

RUSS 4360, Fall 2026
Russian Culture through the Prism of Song

In this course, songs are both the object of study and a stepping off point for broader discussion and writing as we explore key issues in the last 80+ years of Russian and Soviet culture and history. Materials are presented in a specially designed computer interface. Baseline advanced learners will find rich annotation to help support a sophisticated understanding of the songs, while a broad range of contextual content in various media is provided to support directed exploration of the broader cultural context by more fluent reader/listeners who have spent significant time abroad. Songs run the gamut from 1930s popular music to bards, rock and other contemporary forms.

Topics to be covered include the fate of the capable individual in Brezhnev's Russia, Gypsy song in Russian culture, Soviet official attitudes toward jazz and other Western musical forms, as well as exploration of the subcultures that formed around them, the history of the Soviet/Russian national anthem, ironic strategies for challenging official discourse, the Soviet experience during World War II, reflections of Putin's Russia in the songs of the Chechen war, prayer and religion in Russia and the Soviet Union, reflections of camp life, the Soviet-era cult of the hero and its reverberations (Gagarin), Glasnost-era rock music and youth alienation, the fate of communism and communists in a post-communist era, satire and its relation to power, the problem of compromise or non-compromise of principles in choosing a career, the problem of emigration, and songs reacting to the war in Ukraine.

Our objectives are improvement in 1) oral and aural proficiency (with a special focus on listening for detail), as well as 2) reading and writing proficiency in Russian at the advanced level; 3) the ability to present in class for 10 minutes on the cultural context, sense and significance of an iconic song; 4) in-depth knowledge of select focus areas of Russian culture, 5) sophisticated critical reflection on the complexity and context of songs as cultural objects, and 6) development of ability to compare perspectives and practices both within Russian/Soviet culture and between Russian and American cultures.

Course materials can be accessed at no cost through a dedicated interface available at clsp.gatech.edu (the Critical Languages Song Project).

Access: GTRUSS2026 // Pesnia2026!

<u>Course requirements:</u>	<u>Weighting</u>
Attendance and active, prepared participation in class discussions	30%
Compositions/essays (eight)	40%
Oral presentation	10%
Final essay	20%

Attendance policy/Participation grade

The participation grade is given based on active participation in discussions, facilitated by careful reading/viewing of the works to be discussed. **Three unexcused absences, and every two unexcused absences thereafter, will lower your assigned grade for participation by one letter grade (i.e., your third, fifth, etc. unexcused absence).** Participation grades will be assigned as follows: A – engaged, regular, thoughtful participation which demonstrates substantial engagement with the course materials prior to class; B – some participation, demonstrating acquaintance with course materials prior to class, but participation is irregular; C – present, but little or no active participation. Students will be informed of their current participation grade before the withdrawal deadline and at the end of the semester.

Essays

There is a selection of topic-based prompts for each writing assignment. These range from suggestions for analysis of texts and problems to parameters for creative writing or personal reflections. Undergraduate students are expected to write 2/3 to 1 typewritten pages on the basis of a given prompt. Eight of these essays will be assigned over the course of the semester, four of these with the opportunity to revise an initial draft based on feedback.

An A will be assigned to work which is thoughtful, creative, soundly argued (if the assignment is analytical) and organized, and demonstrates appropriate effort given the individual's language level and background.

Oral presentation

Students will make a 10-minute presentation to the class on the historical/social context, meaning and artistic qualities of one glasnost'-era song. Presentations must be spoken, not read, and will be graded on content (40%); presentation skills (30%); language (20%); and quality of visual aids (10%). (These are visual aids, not slides with text to be read.) No more than 2-3 minutes maybe taken up with musical examples.

Final paper

This final paper is comparable to the weekly essays in terms of text-type (a choice of essayistic, analytical, or creative writing), but more ambitious in scope (3-5 pages depending on the individual's language proficiency).

Spell-checkers, Google or Yandex Translate (or other comparable supports) are not allowed for any assignment or assessment.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

It is not acceptable to use AI for any purpose on any assignment. Thus, the use of AI on assignments would constitute false claims of performance, an honor code violation.

Institute activity absences

Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. <http://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on an assignment, project or exam will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Campus Resources for Students

The Center for Academic Success (success.gatech.edu/) offers a variety of academic support services to help students succeed academically at Georgia Tech (e.g. tutoring, peer-led study groups, study skills, etc.).

OMED: Educational Services (omed.gatech.edu/) is the unit charged by Georgia Tech with the retention, development, and performance of the complete student learner who is

traditionally underrepresented: African American, Hispanic, and Native American. OMED's programming and academic support services are aimed at equipping all students with strategies to navigate the Georgia Tech environment.

Support for Students in Distress

Counseling Center: counseling.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2575

Dean of Students (Student Life): studentlife.gatech.edu/ 404-385-8772

Student financial assistance: star.studentlife.gatech.edu/

GT Police: police.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2500

Stamps Health Services: health.gatech.edu/ 404-894-1420