

## ML 2500 C, Fall 2026

### The Russian Twentieth Century in Literature and Film

Russia's dramatic twentieth century, its historical upheavals and the totalitarian pressures it placed on artistic creation, both stifled and catalyzed creativity. Adversity, obstacles and loss formed a backdrop and impetus for powerful, evocative and original works of art. In this course, we will consider each of the major periods in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union in the 20th century, and, in these contexts, examine representative works of prose, drama or film.

#### Course objectives/learning outcomes:

- Students will learn the skill of close “reading” of written and film texts (including developing the vocabulary necessary to speak with precision about film art);
- Students will develop the ability to critically analyze multi-layered texts both orally and in writing;
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of a series of key issues (historical, social, political and cultural) and conceptual constructs around which Russian and Soviet identity constructed itself in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Students will reconstruct authorial point of view, asking what questions the films and books pose, how they pose them, on what terms they ask to be analyzed, and what frameworks they present for analysis.
- Students will analyze how their own cultural template influences observation and interpretation of behaviors and issues in the target culture in a variety of contexts.
- Students will discuss how ethical problems are implicated in narrative works;
- Students will explore how “form” or style in art conveys content and meaning;
- and Students will practice and refine the skills of extended thinking and writing about art.

#### Required Books:

Chekhov, Anton. *The Essential Plays* (Penguin Random House; ISBN: 9780375761348).

Babel, Isaac. *Red Cavalry* (Norton; ISBN: 9780393324235).

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *Master and Margarita* (ISBN: 9781419756504). Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor translation.

Solzhenytsin, Alexander. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (FSG Classics; ISBN: 9781466839410)

The books are available for purchase at Barnes and Noble Georgia Tech in Tech Square. If you choose to purchase them elsewhere, purchase *the same editions*. Translations can differ markedly in quality, and I will be looking for citations to the page numbers in these editions. This is particularly crucial in the case of *Master and Margarita*, initial translations of which were made from a flawed (censored and incomplete) text.

In addition, a series of chapters will be assigned from Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies* (various publishers). These may be read *in any edition*. The chapters assigned

from Giannetti are *required* reading if you have not previously taken a film course (but *recommended* if you have taken a film course previously). Other short readings will be distributed through canvas.

Recommended reading:

Ronald Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford), on reserve at the library.

Film viewing:

All films are available in the library on DVD for 3 hour in-library use. (The library can check out to you a USB DVD-player.) I will also distribute information on where the films can be viewed online. Most are available to stream free.

Requirements:

1. Active participation in discussions, facilitated by careful reading/viewing of the works to be discussed. **Every three unexcused absences will lower your assigned grade for participation by one letter grade.** Participation grade will be assigned as follows: A – engaged, regular, thoughtful participation which demonstrates thorough 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 active participation. Students will be informed of their current participation grade before the withdrawal deadline and at the end of the semester.
2. Close readings (3). These are analyses of a brief scene or shot from a film or passage from one of the main readings and will be written in class. These should primarily be devoted to exploring content and form, but an excellent close reading also demonstrates an understanding of context. The lowest grade of the three will be dropped. One close reading missed during an unexcused absence may be made up.
3. Paper (5-6 pages). The paper is first and foremost an interpretive essay, to be based on careful analysis and close reading/viewing of the films/literary works. Research is not required, but it is expected that students will be aware of the cultural context as discussed in class. We will discuss appropriate topics and parameters for the papers closer to that time. **Use of Artificial Intelligence is not allowed at any stage of preparation of the paper.**
4. Final Exam. Identifications and essay.

Grading:

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Participation  | 25% |
| Close readings | 20% |
| Paper 2        | 25% |
| Final Exam     | 30% |

### Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| A | 90-100% |
| B | 80-89%  |
| C | 70-79%  |
| D | 60-69%  |
| F | 0-59%   |

### **Plagiarism/Artificial Intelligence**

I take plagiarism very seriously. If choose to do outside research for the paper, it must be appropriately documented and rely on vetted sources, like books and published articles. Note that Wikipedia articles are not a vetted source, nor is their content common knowledge. A definition of plagiarism can be found at:

<https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>.

***Artificial Intelligence must not be used at any stage of preparation of class assignments.***

### **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/>.

### **GT Honor Code**

*"Having read the Georgia Institute of Technology Academic Honor Code, I understand and accept my responsibility as a member of the Georgia Tech community to uphold the Honor Code at all times. In addition, I understand my options for reporting honor violations as detailed in the Code."* <http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code>

### **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/>

### **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 the course instructors 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.

**The Center for Academic Success** ([success.gatech.edu](http://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.). **The Communication Center** ([communicationcenter.gatech.edu](http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu)) provides support for students with respect to developing competency and excellence in written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal communication.

### **Support for Students in Distress**

Counseling Center: [counseling.gatech.edu](http://counseling.gatech.edu) / 404-894-2575

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

Student financial assistance: [star.studentlife.gatech.edu](http://star.studentlife.gatech.edu)

GT Police: [police.gatech.edu](http://police.gatech.edu) / 404-894-2500

Stamps Health Services: [health.gatech.edu](http://health.gatech.edu) / 404-894-1420

### **Core Impacts**

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Arts, Humanities & Ethics area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas.

This course directs students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course will help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence