

RUT 3530 (class #20573): **Russia's Struggle with Nature: Legacies of Destruction and Preservation**  
Course Syllabus, Spring 2019

Time of class meetings: **MWF 6 (12:50–1:40)**  
Place of class meetings: **TURL 2354**  
Instructor: **Dr. James Goodwin**

Instructor e-mail: **jegoodwi@ufl.edu**  
Instructor office & phone: **252c Dauer Hall, (352) 273-3790**  
Office hours: M 3:00–4:30; W 4:00–4:30

**COURSE CONTENT:**

This course will explore modern Russia's relationship with the natural world as reflected in works of literature and visual art from the late nineteenth century through the present. In light of Russia's conflicting desires both to exploit and conserve its vast resources, we will examine enthusiastic Russian attempts to transform the natural world between 1917 and 1991, as well as more recent reactions to some Soviet-era policies and their negative environmental consequences (rapid industrialization under Stalin, agricultural experimentation under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and others). By the end of the course we will also review some of the formidable cultural and environmental challenges facing Russia in the 21st century as it confronts the world's pressing demand for sustainability.

Our readings and viewings will combine fictional, documentary (geographical/biological) and historical perspectives on Russia's interaction with nature. Topics will include and integrate issues of ecology and environmental history, but they will be considered mainly through the lens of Russian thought and experience. Thus while we will inevitably need to review the more essential facts behind specific incidents (e.g. the shrinking of the Aral Sea, the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the pollution of Siberian lakes and rivers, etc.), we will focus largely on Russian cultural responses to such problems by well-known Russian writers and thinkers, as well as through some Russian visual art. Writings by specialists on a particular topic will provide essential background and contextual material.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To expand your knowledge of Russian literature and culture in the context of Russian environmental history;
2. To enhance your understanding of the extent to which dramatic changes and transformations in Russia's natural world over the past century have affected — and been affected by — ecological ideas, values and motifs in Russian culture;
3. To raise your awareness of environmental / sustainability issues facing the planet's largest country (by land mass);
4. To strengthen your critical reading and thinking skills through close analysis of our course texts and images.

**REQUIRED BOOKS & TEXTS:**

- Arseniev, Vladimir. *[Dersu the Trapper](#)*. Tr. M. Burr. N.Y: McPherson & Co., 1996. [ISBN #0929701496 ]
- Bulgakov, Mikhail. *[The Fatal Eggs](#)*. Tr. by Michael Karpelson. Translit Publishing, 2010 [ISBN # 0981269524]
- Platonov, Andrei. *[Soul and Other Stories](#)*. Tr. R.&E. Chandler. N.Y.: NYRB Classics, 2007 [ISBN # 159017254X]
- Rasputin, Valentin. *[Farewell to Matyora](#)*. Tr. A. Bouis. Evanston IL: Northwestern U Pr, 1991 [ISBN # 0810113295]
- Selected texts in electronic formats, available either on our “e-learning” site, on “Course Reserves,” or elsewhere online.
- Selected texts and excerpts from books on reserve at Library West (“Course Reserves”).

**OPTIONAL but recommended** (both books will be available at Library West through Course Reserves):

- Josephson, Paul (et al). *[An Environmental History of Russia](#)*. Cambridge U Pr, 2013 [ISBN # 0521689724]

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Regular attendance and engagement in all classroom activities, where “engagement” means fully attentive to class discussions and *NOT* distracted by electronic devices, personal business, etc. See “Attendance Policy,” below.
2. Thorough and punctual completion of all reading assignments. Everyone will be expected to complete the assigned readings prior to the class during which they will be discussed. Our course exams will require that you demonstrate your knowledge of our assigned readings, so be sure to make time in your schedule to complete the readings!
3. Responses in class to (occasional) pre-assigned questions on our readings (details forthcoming).
4. Completion of three exams (two during regular classes, one during finals week) based on required course readings, class lectures, presentations and discussions. The exams will be taken in class and will account for 80% of your course grade.

**EXAM FORMAT:** The three required exams will test your knowledge and assimilation of material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. The exams typically include [1] a brief factual component (identify important names, events, dates etc.); [2] a longer text recognition section (identify an excerpt from our readings and answer brief questions about it); [3] a brief short-answer section (describe characters, terms, etc.); [4] a short essay (respond in detail to a broader question on course content). The second and third exams will cover (mainly) material introduced *since* the preceding exam. The essay on the third (final) exam may ask you to

reference course themes discussed throughout the semester.

