

Russia's Wars on Page and Screen
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Prof. Emily Van Buskirk
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Germanic, Russian, and East European Languages &
Literatures
Comparative Literature
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Class schedule:

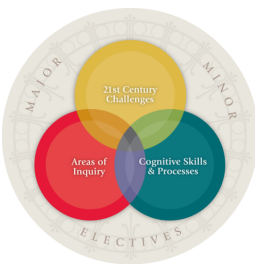
Mon & Thurs. 12:10-1:30pm
Frelinghuysen Hall B1

My office hours:

Thursdays 1:45-2:45pm in person
@ AB West #4121

Also by appt. on Zoom at
[RUZoom-VanBuskirk](#)

As historian Drew Faust has noted, “Only a story of purpose and legitimation can transform random violence into what human convention has designated as war.” In this course we study the experience of “war” as described in Russian- and Ukrainian-language short stories, novellas, poetry, diaries, memoir, and film, from the nineteenth century to Russia’s present war of aggression in Ukraine. How do narratives give voice to experiences of war, and represent what these experiences signify? A special focus of the course will be the Second World War, in which the Soviet Union triumphed while suffering unspeakable losses (roughly 26 million deaths). We will seek to understand not only how this war was experienced, but also how its memory cult has developed, and how it has lately been instrumentalized in reference to Russia’s current invasion of Ukraine. We will also reflect on poetry and prose by Ukrainian and Russian authors in our own day, documenting and representing the largest land war to afflict Europe since 1945. Throughout the course, the topic of war will serve as a window onto culture, values, memory, and literary politics. ***All readings and discussions in English. No prerequisites. Fulfills WCr.***



Writing and Communication goal WCr:

- WCr. Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision.

Course-specific learning goals:

- To understand how individuals (survivors, witnesses, subsequent generations) interpreted the experiences of war in Russian/Soviet history, and how writers and filmmakers represented these experiences.
- To study issues of narrative, memory, and the formation of cultural myths, through diverse modes of cultural production about the war: literature, journalism, song, film, painting, etc.

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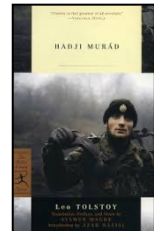
- To learn about literary institutions, censorship, and propaganda.
- To understand how writers, filmmakers, and citizens are processing the contemporary war in Ukraine, and to place contemporary responses in historical context.
- To develop, through analysis of films and literary text, discipline-specific writing skills in standard English, including the ability to revise writing in response to feedback.

Course requirements and grade percentages

Attendance	10%
In-class participation	10%
Close reading paper in class on Feb. 5	10%
Peer editing feedback worksheet	5%
6 quizzes on readings/films (multiple choice)	10%
First paper: first version in-class on Mar. 5; Revisions in class on Mar. 26	25%
6-7-page Final Paper: First draft due April 20, final draft due May 11	30%

Course materials

READINGS: The following required book is on order at the Rutgers University Bookstore: Lev Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, trans. Maude (ISBN 9780812967111)



All other readings will be available as pdfs on Canvas. If at all possible, **print them** so that you can easily mark them up with notes, and so that you'll have them at your disposal during class.

FILMS: Below is a list of films you will be required to watch for this course. They will be available to stream via Canvas

Commissar (1967), dir. Askoldov
Alexander Nevsky (1938), dir. Eisenstein
The Cranes are Flying (1957), dir. Kalatozov
Ivan's Childhood (1962), dir. Tarkovsky
Blockade (2006), dir. Loznitsa
Prisoner of the Mountains (1996), dir. S. Bodrov
Tangerines (2013), dir. Urushadze
20 Days in Mariupol, dir. Chernov (2023) or *Broken Ties* (2022), dir. Andrey Loshak

Schedule of assignments and class meetings:

You are expected to complete any assigned reading by the date indicated; likewise, watch the films before the class for which they have been assigned. Please take notes as you read (or watch), and come to each class with questions, reactions, and ideas to share and discuss.

