

CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES:

BETWEEN POST-COMMUNISM AND POST-MODERNISM

Course leader	Dr Polly Jones
Credit value	8 ECTS
Runs	Second term
Teaching & Learning Methods	Lectures/seminars, private study
Assessment	100% coursework

This course is assessed 100% through a coursework assignment/essay of 5000 words, on one of the approaches/methodologies studied during the course. This may be related to the student's dissertation topic, if the dissertation falls within the scope of literature and culture.

Rationale

This course aims to introduce students to a variety of cultural studies methodologies and literary theories that are of particular relevance to the study of contemporary post-communist culture, including: post-modernism; post-colonial theory; gender theory; diaspora and globalisation. As case studies are taken from contemporary Russian and eastern European culture of the post-communist era, the course will also serve as a survey of literary and other cultural developments in the region since 1985. Topics include: invented tradition, nostalgia and kitsch in re-defining national identity; post-colonialism: i) Russian and soviet empires after communism, ii) re-defining centre and periphery in eastern Europe; post-modernism and post-communism; high and low culture: the Russian *detektiv* between market and genre; gender and sexuality; diaspora and de-territorialization: Russian-language literature in Israel

Aims: The course aims at enabling students to:

1. acquire confidence and competence in researching contemporary culture, with a focus on developing methodological approaches to the particular complexities of the post-communist case
2. Enhance the ability to use and evaluate texts and other source materials both critically and empathetically
3. Apply a wide selection of methodologies to the study of literature and culture, combining rigorous close reading of primary texts with the judicious application of cultural studies methodologies and theories

Objectives: By the end of the course, students will have acquired:

1. A thorough understanding of cultural studies methodologies and of a wide range of theoretical approaches to the study of contemporary, post-communist culture in particular
2. The ability to choose and develop topics of research relating to Central and Eastern Europe and within the contemporary period covered
3. An enhanced understanding of the complexity and richness of Russian and East European culture since the collapse of Soviet communism

Topics

1. Invented tradition, nostalgia and kitsch
2. Post-colonialism: Russian and Soviet empires after communism

3. Postcommunism and the Postmodern
4. Postcolonialism and Posthabsburgism
5. High and low culture: the Russian detektiv between market and genre
6. Gender and sexuality in contemporary culture
7. Diaspora and De-territorialisation
8. Bilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Globalisation

Core/preliminary reading

D. Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (London, 1980)

S. Daring, *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London, 1999)

C. Kelly, D. Shepherd, *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1998)

N. Condee, *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual culture in late twentieth-century Russia* (Bloomington, 1995)

S. Lovell and B. Menzel (eds), *Reading for Entertainment in Contemporary Russia: Post-Soviet Popular Literature in Historical Perspective* (Munich, 2005)