepared to offer your opinion in class in response to your own questions);
  - to make an entry into the course glossary on LATTE with new words and expressions you saw/heard during reading/viewing. I expect that each student may find at least 10 new words or expressions in any given reading (and most likely in films as well). You should provide English translations or Russian definitions. **Before you post your entries, you should check if an entry of this word already exists.** If the entry exists in English, add Russian translation, and vice versa. If nothing can be added, you should look for another word to add. You should use trustworthy sources for definition of your words and concepts and provide multiple meanings of polysemantic words. Be sure add connotations the word has in Russian (e.g., палач is not a killer in the sense “homicidal murderer,” rather he is an executioner);
- to study the words in the glossary (you will have regular quizzes on the words you post).

**Short presentations**
You will prepare and deliver a short (5-10 minute) presentation in class regarding the author of the reading/viewing assignment. Students will take turns making these short presentations. Depending on the size of the class students are expected to make 2 or 3 such presentations during the semester. You will be required to send your presentations to me at least 2 days ahead for comments and corrections. Your presentations need to be polished (without mistakes, logically organized and well-delivered). Students will receive individualized feedback for each of the practice presentations, which will include strategies on how to improve for the final presentation.

**Vocabulary quizzes** will be based on words and expressions all students and the professor entered into the LATTE glossary up to the week prior to the quiz. The dates of the quizzes will be announced ahead of time.

You will work on **analytical writing** throughout the semester by taking 10-15
minutes every week to do free-writing on the most thought-provoking questions or issues that were discussed or raised in class that week. You will receive an immediate assistance on any questions of grammar, spelling or punctuation. The midterm paper will consist of short essays based on these free-writing episodes. You will receive feedback on your work so that it goes through several revisions before you submit your final version for a grade.

**Final Presentation** successfully, you will be required to do additional research outside class time. This research can be carried out in English; however, all presentations must be done in Russian. You will receive more detailed instructions for the final presentation by mid-semester.

You will be required to meet with the instructor twice in preparation for the presentation to discuss strategies for a successful delivery and the language of your presentation. You will receive feedback on your presentation both from the instructor and your fellow students at the end of the semester.

**What to do if you need extra help**
Please do not wait until problems start piling up. If you need another explanation of a particular concept or want to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, conversation, seek help from your instructor (Irina Dubinina) during office hours or by appointment, Recitation Hour instructor (Galina Gazizullina) during her office hours, and the BUGS tutor (Yan Shneyderman) by appointment. You are highly encouraged to practice the language with him. He can help with pronunciation practice, homework troubles, vocabulary learning, etc.

**Other Useful Contacts**
The undergraduate advisor for the Russian language program is professor David Powelstock (pstock@brandeis.edu). He will help you plan out your Russian Studies major or minor and guide you in questions related to study abroad credits.

The Russian program’s **Undergraduate Representatives** for the 2016-2017 academic year are Linda Liu (lliu18@brandeis.edu) and Andrew Baker (abaker31@brandeis.edu). Both of them are majoring in Russian Studies. Andrew started learning Russian in high school; Linda started Russian at Brandeis. The UDRs can answer your questions about choosing a Russian major or minor, professors in the Russian program, etc.

**Information on Russia-related Events on Campus**
There are two list-serves you may want to join.

1) Brandeis has a very active Russian Club. If you are interested in participating in events organized by the club, please sign up for their e-mail list. (Find them on the Brandeis website)
2) If you are interested in receiving messages with announcements about Russian language and culture related events as well as about courses offered in the Russian Studies program, please sign up for the Russian list serve (put your e-mail on the Bio Info Form)

Links to these listserves are also available at the program’s website: http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/grall/russian/

Study-Abroad and Other Related Opportunities
Brandeis has a number of approved programs for studying Russian in the Russian Federation. You will be able to choose between summer programs, semester-long and year-long programs. Brandeis Russian Language Program recommends that you have at least 4 semesters of Russian before a study-abroad program. You are well on your way toward this goal! If you are interested in going abroad, please talk to your instructor and visit the Study Abroad office. There are also several summer intensive Russian language programs in the U.S. The Russian program’s website lists a few of them. If you would like to know more about these programs, please talk to your instructor.