**GRADING CRITERIA** and **EXAM DATES**. Final course grades will be based on the following percentages:

- **Total attendance** (= total number of class meetings attended) [see “Attendance policy,” below]. . . . . **10%**
- **Course participation** (= attendance percentage [not including officially excused absences — see “Attendance policy,” below]; + punctual completion of assignments; + involvement in classroom activities; + two oral presentations). . . . . **10%**
- **Three in-class exams** (on **Wed., Feb. 13**; **Wed. Mar. 27**; **Mon. Apr. 29**), averaged together. . . . . **80%**

**Final course grades** will be assigned according to the following scale: **A** = a final course percentage of 93-100; **A-** = 90-92; **B+** = 87-89; **B** = 83-86; **B-** = 80-82; **C+** = 77-79; **C** = 73-76; **C-** = 70-72; **D+** = 67-69; **D** = 63-66; **D-** = 60-62; **E** = less than 60. (Note that the University of Florida issues grade points according to the following scale: A: 4.0 grade points; A-: 3.67; B+: 3.33; B: 3; B-: 2.67; C+: 2.33; C: 2.0; C-: 1.67; D+: 1.33; D: 1.0; D-: .67; E: 0; WF: 0; I: 0; NG: 0; S-U: 0.)

**Make-up policy:** Except in the case of a certified illness or other officially approved reason (e.g. U.F.-assigned travel), there will be no make-up option for missed exams or term paper deadlines. Please do NOT request an individual assignment for extra credit in place of a missed exam or missed classes! If/when unavoidable, a make-up exam should be arranged in person with me *prior* to an anticipated excused absence. In case of certified illness, please contact me immediately following your return to classes.

**Attendance Policy:** Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams and other work are consistent with UF policies (see catalog: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Although there is no penalty for *officially* excusable absences (as defined by university policy), please *NOTE* that **the number of attended class meetings counts for 10%** of the course grade. Thus if a class is missed, even for officially acceptable reasons, then an attendance point will *not* be gained for that day. The attendance score will equal the percentage of meetings actually attended, so *be sure to sign the attendance list daily*. A second attendance percentage, which ignores *officially excused* absences, will factor into the “Course participation” portion of the final grade.

**Cell phone / electronics policy:**

- Keep all cell phones **silent** (on “vibrate” mode, or off) for the duration of each class meeting. In the event of an emergency that requires your immediate use of a device, please *exit the classroom quietly before using your device*.
- Laptops or other electronic reading devices (tablets, e-book readers, etc.) should be used in class *ONLY* for the purpose of viewing one of our texts and/or taking notes. *Please do NOT use the internet OR read / write electronic messages during class*. Failure to respect this rule will result in a lower “Course Participation” component of the final grade.
- All are required to adhere to U.F.’s **Student Honor and Conduct Codes**: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>.

**Classroom accommodation:** Students requesting classroom or test accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student who must then provide it to me for accommodation. Students with physical, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities will be accommodated according to UF policies. See the [Disability Resource Center](#) for more information.

**Course evaluation policy:** Students are expected to provide online feedback on the quality of instruction in this course at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Results of the assessments are available at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**Weekly schedule of primary course readings and exams.** *NOTE:* a more detailed reading schedule, including shorter readings, will be posted and updated regularly on [our course Canvas \(“e-learning”\) space](#):

- Week 01 (Jan. 7, 9, 11): Introduction and Survey. Geography of Russia.
- Week 02 (Jan. 14, 16, 18): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*
- Week 03 (Jan. 23, 25): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*
- Week 04 (Jan. 28, 30, Feb. 1): Arseniev, *Dersu the Trapper*
- Week 05 (Feb. 4, 6, 8): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs*
- Week 06 (Feb. 11, 13, 15): Bulgakov, *Fatal Eggs*; **Exam № 1 (Wed. Feb. 13)**
- Week 07 (Feb. 18, 20, 22): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 08 (Feb. 25, 27, Mar. 1): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 09 (Mar. 11, 13, 15): Platonov, *Soul* (and other stories)
- Week 10 (Mar. 18, 20, 22): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*
- Week 11 (Mar. 25, 27, 29): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*; **Exam № 2 (Wed. Mar. 27)**
- Week 12 (Apr. 1, 3, 5): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*.
- Week 13 (Apr. 8, 10, 12): Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora*.
- Week 14 (Apr. 15, 17, 19): [Readings on late/post-Soviet environmental themes and issues]
- Week 15 (Apr. 22, 24): [Readings on late/post-Soviet environmental themes and issues]
- Week 16: **Exam № 3 in class on April 29 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon**