

Department of History/College of Arts and Letters

## HIST 129d. Socialist Popular Culture.

Spring 2024, official title "A Cultural History of Russia" ver. 1-29-24 updated

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### Part 1: Course information

**Time and place:** Tuesdays and Thursdays noon-1:15 p.m. in Brighton Hall 208.

**Note:** This course is new. Any changes will be communicated in a timely manner and implemented without detriment to student performance.

#### Instructor information

**Instructor:** Aaron J. Cohen, PhD.

**Office hours:** TuWeTh 1:30-2:30 p.m. or by appointment in Tahoe Hall 3092 OR via Zoom @ <https://csus.zoom.us/my/cohenofficehours>.

**E-mail:** [cohenaj@csus.edu](mailto:cohenaj@csus.edu).

#### Catalog description.

A historical survey of popular culture and mass culture in the Soviet Union and other socialist states in the twentieth century. Emphasis on the role of political and economic systems in cultural production, the relationship between culture producers and audiences, and interactions between socialist and nonsocialist countries as expressed in a variety of genres and media. Focus on film and music with references to literature, social pastimes, and the performing and visual arts.

#### Registration details

**Graded:** Graded Student.

**Units:** 3.0.

**Prerequisite:** None.

**GE area:** **C1 (Arts).**

#### Textbooks and course materials

##### Required texts

1. Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1992. ISBN 978-0521369862. Note: The original edition of this book was entitled (correctly) *Soviet Popular Culture*.
2. Various required readings and videos posted on Canvas and Panopto and listed on this syllabus. These materials are free of charge.

#### Course technology requirements

Handouts and assignments are distributed only via Canvas. **Students have a responsibility to access course materials and assignments in a timely manner;** the instructor will not be held responsible for any circumstances,

technical or personal, that prevent access to course material. **Students who have not logged into Canvas by 11:59 p.m. Monday, January 29, will be administratively dropped and may not be allowed to re-add the course.**

The use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments without instructor permission is considered by the university to be academic dishonesty. The goal of an education is not to complete assignments but to learn. Learning involves direct engagement with material and practice. Anything that prevents students from engagement and practice (such as plagiarism, buying a paper from someone else, or using AI to write papers) does not contribute to learning but in fact undermines it. Any work determined to be AI generated in this class will therefore be treated as the equivalent of plagiarism according to the policies in this syllabus. However, spelling and grammar checkers that do not write or rewrite papers are allowed.

All required technology is available at low or no cost through student support services at Sac State. The CSUS library and Instructional Resource Technology office provide **free laptops** and Microsoft Word for students to use on a short- or long-term [basis](#). Students may use personal computers, but they must meet the following requirements:

- High-speed internet connection.
- Access to Canvas throughout the semester.
- Ability to use Zoom, Microsoft Word, and Adobe software.

**Please do NOT use Google Docs OR portable devices as word processors in this course.** The history profession uses Microsoft Word for its robust tools, especially footnotes. Google Docs often does not format footnotes correctly, and it is good to practice using the industry standard. **Use a computer and the desktop version of MS Word.** To obtain your free desktop version of MS Word (and Microsoft 365), go to [office365.csus.edu](https://office365.csus.edu) and login with your Sac State login and password. Click on "Install and more."

Videos are hosted within the university's Panopto system. Panopto sometime has difficulty interacting with various devices and technologies. **To ensure that you receive proper credit for viewing videos and films:**

- **Make sure to use a laptop computer** and web browser. **Do not use** an iPhone or iPad or the Canvas app (on Apple or Android) as privacy settings can interfere with Panopto.
- **Disable ad blockers (e.g., Adblock) and browser extensions/plugins that block analytics or anonymize.** These can interfere with Panopto.
- **Avoid having open multiple windows while viewing.** If you would like to have a different page open while viewing, use a separate device.
- To take a break from a film, exit the film and close the browser. **Do not put the computer to sleep** before you exit the film and close the browser.

If Panopto is still not correctly registering your participation, contact the Information Resources and Technology (IRT) department and [open a service ticket](#).