Statement on Brandeis Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person, be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner, without proper acknowledgement of that source.

Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section Three of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure of the course or on the assignment, or in suspension or dismissal from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your responsibility to ask your instructor for clarification.

Notice of Accommodation
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

SPECIAL NOTE: It has become a tradition of the Russian program to organize a Russian evening in celebration of the International Women’s Day on March 8th. I would like to invite our class to participate in this evening (it is really meant as a show of student talent). Please consult with your friends and let me know if there is a project you’d like to present. It can be a song, a dance, a skit, an imovie, a poetry reading, etc. As a group, we will be singing a song (together with other students of Russian from other classes).
"Through documenting memories and stories of the older generation, the past comes to life in the present, filled with vivid images of people, places, and events. ...we learn about ... traditions — the foodways, celebrations, customs, music, occupations, and skills — that are a vital part of daily experience. These stories, memories, and traditions are powerful expressions of community life and values. They anchor us in a larger whole, connecting us to the past, grounding us firmly in the present, giving us a sense of identity and roots, belonging and purpose."

Margaret Hunt, "The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide", 2003

You are invited to participate in this supplemental experiential practicum course designed to provide you with hands-on experience conducting oral histories fieldwork at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center and being engaged in a much needed community service benefiting Russian-speaking elders. The practicum is based on the principles of experiential learning (EL), which emphasizes connecting the knowledge received in the classroom to real-life issues that exist in our society, and allowing students to reflect on the knowledge gained from real-life experiences.

The project aims to bridge the intergenerational gap between Russian-speaking seniors and youth in order to generate the exchange of valuable wisdom and strengthen the Russian-speaking community.

Course Objectives

• Provide valuable community service to elderly Russian speakers
• Document memories and stories of the generation that witnessed the development and downfall of the Soviet Union and survived the Great Patriotic War
• Learn techniques for collecting oral histories and conducting focused interviews
• Appreciate differences in values and world views
• Engage in real-life relationships and fieldwork
• Gain experience working with vulnerable populations and learn ’rules of engagement’ with geriatric patients
• Challenge your powers of observation, analysis and creative thinking.
• Have the chance to work intimately with the instructor and a smaller group of dedicated students.
• Use the experience to connect what you are studying academically with what is happening "on the ground"
• Earn two credits while building your resume.
The 2-credit Experiential Learning (EL) Practicum course is available as an option, by application, to students enrolled in the base course of Russian 160: Russian/Soviet Jews: Dual Identities in Text, Image and Music and students who completed the advanced Russian 106 course in the fall semester of 2013.

**Course Structure and Requirements**

- students will work in pairs with one elderly resident at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center in Roslindale, MA;

- students are expected to spend an average of 2-3 hours per week of hands-on work, serving as conversation partners the elders and conducting interviews with those who are willing to share their life stories. Trips to the HRC will take place starting during the week of January 27 and will end on April 14th (a total of 9-10 trips to the HRC);

- in addition, students will have a one hour meeting with the instructor and/or TA on a bi-weekly basis to discuss and reflect on their experiences at the HRC. The meetings will commence one week after the first scheduled visit to the HRC;

- students will record their interviews and transcribe them later in order to document the oral history;

- students will produce collectively a final project which can be a bilingual book documenting life histories of several interviewed HRC residents or a particular aspect of their lives (e.g., experiences of fighting the Nazis and/or surviving the Nazi occupation of the Soviet Union, experiences of anti-Semitism, attitudes about high culture in the USSR, differences between Russian and American cultures, the experiences of immigration, cooking wisdom, etc.).