

RUSSIAN THOUGHT

Course Description

This course studies the distinctive themes and approach of the Russian tradition of thought from the Enlightenment to the twentieth century, concentrating especially on the great flowering of Russian thought in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Russian thought is distinguished by its focus on the person and human nature. Themes covered include the person, freedom and society, reason and faith, ethics and love, time and eschatology, as well as broader topics such as Russian national identity, nihilism, the philosophy of all-unity and utopianism.

Within and against the broader background of the course's thematic approach, there will also be detailed study of individual thinkers and/or works, including Chaadaev, Herzen, Dostoevskii's Notes from the Underground, Chernyshevskii and nihilism, Solov'ev, Shestov, Bakhtin, Tolstoi, Rozanov, Fedorov, utopian works, Berdiaev's Russian Idea etc. The course will briefly introduce and discuss relevant movements and philosophers of the Western tradition (the Enlightenment, Idealism, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche etc.) as appropriate.

The 'open' and 'inclusive' nature of Russian thought lends itself to study in which different intellectual backgrounds can meet, literature and culture, history, philosophy and social sciences. The course can be combined with ones in literature, history and social sciences. The course is open both to students who have not studied Russian thought before, and to those who have. For those who have done undergraduate courses in Russian thought the course offers the chance to develop your knowledge and understanding much further, through far deeper and wider study: of new thinkers and topics (perhaps such as Bakhtin, all-unity, eschatology and time), in the area of the more philosophical thought from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and also through the thematic approach, which provides different perspectives and avoids duplication of the chronological coverage typical of BA courses.

Knowledge of Russian is NOT a prerequisite for this course.

PRELIMINARY READING

Works from and about the Russian tradition of thought to read in advance include:

N. Berdiaev, *Russkaia ideia* (various editions), tr. *The Russian Idea* (London, 1947)

Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London, 1978)

Edith W. Clowes, *Fiction's overcoat: Russian literary culture and the question of philosophy* (Ithaca, 2004)

Aileen Kelly, *Towards Another Shore: Russian Thinkers between Necessity and Chance* (New Haven and London, 1998)

Frederick C. Copleston, *Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev* (Notre Dame, 1986) and *Russian Religious Philosophy: Selected Aspects* (Notre Dame, 1988)

Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Oxford, 1980)

V.V. Zen'kovskii, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 2 vols (London, 1953)

Petr (Peter) Chaadaev, *Philosophical Letters*, especially the First Letter (various editions)

Aleksandr (Alexander) Herzen, *From the Other Shore* (various editions)

F.M. Dostoevskii (Dostoevsky), *Notes from Underground* (various editions)

Anthologies of Russian thought in translation include:

Russian Philosophy, ed. J.M. Edie, J.P. Scanlan and M.B. Zeldin, 3 vols (Chicago, 1965)

A Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (Ann Arbor, 1987)

Title: RUSSIAN THOUGHT
Course Code: SEES GO57
Course-unit value: 1 cu

Availability: Taught in the autumn and spring terms
Open to: Students of: MA in Russian Studies
MA in Russian and East European Literature and Culture
MA in European Thought
other MA degree programmes, subject to requirements

Course leader: Dr Robin Aizlewood
Other participants:

Aims

The course aims at enabling students to:

1. Examine key themes from the tradition of Russian thought in cultural context;
2. Develop a knowledge and understanding of the philosophical problematics and the discourse(s) of the Russian tradition of thought, with comparison also to Western European thought.

Objectives

By the end of the course you will have acquired:

1. Extensive knowledge and understanding of the tradition of Russian thought, covering a wide range of thinkers, key works and themes;
 2. Experience in the study of intellectual history and the discourse(s) of thought;
 3. In-depth knowledge and understanding of particular thinkers/works/themes studied for course assignments;
 4. Enhanced skills of research, analysis, essay writing, presentation and the articulation of ideas in discussion.
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<u>Teaching & Learning Methods:</u>	<u>Number of Hours:</u>
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<i>Lectures</i>	n/a
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<i>Seminars</i>	40
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<i>Private Study</i>	90
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Classes meet for two hours per week over twenty teaching weeks during the autumn and spring terms.

Assessment:

Coursework:

Students will be encouraged to submit ONE or TWO coursework essays, including a bibliography and footnotes. Feedback will be provided. Although these essays do not count towards the final mark for the course, they will enable students to improve their writing skills in preparation for the assessed essays and written examination.

Examination:

The course is examined by a combination of TWO assessed essays and ONE two-hour examination.

- **TWO assessed essays** of 3,000 words each, to be presented with bibliography and footnotes, to be submitted by dates confirmed at the end of each term.

The marks for the two assessed essays account for **50%** of the total mark for the course (each essay is worth 25% of the total mark for the course).

Late submission is penalised according to the rules set out in the MA Handbook. The essays are double-marked and examined externally. Feedback forms with tutor's comments are returned to students without marks; the marks are released after they are confirmed at the MA Examination Board, held at the end of the academic year.

- **ONE two-hour written examination**, held in May.

The written examination accounts for **50%** of the total mark for the course.