For technical questions about Canvas, please:

- See [Canvas for Students](#) for common Canvas questions and solutions.
- Email the [Academic Technology Center](#) in AIRC 2005.
- Call (916) 278-7337.

### **Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support (CARES)**

If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The [CARES](#) office provides case management support for any enrolled student.

### **Disability Access Center (DAC)**

Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact the [Disability Access Center \(DAC\)](#) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from DAC is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.

### **Title IX information**

Sac State is committed to supporting students and fostering a campus environment free of sexual misconduct and gender-based discrimination. If a student chooses to disclose to a faculty or staff member an experience related to sexual misconduct which includes, but is not limited to rape, relationship violence, or stalking, all faculty and staff members are obligated to report this disclosure to the university's Title IX Coordinator. Contact Sac State's Title IX Coordinator, Skip Bishop, at (916) 278-5770 or email at [william.bishop@csus.edu](mailto:william.bishop@csus.edu). Upon receipt of the report, the Title IX Coordinator will contact you to inform you of your rights and options as a survivor and connect you with support resources, including resolution options for holding accountable the person who harmed you.

Students who elect not to discuss their experience with the Title IX Coordinator can speak confidentially to the following confidential resources: Student Health & Counseling Services at The WELL On Campus Phone Number: 916-278-6461 Website: [www.csus.edu/shcs](http://www.csus.edu/shcs). Campus Confidential Advocate – Laura Swartzen Email: [weave@csus.edu](mailto:weave@csus.edu). On Campus Phone Number: 916-278-5850 (during business hours) WEAVE 24/7 Hotline: 916-920-2952.

### **Student Health and Counseling Services**

Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. [Student Health and Counseling Services \(SHCS\)](#) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers: Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for

acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost.

**Important notes:** Any form of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, may be reported to the office of student affairs. **This syllabus and course policies are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or typographical errors. In case of a conflict between the syllabus and Canvas instructions, the syllabus will take precedence unless the syllabus shows a clear error.** Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. It is the student's responsibility to check Canvas for corrections or updates to the syllabus.

All students are expected to follow the [Hornet honor code](#). Students will:

- Promote an inclusive campus and community.
- Listen and respect each other's thoughts, interests, and views.
- Value diversity and learn from one another.
- Engage daily with mutual trust, care, and integrity.
- Support a culture of honor and adhere to campus policies for honesty, ethics, and conduct.
- Be proud to be Sac State Hornets.

## Part 2: Course objectives

In this course, students will be able to:

### General course learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the history of socialist popular culture and mass culture from 1917 to 1991.
- Evaluate popular culture and mass culture as they relate to issues of politics, social class, gender, and ethnicity in socialist states.
- Recognize how form and content are both important in understanding the meanings of film, literature, music, the visual arts, and other media.
- Create arguments about the history of socialist popular and mass culture based on empirical evidence and critical thinking.
- Apply written communication skills as practiced in history, teaching, and related professions.

### GE Area C1 (Arts) learning outcomes

- Think conceptually and critically about medium, performance or presentation, and production for at least one art form.

- Demonstrate knowledge of artistic production, aesthetic properties, and the way creative work is shaped by artistic and cultural forces.
- Have an acquaintance with a broad understanding of artistic forms, genres, and cultural sources.
- Be able to develop and defend informed judgments about creative work. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of at least one of the disciplines in the arts.

## Part 3: Course assignments

Students will meet these objectives through a combination of these course activities. Details on rubrics, criteria for grading, and other information are posted on Canvas.