Thurs. Jan. 22 Course introduction

War, Truth, and Narrative

Mon. Jan. 26 Lev Tolstoy, "The Raid" (1852)
Yuri Lotman, *Non-Memoirs* (short excerpt)

Thurs. Jan. 29 Tolstoy, "Sebastopol in December" (1855) and
"Sebastopol in May" (1855)

The Russian Civil War

Mon. Feb. 2 NO CLASS (Prof. out sick)

Thurs. Feb. 5 Isaac Babel, stories from *The Red Cavalry* (1923-26)
Reading Quiz 1

Mon. Feb. 9 Watch: *Commissar*, dir. Askoldov (1967) (110 min.)
Read: Vasily Grossman, "In the Town of Berdichev" (1934)

The Great Patriotic War

Thurs. Feb. 12 In-Class Writing Assignment

Mon. Feb. 16 NO CLASS (Prof. out sick)

Thurs. Feb. 19 Wartime song: Holy War (1941), New Soviet State Anthem (1944), "Katiusha" (1938)
Propaganda posters ("The Motherland is Calling" and others)
Poetry: Konstantin Simonov, "Wait for Me" (1941), "Smolensk Roads" (1941), "Kill Him" (1942), Anna Akhmatova, "Courage" (1942)
OPTIONAL: chapters from *World War II: A Very Short Introduction*, material from Soviet History website:
<http://soviethistory.msu.edu/>

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- Mon. Feb. 23 Film: Sergei Eisenstein, *Alexander Nevsky* (1938/111 min.)
Recommended: Robert Rosenstone, "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age" (45-79)
Reading Quiz 2
- Thurs. Feb. 26 Rivka Rubin, "The Wall"
Andrei Platonov, "The Return" (1946)
Recommended: William Fuller, "The Great Fatherland War and Late Stalinism, 1941-1953" (374-405)
- Mon. Mar. 2 Svetlana Alexievich, *War's Unwomanly Face*, 62-92, 103
"Revising for Clarity" from *A Short Guide to College Writing*
- Thurs. Mar. 5 In-class essay

Changing Representations in the Thaw

- Mon. Mar. 9 Film: *The Cranes are Flying* (1957), dir. Kalatozov (95 min.)

City under Siege: The Blockade of Leningrad

- Thurs. Mar. 12 Lydia Ginzburg, *Notes from the Blockade* (1942-1962-1983), Part 1
Reading Quiz 3

***** SPRING BREAK *****

- Mon. Mar. 23 Poetry: Olga Berggol'ts, "Conversation with a Neighbor" (1941) "A Wish" (1943); from *Written in the Dark*: Gennady Gor, "Don't eat of my leg," Pavel Zal'tsman, "Growl," "Dinnertime Ode to Chub"

- Thurs. Mar. 26 In-class revisions of essay

Afghanistan

- Mon. Mar. 30 Svetlana Alexievich, *Zinky Boys* (excerpts)
Reading Quiz 4

Chechnya/the Caucasus

- Thurs. Apr. 2 Tolstoy, "Prisoner of the Caucasus" (1872)



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Vladimir Makanin, "The Prisoner from the Caucasus"
(1994)

Mon. Apr. 6

Film: *Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996),
dir. Sergei Bodrov (98 min.)



Thurs. Apr. 9

Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad* (1911), up to 65

Mon. Apr. 13

Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, 65-149
Reading Quiz 5

Thurs. Apr. 16

Sadulaev, "One Swallow Does not make a Summer"

Mon. Apr. 20

Tangerines (2013) dir. Urushadze
Final Papers: First draft due

War in Ukraine, 2014-Present

Thurs. Apr. 23

Stanislav Aseyev, *In Isolation* (excerpts)
Poetry of Lyuba Yakimchuk and Halyna Kruk

Mon. Apr. 27

Peer editing workshop
Reading Quiz 6

Thurs. Apr. 30

Final reflections, student evaluations
Choice: *20 Days in Mariupol*, dir. Chernov (2023)
or Andrey Loshak (dir.), *Broken Ties* (2022)
<https://vimeo.com/748872750>

