Jane Knox-Voina and Gulnara Abikeyeva
White Spots on the Soviet Map: Central Asia and Siberia through Film and Literature (RUS 251)
Syllabus for the course offered in Spring 2002
Bowdoin College
Russian Department

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White Spots on the Soviet Map: Central Asia and Siberia through Film and Literature
SPRING 2002 TTH 11:30-1:00
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Examination of little known Asian peoples of the former Soviet Union and their role in solving global cultural, economic and geopolitical issues. The course will focus on history, culture, politics, religion and the ever changing socio-economic status of women of these areas. The focus will be on cinema as a media for promoting nationalism. Films by A. Konchalovsky, N. Mikhalkov, A. Romanov, Dz. Vertov, A. Kurosawa, as well as Central Asian cinema will be examined to determine their role in promoting images of certain ethnic nationalities and the director’s bias toward these groups.

The first half of the course will focus on the former Soviet Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. A discussion of the history and culture of this transit zone linking West to the East, Christianity to Islam, Europe to Asia, will help students better understand the important geopolitical processes occurring in the border regions of the former Soviet Union. Discussion based on examples of Central Asian literature and cinema.

The second half examines the largest sovereign state in Siberia, Yakutia/Sakha, and its indigenous peoples -- the Nenets, the Evenk, the Nivkh, the Sakha/Yakut and the Chukchi. Several times larger than France, this non-Slavic state within the Russian Federation has felt the enormous impact of Russian "outsiders" or "incomers" (conquerors, traders, settlers, rulers and exiled convicts). Films, folktales, short stories and art will shed light on the culture, history, spirituality (shamanism), environment, socio-political struggles and gender issues of these ethnic groups.

Important questions.
1) What is Central Asia? What is Siberia?
2) How have Russification, politicization and industrialization affected the belief systems of these Islamic or Turkic peoples?
3) What role does their traditional attitude toward nature and subsistence economies play today?
4) What is their relationship with others west (and east) of the Caspian Sea and the Ural Mountains?
5) What is the significance of these vast areas, rich in natural resources--for Russia and for the world beyond?
6) What role does religion play in shaping cultural and sociopolitical struggles today?
7) What is the role of film in promoting or demoting nationalism within the parameters of geopolitical change?
8) How has the status of women changed in these national cultures?

All lectures and materials will be in English. Films viewed are with English subtitles or will be dubbed in English. There will be two short term papers (5-6 pages each) and two longer paper (8-10 pages). No mid-term. In-class discussion
will be stressed. Occasional 1-2 page response papers on films or readings and in-class writing activities.
The class will be broken down into discussions groups which will meet in and out of classes, depending on the assignment. Keeping a journal will be required. Journals will be collected four times (see syllabus).
There are no prerequisites for this course.
This course counts toward the non-eurocentric distribution requirement, a major in Russian or Women’s Studies and a minor in Film.
Grades: Class Participation will account for one third of the grade (this means attendance, preparedness, in-class writing assignment and active participation), two short papers – one third, two long papers one third.

S. Aitbaev, "Happiness," Kazakhstan, 1966

Readings:
Books in book store:

All handouts are in two packets (Part I and Part II) and may be purchased at a nominal fee from Tammis Lareau, Russian Department Program Coordinator, Sills 206, tlareau@bowdoin.edu, 715-3782.
PART One: Central Asia

Week I: Central Asia

Day One (Tuesday, 1/22)

Siberia and Central Asia: Introductions.
In-class clips from Dz. Vertov’s *Three Songs of Lenin*.
Writing activity.

Readings for next time:
3. Look at the web page link on and map of Mongolia (under courses on Dept web page before seeing the film).

Day Two (Thursday, 1/24)


Readings and Assignment. Handouts for next time:
2. Sergei Poliakov, "Gender and Behavior", in Everyday Islam. Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia, pp. 81-87 (handout).

Break-down into discussions groups, each group will discuss one of the readings. In addition to the readings listed here, each group should select one web site pertaining to their country: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan or Tadzhikistan and be prepared to give a few details.

