

Post-Soviet Communication
MW 12:30am - 1:45pm, Fraser 106

Instructor: Dr. Irina Six

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Office Hours: or by appointments

Course Description

Gorbachev's "perestroika", "glasnost" launched the unprecedented trustworthiness in communication and exchange of ideas between Russia and the West. The post-Soviet country experienced a huge and immediate influx of western style of communication that came with business development, mass media advances, marketing, and advertising. Though initially an attraction, the novelties started to instantly or gradually clash with traditional Russian communication patterns and practices. The mutual openness with the West has gradually evolved into miscommunication frustrating to both Russians and Westerners.

The course is designed to provide students with a general framework of principal categories that formulate the current Russian discourse. Instead of offering a historical survey of key "events," the course focuses on the major variables essential for Russian communication. The structural backbone of the course are the key concepts that are frequently spoken in Russian mass media, cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. The lectures and readings drawn from anthropology, history, journalism, linguistics, sociology, politics, literature, films, and popular culture are intended to develop a framework for understanding both Russian and American perspectives.

Course Prerequisites

Intellectual curiosity and interest in foreign cultures, mass media and communication. Students do *not* need to know Russian or have taken courses in journalism or communication to participate in this course. However, this course contributes to any of these KU programs.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Examine the evolution of Soviet and post-Soviet traditional (newspapers, magazines, TV, cinema, radio) and new (Internet, digital broadcasting) mass media segments
- 2) Evaluate the structure of Russia's media industry
- 3) Assess press freedoms in post-Soviet Russia
- 4) Reflect on the cross-cultural differences in interpersonal communication
- 5) Develop some skills and concepts essential for successful communication in Russian culture

The course is geared towards advancing:

- Intercultural communicative capabilities
- Independent study and information management abilities

Course Components

The course is organized in 12 Lessons. Each Lesson examines one aspect of post-Soviet communication and consists mainly of 5 components:

1. Lectures and Discussions

Each Lesson will include in-class instructor's presentation and discussions that provide space for examining the concepts. Class discussions will revolve around reading assignments of primary and secondary sources as well as around case-studies of texts and phenomena presenting Russianness in daily life.

2. Readings

For each Lesson, you will read assigned texts, articles, book chapters, or watch videos and documentaries posted on the BB under "Required Reading" sections. The course emphasizes short and dense (rather than long and light) readings. Read the assigned materials at your own pace, but keep in mind that readings should be completed before the class it is assigned for.

3. Supplementary Materials

You may also use videos and texts provided for each lesson under "*Supplementary Materials*", intended to help you understand the nature of the discussed problems, offer possible solutions, and benefit in writing your weekly *Essays* and *Final Project: Russian Perception*.

4. Essay

In the end of each Lesson, you will have to submit an essay-type summary of the week's topic (900 - 1000 words excluding footnotes and bibliography). Your 13 Essays will be graded on both content and form. You have to demonstrate your ability to write clearly and concisely and effectively use all the information you reserved in class discussions and in required (and supplementary) reading. The essays are intended to enhance your writing skills.

All *Essays* must be conformed with MLA standards and submitted through SafeAssign via Blackboard by 11pm CT on the day assigned. SafeAssign is a service that is designed to prevent plagiarism by comparing the content of papers to a very broad database of other student papers and materials on the web. The Rubrics for written papers are posted on the BB.

5. Final Project: "Russian Perspective"

In Weeks 15 - 16, students are expected to present their *Final Project: Russian Perspective* (100 points total). The project should be based on American and:

- at least three Russian sources available in English (original sources in Russian are highly welcomed for students with good Russian reading skills).
- one of the 'sources' could also students' interviews with Russian peers, colleagues, nationals, and/or with individuals able to present their expert opinion.

The project is designed to bring together all the knowledge that students have completed through independent study and communication. It is supposed to be implemented in three evaluated step :

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| 1) Topic Report | 15 points (due on week 8) |
| 2) Structure Report | 15 points (due on week 10) |
| 3) Project Paper and Presentation | 70 points (due on week 15-16) |

For the deadline of each component, see the schedule.

Topic Report (450 – 500 words) defines a mass media and communication problem related to post-Soviet Russia. Lectures and Reading are supposed to give you some background to support your topic initiative, however you will be assessed on the originality and significance of the problem and on how you approach it.

Structure Report (450 – 500 words) speaks to how you “learn by doing” and basically includes three components:

- Preliminary research of the problem (5 points),
- List of media sources/academic articles/actual communication you are planning to use. Not less than 3 sources should be of Russian origin (5 points)
- Mode of presentation: ppts, recorded or videotaped interviews, YouTube clips, etc. (5 points).

You are encouraged to present a plan on how you will examine your problem in actual interview with Russian peers, nationals, and experts in Russian studies. You are expected to present a Russian perspective to a certain problem. You will be assessed on the originality and creativity of your approach.

Project Paper (1900 – 2000 words) summarizes your topic research and the arguments presented in mass media and in your interview communication. In class Presentation contains the explanation of the problem, the results of your research and preferably some visuals to be demonstrated in class. It might contain a Skype or personal communication outcome, video-clips of “interview” recordings.

Required Reading:

- Each Lesson has a list of **Required Reading** accessible via BB.

- Russia: a concise history / Ronald Hingley. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Components of Course Evaluation

Attendance	20%
Discussion Questions	25%
Essays	25%
Final Project	30%
Total	(100 %)

Course Make-up, Late Work and Extra-credit Policy

1) Extra CREDIT: You may participate in any Cultural Encounters to get at extra points. Up to 5% of your grade is available as extra credit.

2) LATE WORK: All assignments deadlines that must be met that week. If you are ready to submit *earlier*, that is perfectly fine. Submission *after* the specified date and time, however, will affect your grade.

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary, although no major changes will be made.