**I. Classroom attendance and film watching.** For each class meeting, students will receive 1 point for attendance and 0 points for non-attendance. **Students will also receive 1 point for watching all required films for each week before 11:59 p.m. Wednesday for at least 95% at normal speed.** Film viewing will be noted as Wednesday attendance on Canvas (there is no Wednesday class meeting). Points will be added together and scored using the standard percentage scale, e.g. ten absences or missed films = 35/45 or 78%, C+. **No late work accepted.**

**II. Identification quizzes.** There are **three (3)** thirty-minute **in-class** identification quizzes as indicated on the class schedule. For each quiz, **seven quiz items** (people, places, dates, and concepts) will be chosen from lecture material and primary source assignments. Students will identify, describe, and state the significance of **four (4)** out of these seven items. Each answer should be at least a paragraph containing the “who, what, where, when, and why” for that item in as much detail as possible. Quizzes are not cumulative. **No late work accepted.**

**III. Primary source analyses.** The primary source analysis assignment is an online space where students demonstrate the historical significance of **any single (1) primary source assigned for the week, whether a reading, a piece of music, image, or specific aspect of a film (e.g., scene, character, style, or theme).** Do not analyze multiple sources in any individual analysis. The instructor encourages you to read the essay questions first and choose a primary source for the analysis that you can use to make your argument in the essay. In this way you will be able to scaffold your work, i.e., use the analyses to help write the essays. The due dates are **Tuesdays, 11:45 a.m. Pacific Time.** **No late work accepted.**

**IV. Formal take-home essays.** There are **three (3)** short (ca. 750 word) formal take-home essays due when indicated on the class schedule. **Late work accepted with a penalty.**

**V. Final examination.** The final examination will take place in our classroom. Students must complete the final to pass the class. **No late work accepted.**

## Part 4: Course schedule

**Note:** Readings and film viewing should be completed for the week they are listed. The instructor may add assignments or alter the schedule for special events. Changes will be communicated via Canvas.

Week 0 (Read first and use as a reference). **Course information.**

Week 1 (January 23, 25). **Introduction.** Watch the video on modern cultural production. Read Stites, introduction; Parker, "Popular Culture" (2011).

Week 2 (January 30, February 1). **Bolshevik mass culture.** Watch *Kino-Nedelia*, no. 1 (1918); *Kino-Pravda*, no. 1 (1922). Read Stites, chapter 1; Taylor, "Birth of Soviet Cinema" (1985); Von Geldern, introduction; Lunacharsky, "Self-Education of Workers" (1918); Lenin, "Tasks of Youth Leagues" (1920), "Directives on Film Business" (1922); Krupskaja, "Young Pioneers" (1925); Trotsky, "Vodka, Church, and Cinema" (1923); "Iron Messiah" (1918); "Send Off" (1918); "Little Apple" (1918); "Young Guard" (1918).

Week 3 (February 6, 8). **The roaring twenties.** Watch the feature film *The Cigarette Girl of Mosselprom* (1924). Read Stites, chapter 2; Kollontai, "New Woman" (1918).

Week 4 (February 13, 15). **Socialist (sur)realism.** Watch the feature film *Volga Volga* (1938). Read Stites, chapter 3; Bulgakov, selected letters (1930-1939); "March of Happy-Go-Lucky Guys" (1934); "Katyusha" (1938).

Week 5 (February 20, 22). **World War and Cold War.** Watch the feature film *For Eyes Only: Streng Geheim* (1963). Read Stites, chapter 4; Sukovataya, "Spy and Counterspy" (2017); "Wait for Me" (1941).

Week 6 (February 27, 29). **Thaw. Essay 1 (February 29).** Watch the feature film *Carnival Night* (1956). Read Stites, chapter 5.

Week 7 (March 5, 7). **Producers and audiences in eastern Europe. Quiz 1 (March 7).** Watch the feature documentary *East Side Story* (1997). Read Drakulić, "Trivial is Political" and "On Doing Laundry" (1992).

Week 8 (March 12, 14). **"Developed" socialism as reality and farce.** Watch the feature film *Ivan Vasilevich Changes Profession* (1973). Read Stites, chapter 6.

Spring recess (March 18 through 24).

Week 9 (March 26, 28). **Maoism and cultural revolution.** Watch the feature film of the ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* (1970). Read "Mass Line," "Youth," "Women," "Culture and Art" from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (1966); selected chapter from Ji-li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl* (1997).