Individual students will agree to discuss in class one of the assigned articles and must be prepared to answer or ask general questions in class about the articles and one of the Stans. Sample questions to be handed out.

Week II: Focus on Uzbekistan

Day One (Tuesday, 1/29)

Traditional community - Mahhala and relationships in large family. Values in settled cultures. General information about Uzbekistan

Discussion of articles. Clips from Before the Sunrise e. Role of religion in the Uzbek community and values of a "settled" culture. Concepts of national cinema.

Assignment: Be prepared for discussion and an in-class writing activity on the themes developed in the film Orator.

Film (1/29) Yusup Razikov, Orator (1998), (English subtitles)

Day Two (Thursday, 1/31)

The values of “settled” cultures. Discussion of the film Orator.

Assigned Readings:
1. Chingiz Aitmatov, Jamila (short novella ) (handout)
3. Iraj Bashiri, "The Art of Chingiz Aitmatov's Stories" (9 pages - see syllabus on web)

Week III: Focus on Women
Day One (Tuesday, 2/5)

The position of woman in Central Asia. Discussion of the Aitmatov’s Jamila. Comparison with the film The Cranes are Flying (clips in class). Contemporary Central Asian Woman. Clips from The Junior (Mladshaya) and Bo, Ba, Bu.

Assignment: Prepare for discussion of role of woman in the film The Daughter-In-Law and for an in-class writing activity on Thursday.

Film (2/5) The Daughter-In-Law (1971), dir. Khodjakuli Narliev

Day Two (Thursday, 2/7)

Women’s positions of in pre-Soviet, Soviet (painting "The Washers" by E. Bebutova, Kazakhstan, 1928) and post-Soviet periods. Clips from the films Mandala and Zamanai. Discussion of the different position of woman in settled and nomadic cultures.</p>

Assignment: 3-4 page short paper about position of women in Central Asian countries on the basis of readings (Polyakov and Akiner), films (Daughter-In-Law and Orator) and Aitmatov’s Jamila. (due February 12, 2002)

Reading: Fragment about Stalin epoch from Aitmatov’s The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years, pp. 108 – 121, 166-200 (in book store annex)

Pass in journals.

Week IV: Focus on Turkmenistan

Day one (Tuesday, 2/12)

The values of nomadic culture (click for painting "In Memory of the Father" by O. Nurzhumaev, 1967). Pre-islamic religions in Central Asia. Stalin’s policies on nations, nationalities, collectivization and resettlement. General information abou Turkmenistan. Clips from Yandim’s, Man with Fir-tree. Assignment: First paper due by 5:00 today. Watch Little Angel, Make Me Happy.

Film (2/12) Usman Saparov, Little Angel, Make Me Happy (1993), (English subtitles)

Day Two (Thursday, 2/14)

Discussion of film and fragment of Aitmatov’s novel about Stalin epoch. Clips from Snow Covered Station.

Readings:
1. Fragment "Mankurt" from Aitmatov’s The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years, p. 124-147.

Week V: Focus on Kyrgyzstan

Day One (Tuesday, 2/19)
Policies of the smaller countries: strategy for survival.  
General information about Kyrgyzstan. Discussion of Aitmatov's novel and the film **Mankurt** (clips). Documentary clips by director Aktan Abdikalikov.
Assignment: See film **Beshkempir**.

**Film (2/19) Aktan Abdikalikov, Beshkempir (1998), (English subtitles)**

**Day Two (Thursday, 2/21)**

Rural and Urban Culture of Modern Central Asia.  
Clips from **The Bus Stop** and **In Spe**.  
Readings:

**Week VI: Focus on Kazakhstan**

**Day One (Tuesday, 2/26)**

General information about **Kazakhstan**.  
The new "Kazakh Wave" in cinema – the sign of new epoch.  
Clips from **The Needle**.  
Assignment: See film **Shanghai** and prepare for discussion.

**Film (2/26) Alexander Baranov, Shanghai (1995) (Voice-over in English)**

**Day Two (Thursday, 2/28)**

"Perestroika" and the first steps of Independence. New Russians and new Kazakhs.  
Clips from **Fara**.  
Readings:

Discussion groups: In addition to discussing the readings listed above, each group should select one web site pertaining to their country: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan or Tadzhikistan. This is in preparations for ORAL REPORTS on Thursday, March 7. Please, also look at the list of reserve readings and select one for your FIRST LONG (5-7 page) PAPER due after spring break at 5:00, March 26. The paper should be based on assigned readings, films, a reserve reading and a web site.

**Week VII: Focus on Tadzhikistan**

**Day One (Tuesday, 3/5)**


**Day Two (Thursday, 3/7)**

Central Asian Region as the Transit Zone between West and East. Discussion of film. Clips from *Luna Papa*. Final Presentations.

Assignment: Journals 5-7 page paper about Central Asian due the first class after the break.

**SPRING BREAK**
PART II: SIBERIANS AND SMALL NUMBERED PEOPLES OF THE NORTH

Shamanic Elements in Siberian Folklore

**READINGS FOR RUSSIAN 251 PART II: SIBERIA**

**WEEK VIII: FOCUS ON PEOPLE OF THE POLAR NORTH**

**Day One (Tuesday, 3/26)**


Discussion: The importance of story telling and the story teller in indigenous cultures of Siberia. How did the tales come to be written down. Russian and Soviet Ethnographers. Women as "the bearers of cultural signs." Photos from Siberia today. See Section 1.
Assignment:
See Film *Nanook of the North*. Study the class web page on the "Population of Polar Peoples." Locate these Siberian people on a map.
Please read *Siberia's Peoples* and try to answer the questions where do they come from and who lives where.
Look at web site and study table of *Populations*:

**FILM SHOWING (3/26): Nanook of the North, dir. Roger Flaherty, 1922 (LMC, 7:00 p.m.)**

**Day Two (Thursday 3/28)**
Paper from Part I on Central Asia due. Discussion and criticism of Film. History, Climate, Geography, Languages and Life of the Northern Peoples: Chukchi. Relationship between nature and polar peoples. Construction of Gender roles in film.

**Assignment:**
In bookstore:

In packet:
Optional: Check class webpage under "Resources - Chukotka."

**WEEK IX: FOCUS ON SHAMANISM. YAKUTIA/SAKHA AND THE SMALL NUMBERED PEOPLES OF THE FAR NORTH**

Introduction of belief systems and cultural values of Siberia’s Northern small numbered peoples. What is Shamanism? Its roots. What are the initiation rites of a shaman? Why does the shaman use the drum? Here we see a recent performance of shaman rituals.

**Day One (Tuesday 4/2)**
Assignment:
See the film *Life*.


Day Two Thursday (4/4)

Assignment:
*Siberian Tales*, pp. 54-56, 72-74, 77-78, 82, 149-152, 169-172, 185, 197-199. (in packet)
*Shamanic folktales, rituals, ways of life* translated by Marie Pahilan '01 (on rus251 web page).
*Shamanism* translated by Marie Pahilan '01 (on rus251 web page).
Folktales in packet: *Master of the Earth (khozyain zemli)*. "How a female shaman did battle with the devil's daughter" (Yugakir), "Lonely Adil" (Yukagir), "Myth about a Woman and a Seal" (Chukotka).
Riordan, 71-82, 107-112, 141-147.

**WEEK X: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE FAR EAST**

Day One (Tuesday 4/9)

Assignment. See Film *Dersu Uzala*. Be ready to discuss the belief system of Dersu Uzala as seen in the film. Is he a noble savage (See Jean-Jacques Rouusseau, 1712-1778, *The Discourses and Other Political Writings, 1750, and The Social Contract* )? Read *Dersu the Trapper*, pp. v-ix, 5-52.

**FILM (4/9):Dersu Uzala , dir. Akira Kurosawa (LMC, 7:00 p.m.)**

Day Two (Thursday 4/11)
Discussion of Film and Novel. See questions on the web site. What are the different ethnic peoples represented in this film? In what areas of the Russian Far East are they found? What are the values which the two clashing worlds present? Who has the superiority? Look at Lev S. Vygotsky's discussion of superior psychological perceptions in primitive peoples and reduced perceptions in civilized or educated peoples. Comparison of Arsen'ev's perspective with that of the Soviet/Japanese film Dersu Uzala by Kurosawa. Discussion of Russian exploration that preceded Soviet expansion.

