

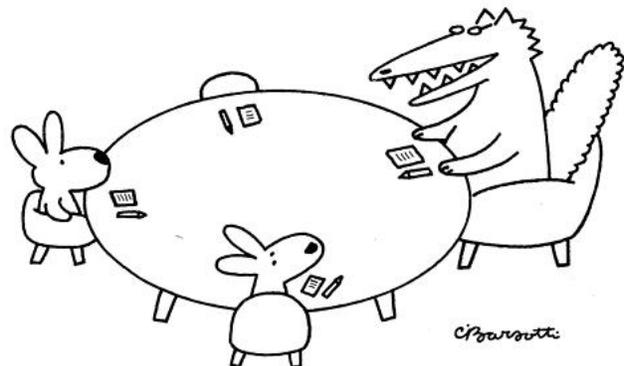
# RUST320A: Russian Culture through Film

## Goals of this course

1. I stress film's artistic and formal nature, but I also emphasize the historical, economic and technological framework that cinema has to work within, a framework that is probably more confining and decisive than it is for any other artistic medium. No one believes the myth of art completely innocent of time and place, and a thorough understanding of "beauty" requires an understanding of how art is shaped by local and historical taste and material factors.
2. The first weeks of the course are devoted to developing the students' conceptual base for talking about film as a work of art. We read *Film Art: An Introduction*, a very well written and approachable discussion of the formal elements like film style, editing, shots and sound in film.
3. Students are exposed to theoretical art criticism by reading formal theoretical texts by writers like Kuleshov, Vertov, and Eisenstein, all of whom are trying, in the '20s and '30s, to figure out what makes film materially distinct from other fine arts.
4. Students learn about the dynamic between technology and art: To understand better how film creates the illusion of continuous motion, they build zoetropes (this is quite a lot of fun, too). Often students believe that photographic images are perfectly mimetic. To show them how a lenses and film work, we have a pin-hole camera workshop in which students build their own cameras and take pictures. We discuss how lenses and film distort images, which helps them to appreciate how much control a cameraman and director have over the final image.

## Rules of the game & Important Dates

5. Attendance is mandatory for all classes and viewings. More than two absences will be penalized.
6. Assignments must be turned in on time. They will not be accepted late. You will receive a failing grade for the paper or project.
7. The last day to drop course without academic penalty is Friday, March 22.
8. Our last meeting will be a brief one, on April 23, a week before classes end. This early end will give you time to work on your projects and meet with Ethan and me.
9. Our seminars take place on February 12, February 26, April 2, April 16.
10. Your final projects are due May 4 at 9:30PM. No projects will be accepted late.



"Any other objections?"

## Evaluation

- Quiz over film terms (Jan 29)..... 10%
- Participation grade during four Seminar Days (5% each) ..... 20%
- Two VERY short integration essays (~1200 words, 2-4 pp), equally weighted..... 10%\*
- Frame/shot/sequence project on film made before 1939 (online) (March 14) ..... 15%
- Analytical paper (5-7 pp) (Draft April 16; final April 23) ..... 15%
- Final pair-work project on a film made after 1962 (May 4) ..... 30%

\*We have four seminars and TWO integration papers. You can choose the seminars for which you write essays.

## Texts

It is VITALLY important that you purchase the editions I have indicated below.

- *Film Art* ISBN 0072484551 **SEVENTH EDITION**
- *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* ISBN 978-0321096654 **FIFTH EDITION**
- An online reader (Wikidot)

## Office Hours

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## Accommodation Statement

Any student who feels that she or he may need an accommodation based on a disability or medical condition should speak with me. In addition, please contact the Academic Resources Center in 101 CUB (386.822.7127 or [academicresources@stetson.edu](mailto:academicresources@stetson.edu))

Week One-Week Four: **The Birth of a Medium, 1896-1926**

**January**

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



*Man with a Movie Camera*: The poster emphasizes the “cyborg” element of the movie: Man and camera are one.

**February**

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		



*“Battleship Potemkin*: Coming soon to the best theaters in Moscow!”  
(Though the movie played in more theaters in Berlin alone than in all of Russia)

**Tuesday, Jan. 15**

- Class overview, introductions
- What makes film different?
- Film as a medium. Who invented it? Who popularized it?
- How does film work?
- Last forty-five minutes: **Watch** relevant films from Pre-Revolutionary Russia.
- Read the free, online sample of *Zona* by Geoff Dyer. About 20 pages. See Wikidot for a link.
- On your own**, due by class on January 29, read Bordwell/Thompson: Part III (on film style, editing, shots and sound) (p. 112-317)

**Thursday, Jan. 17 (Screening)**

**SCREENING:** *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, 1979; 163 minutes)

**Tuesday, Jan. 22**

- Guest lecture by Geoff Dyer
- Finish lecture from last week
- A brief history of film in Russia, 1905-1930: “The most important art”
- Discuss readings, format of quiz on *Film Art*.
- SCREENING:** *Dying Swan* (Evgenii Bauer, 1916; 46 minutes.)

**Thursday, Jan. 24**

Matchbox camera workshop (about an hour)

**SCREENING:** *Father Sergius* (Ia. Protozanov, 1918; 80 minutes.)

**Tuesday, Jan. 29**

- Quiz** on terms from *Film Art* (30 minutes)
- Lecture on the 1920s, the Civil War, and NEP. What is Communist cinema?
- Introduce Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin*
- SCREENING:** *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925; 101 min.)
- Post-viewing:** Reactions to the film, discussion
- On your own**, due Feb. 11: Begin reading the primary and secondary texts for the first seminar—about 120 pp of reading, some of it very dense, some of it very light.

**Thursday, Jan. 31**

**SCREENING:** *Salt for Svanetia* (Kalatozov, 1930; 54 minutes) and some shorts from the 1920s.

**Tuesday, Feb. 5**

- Return, discuss quiz
- Lecture, discussion of *MvMC*, *Kino-Truth* Pinhole camera show-and-tell (20 minutes)
- Introduce the Spinning Top
- SCREENING:** *Man with a Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929; 62 minutes)
- Next class (on February 12) is a SEMINAR. In addition to the readings, your short (3-5 pp) integration paper is due. Note that there’s no Thursday screening.

**Tuesday, Feb. 12**

- Seminar: From the beginning to the advent of sound (pre-Revolutionary to Stalin’s ascendancy)
- Integration paper is due.** You need to write TWO of these by April 16.
- On your own**, due Feb. 26: Begin reading the primary and secondary texts for the next seminar.

**Thursday, Feb. 14**

**SCREENING:** *Land* (Dovzhenko, 1930; 76 minutes)