Mon. May 4

One-on-one meetings on final papers in lieu of class

COURSE POLICIES

Online course materials

Please note that our course has its own website on <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>. You can log on using your Net ID and password. If the course does not appear as one of your tabs, please search and add it or contact me and I will grant you access. Many of the readings, and all of the assignments will be available via Canvas. **Please print out these readings.**

Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

Participation

Much of our course will be discussion-based. Your active participation is therefore a significant and regular assignment in the course. In discussion you will be able to test out ideas and interpretations, engage with your peers, ask questions, and practice literary analysis and critical thinking. After each class I will grade your participation for that day using the following (quite generous in my view) scale:

Outstanding	Student contributes deep, thoughtful comments that change the course of the class discussion (while being respectful of and giving time for others' voices)	100%
Full	Student makes at least one substantive comment or question	95%
Partial	A student interjects a very minor comment or question, or demonstrates active engagement/attentiveness	85%
Poor	Student makes no comments, or is obviously disengaged	75%
Zero	Disruptive or inappropriate engagement, or class absence, or use of electronic devices	0%

Devices

Phones should be kept off your desks and out of sight. I encourage the use of old-fashioned pencil/pen and paper for note taking. Studies have shown that hand-written note taking enhances learning. Keeping digital distractions to a minimum improves our ability to concentrate. Laptop use is discouraged, and if you must use yours, I expect you to turn off the wifi. On certain days or for certain portions of the class, I reserve the right to require students to close laptops entirely. My aim will be to help you learn and interact with the class material and engage in fruitful discussions. Please see me if you have any concerns.

Reading quizzes

There will be 6 short (multiple-choice) reading quizzes during the course of the semester. These are designed as "check-ups" to see whether you have been keeping up with the course reading assignments. My intention is to make them easy for those who have been doing the reading. I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

In-class close reading paper

Your first paper will be a close reading assignment that you complete in class, in a blue book. I will provide detailed instructions in advance. There will be no make-ups, except in case of medical illness or serious emergency.

First paper assignment

I will post detailed instructions about each longer paper in advance of the due date. For the first paper, you will draft both the initial paper and the revision in class. This assignment will be open-book (you may use notes and printed materials, but no devices).

Final paper assignment

I will hand out detailed instructions about the final paper 2 weeks in advance of the due date for the first draft. You will be encouraged to design your own topic; I will also provide prompts for those of you who prefer this.

You will be assigned a partner, and we will have a peer editing workshop in class to exchange feedback. You will fill out a **peer editing worksheet**, which you will hand in.

I will provide materials (websites, excerpts from manuals, exercises) to troubleshoot specific writing issues throughout the semester. You may be asked to work with writing samples from essays produced in this course, distributed anonymously. This is not meant to be taken as a personalized critique, but rather a learning opportunity for all students in the class who have similar issues.

Each longer essay (i.e. not the close reading paper) will be submitted in an initial and revised version. After the initial submission, students will receive written feedback on the following: 1) Thesis, analysis, and argumentation; 2) Evidencing and use of sources; 3) Structure of the essay; 4) Grammar and Style. Your overall grade for each essay will combine points or grades for the initial and revised submission. The grade for the final essay will take into account not only the quality of the final product, but also the degree of improvement between the two submissions of the essay. In other words, the overall grade will reflect not only the quality of the revised essay, but also your effectiveness to responding to suggested revisions.

Academic Freedom

Faculty and students alike are free to express their viewpoints at appropriate times in class, including perspectives that differ from most in the Rutgers University community. Students may be exposed to views they find challenging, uncomfortable, or distressing. But, since Rutgers is a public institution, First Amendment speech protections apply. Legally, feelings of discomfort are not sufficient to restrict speech. Pedagogically, exposing people to different ideas—even challenging their most deeply held beliefs—is a feature, not a flaw, of academic life. Free inquiry is essential to a robust learning environment. Students and professors are at our best—and best able to contribute to society—when we are exposed to a wide range of challenging ideas.