Assignment:
Selections from Arsen’ev’s Dersu The Trapper, pp. 299-344. (on reserve).

WEEK XI: NORTHWESTERN SIBERIA. SOVIETIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF BOLSHEVIK/RUSSIAN RULE IN SIBERIA

Day One (Tuesday, 4/16)


Assignment: See film Siberiade Part I.


Day Two (Thursday, 4/18)

Discussion of Film. Stereotypes of Indigenous Siberians in Russian films. Shock Brigades of Russian, Ukrainian and other Hero Workers Sent to Conquer or Harness the Siberian Wilderness. See Photos (Section 2). The building of Soc Cities (clips from the films Cities for Utopia and Magnitogorsk). Collectivization of the 1930s. Clips from The Legend of Siberia (Skazanie o Sibiri). Arrival of Russians who plundered forests to build new farms. Fate of “Native Peoples” with the emergence of new Russian towns or cities. Socialist Realist representations of new Soviet man in Siberia. Click here for Photos (See section 2). Old Russian settlers ("siberiyak") versus new Soviet temporary workers ("outsiders" or "new comers"). Establishment of the labor camp systems in Northern Siberia.

Assignment:
Rasputin’s Farewell to Matyora, pp 1-101 (in bookstore).
Day One (Tuesday, 4/23)


Assignment:

See film Siberiade. Part II. Read Polar Peoples, pp. 63-70. (in packet)

Film: Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky's Siberiade. Part II (1982)

Day Two (Thursday, 4/25)


Assignment:
"Diamonds". National Geographic (in packet).
Time article, Rape of Siberia (in packet).

WEEK XIII: POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION OF SIBERIA

Day One (Tuesday 4/30)
Destruction of centuries-old Siberian communities. Folk Ideas of Place Spirits. Female earth spirit. Matyora: Standard of Traditional Old Russian Values. Russian village prose as a form of rebellion against European Russia, the Moscow Center and Sovietization. Reclaiming nature, the past and the individual in the face of industrial destruction and loss of cultural identity. Negative Results of Stalin’s Siberia Policies, continued by Leonid Brezhnev. Global warming and flooding today.

Assignment: See film BAM.

Khatynaakh, Kolyma Today: Far Northern Siberia. (Narrated in English..)

Day Two (Thursday, 5/2)
Discussion of possible paper topics.

Assignment:
Every one must read:
Anatoly M. Khazanov, "Yakutian Nationalism in Search for Identities," 175-191. (in packet)
Polar Peoples, 70-80 (in packet).

Group Assignments for the following readings:
Leokadia Drobizheva, "Russian Ethnonationalism" in Ethnic Conflict (in packet).
Marjorie M. Balzer and U.A. Vinokurova, "Ethnicity or Nationalism? The Sakha Republic (Yakutia)" Nationalism, Interethnic Relations and Feralism. (in packet).
WEEK XIV: SIBERIA AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND DURING GLASNOST--SOVEREIGNTY, CULTURAL REBIRTH AND SURVIVAL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Birthday Celebration in Yakut village of Kolyma

Day one (Tuesday, 5/7)

Discussion groups reports. Collapse of the center. Discussion of film BAM. See Photos of Post-Soviet Siberians reclaiming their past (See Section 1). Clips from semi-documentary films from the Yakut/Sakha Institute of Small Number Peoples. Interethnic Relations in the Sakha Republic. Sociological Profile of Women in Yakutia. Ethnic potential for self-support and a worthy Sakha ethnic community. New educational reforms restoring cultural traditions and ethnic languages in schools both in the city of Yakutsk and in remote villages of the Far North, for example, Khatynaakh. Recent Russian films devoted to Siberia.

Siberia.

DISCUSSION OF FINAL 8-10 PAGE PAPER TOPICS.