What is ‘Eurasia’?:
Identity, Alterity and Violence in the Post-Soviet Space

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores conceptions of Russian national identity vis-a-vis the Eurasian region, particularly the nations and peoples located in the Caucasus Mountains and Central Asia. On the basis of a wide range of films, novels, stories and secondary readings, we tackle such topics as: Russian notions of Self and Other, beginning with the Westernizer-Slavophile debates in the 19th century; the textual practices of the Soviet multi-ethnic empire, and post-Soviet notions of the Russian nation; imperialist and Orientalist narratives and tropes; the Eurasianist movement in the early 20th century and its various descendants, including the notion of “sovereign democracy” in the Putin era; post-Soviet conflicts in the region, especially the Chechen Wars and tensions related to migration; and postmodern discourses of multiculturalism and postcoloniality.

MAIN LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

*To acquire skills in handling sophisticated concepts and incorporate them into discussions that address philosophy and hermeneutics
*To think comparatively across cultures
*To adduce concrete and eloquent examples when making an argument
*To analyze how rhetorical and artistic practices are used to reinforce or destabilize power relations
*To analyze examples of construction of identity (Self) and alterity (Other) in cultural texts, as well as texts/narratives/tropes that subvert and challenge such stereotypes
**Required Reading List:**
Berdyaev, Nikolai, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (1937) (excerpts)
Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Diary of a Writer* (excerpts)
-- “Speech about Pushkin” (1880)
-- “Russian nationalist thinker Dugin sees war with Ukraine,” *BBC News*, July 9, 2014
Efimov, Boris, *Political caricatures (Politicheskie karikatury)*
Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) (excerpts)
Grant, Bruce, *The Captive and the Gift* (2009) (excerpts)
Lermontov, Mikhail, *Hero of our Time* (1839) (excerpts – *Bela*)
-- “Cossack’s Lullaby” (1838)
Pushkin, Alexander, “The Captive of the Caucasus” (1821)
-- “Journey to Arzrum” (1836)
-- “Philosophical Letters to P. Chadaaev” (1826-31)
Tolstoy, Leo, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1872) –or- Hadji Murat (1912)
Zizek, Slavoi, “The Nation-Thing,” in *Looking Awry* (excerpts)

**Viewing List:**
*A Sixth Part of the World* (Vertov, 1926)
*Anna from 6 to 18* (Mikhalkov, 1994)
*Another Sky* (Mamuliia, 2010)
*Barber of Siberia* (Mikhalkov, 1999)
*Brother* (Balabanov, 1999) –or- *Brother 2* (Balabanov, 2000)
*Circus* (Aleksandrov, 1936)
*Close to Eden* (Mikhalkov, 1991)
*House of Fools* (Konchalovskii, 2002)
Kidnapping, Caucasian Style (Gaidai, 1967)
Mimino (Daneliia, 1977)
Prisoner of the Mountains (Bodrov, 1996)
Russian Ark (Sokurov, 2002)
Russia 88 (Bardin, 2009)
The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks (Kuleshov, 1924)
Tulpan (Dvortsevoi, 2008)
Tycoon (Lungin, 2002)
War (Balabanov, 2001)
12 (Mikhalkov, 2007)

Other Suggested Readings/Viewings:
Baer, Brian, “Post-Soviets self-fashioning and the politics of representation.” Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon (2012)
Spivak, Gayatri, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (1988)

Course Schedule

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<td><strong>Week 2</strong>: Orientalism and the ‘Gift of Empire’: The Caucasus in Russian Literature</td>
<td>Pushkin’s “The Captive of the Caucasus” (1821) and “Journey to Arzrum” (1836) Tolstoy’s Prisoner of the Caucasus (1872) –or- Hadji Murat (1912) Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) (excerpts)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong>: Soviet Imperial Narratives: The ‘Big Family’ and Russia’s ‘Little Brothers’</td>
<td>Kidnapping, Caucasian Style (Gaidai, 1967) Mimino (Daneliia, 1977) Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or</td>
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<td>Correspondence between A. Pushkin and Piotr Chaadaev, “Philosophical Letters” (1826-31)  Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Diary of a Writer</em> (excerpts) and “Speech about Pushkin” (1880)</td>
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