Academic Integrity

Rutgers University takes academic dishonesty very seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to):

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Aiding others in committing a violation or allowing others to use your work
- Failure to cite sources correctly
- Fabrication
- Using another person's ideas or words without attribution—re-using a previous assignment
- Unauthorized collaboration
- Sabotaging another student's work

If in doubt, please consult me.

Please review the [Academic Integrity Policy](#)

When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at [Academic Integrity Policy](#), and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

SPECIAL NOTE ON Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy: In concert with Rutgers' code of conduct, which mandates "[that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations](#)," this course has been designed to promote your learning, critical thinking, skills, and intellectual development without reliance on unauthorized technology including chatbots and other forms of "artificial intelligence" (AI). Although you may use search engines, spell-check, and simple grammar-check in crafting your assignments, you will be asked to submit your written work with the following statement. *"I certify that this assignment represents my own work. I have not used any unauthorized or unacknowledged assistance or sources in completing it including free or commercial systems or services offered on the internet or text generating systems embedded into software."* Assignments that do not include this statement will not receive credit. Please consult with me if you have any questions about the permissible use of technology in this class. (I have adopted this statement from the Rutgers AI Council recommendations.)

To be clear, then:

- The use of generative AI tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is prohibited.
- The knowing use of generative AI tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of, an

examination, term test, assignment, or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

- Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of completing assignments in this course.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is strictly prohibited in all course assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course. This includes ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating.

(This language was adopted from the [University of Toronto](#) website.)

If I suspect that your text was completely or substantially written by an AI text generator, I may:

- share it with a colleague in the department for a second opinion
- request your oral explanation of what you've written
- ask you to redo all or part of the assignment
- assign you a failing grade on the assignment

Any unacknowledged use of text generators or other AI is considered a violation of academic integrity and will be treated accordingly, with consequences including referral to the Office of Student Conduct, a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and/or other disciplinary action.

Rutgers honor pledge

Make sure to include the Rutgers honor pledge on all of your papers and major assignments:

I certify that this assignment represents my own work. I have not used any unauthorized or unacknowledged assistance or sources in completing it including free or commercial systems or services offered on the internet or text generating systems embedded into software.

Type or sign your name after. Assignments that do not include this statement will not receive credit.

Turnitin plagiarism detection

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [Turnitin.com](#) (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Canvas) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the [Turnitin.com](#) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the [Turnitin.com](#) service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the [Turnitin.com](#) site.

Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

Religious observance and athletics

It is the policy of the university to excuse without penalty students who are absent because of religious observance or participation in intercollegiate athletics, and to allow the makeup of work missed because of such absences. A student absent from an examination because of required religious observance will be given an opportunity to make up the examination without penalty.

Email, Grading and Response Time

Please use the Canvas site and Inbox to send me messages, or send messages to evanbusk@greell.rutgers.edu. **(I do not use scarletmail!)** I will reply to e-mails within 24 hours on school days. I will respond to a weekend email on a Monday.

For weekly assignments (i.e. quizzes), you can generally expect feedback within 7 days. For exams and papers, you can expect feedback within 14 days.

Late papers

Late papers will be marked down by 5 points per week. If you have a valid excuse, please talk to me about it and I will waive this penalty.

Grades

Throughout the semester, you will receive number grades. Your final letter grade will be computed using the following conversion scale: A = 90-100 B+ = 85-89 B = 80-84 C+ = 75-79 C = 70-74 D=65-69 F=64 and below

Intellectual property

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, syllabi, visual presentations, recorded lectures, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Copyright

Almost all original work is the intellectual property of its authors. The authors may hold copyrights in these works, which are protected by U.S. statutes. Copying this work or posting it online without the permission of the author may violate the author's rights. More importantly, these works are the product of the author's efforts; respect for these efforts and for the author's intellectual property rights is an important value that members of the university community take seriously.

Additional resources

For general **emergency assistance**, please see this page:

<http://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/support-students/emergency-assistance/>

STUDENT-WELLNESS SERVICES:

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.