Week 10 (April 2, 4). **Postwar counterculture.** Watch the feature documentaries *Soviet Hippies* (2017) and *After Leto* (2018). Read "Stilyaga" (1949); Stingray, "Interview with Boris Grebenshchikov" (1984).

Week 11 (April 9, 11). **Socialist Yugoslavia as spectacle. Essay 2 (April 11).** Watch the feature documentary *Cinema Komunisto* (2011). Read Mihelj, "Dreamworld of New Yugoslav Culture" (2012).

Week 12 (April 16, 18). **Perestroika. Quiz 2 (April 18).** Watch the feature film *Little Vera* (1988). Read Stites, chapter 7.

Week 13 (April 23, 25): **The fall of the Berlin Wall.** Watch the feature documentary *Whisper and Shout* (1988). Read Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the GDR" (1993); *Do You Know About the GDR?* (1983).

Week 14 (April 30, May 2): **North Korea.** Watch the feature film *Myself in the Distant Future* (1997). Read Kim, introduction to *Illusive Utopia* (2010).

Week 15 (May 7, 9): **After socialism. Essay 3 (May 9).** Watch the feature film *Hipsters (Stiliagi)* (2008). Read Stites, Greetings and farewell.

**Final exam: Tuesday, May 14, 12:45 - 2:45 p.m., in our classroom. Quiz 3 will take place during the final exam period.**

**Deadline for late work: Thursday, May 16, 11:59 p.m.**

**Important policies:** Course deadlines are enforced by Canvas and cannot be extended for any reason. Keep copies of all your work on a hard drive, flash drive, or paper in the event of a computer malfunction or other technical problem.

## Part 5: Grading policy

### Graded course activities

Grades are based on the average grade in each activity category, not a cumulative point system. **In category III the lowest five (5) scores will be dropped to allow for circumstances that might cause students to miss assignments. To pass the class, students must demonstrate passing competence (60% or above) attempted in 60% or more of assignments within categories AND in 60% or more of all categories. In this class, then, students who fail more than three categories will fail the course. Students must also complete the final to pass the class. Students will be expected to follow the writing guide posted on Canvas in categories with formal writing.** Each category will be combined using this weighting:

Category	Assignment	% of course grade
I	Attendance and film viewing	10
II	3 identification quizzes	20
III	14 primary source analyses (9 required to pass the category, lowest 5 dropped)	20
IV	3 formal written essays	30
V	Final examination	20

### Late work

To be fair to students who work hard to make deadlines, late essays will receive a full letter grade penalty. **No other assignments will be accepted late.** Late essays will normally be graded at the end of the semester, not when submitted, except upon request by the student directly to the instructor.

**These late policies will be in force also for foreseeable scheduled power outages, COVID-19 physical distancing regulations, travel, and work schedule changes.** Students are expected to be aware of technical and social limits that may impact their area of residence and to plan around them by completing work in advance and notifying the instructor.

### Viewing grades in Canvas

This class does not use the Canvas gradebook. Grades and student progress and information indicators are calculated from an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded by the instructor manually. They can be viewed in the Canvas gradebook or Canvas assignments section (**click "View By Type"**). **For information see week 0.** The instructor will update the online grades each time a grading session has been complete (typically 7 days after the completion of an activity but often quicker).

### Letter grade assignment

Grades for most work are given as letter grades, calculated and averaged using a 12-point system. Some assignments may be graded on a percentage basis. All are computed and rounded by Canvas or Excel. Missing work will be scored as 0.

Letter grade earned	Points used in calculation	Percentage equivalent	GPA equivalent	Standard
A	12	93-100	4.0	Excellent work
A-	11	90-92	3.7	Nearly excellent work

B+	10	87-89	3.3	Very good work
B	9	83-86	3.0	Good work
B-	8	80-82	2.7	Mostly good work
C+	7	77-79	2.3	Above average work
C	6	73-76	2.0	Average work
C-	5	70-72	1.7	Mostly average work
D+	4	67-69	1.3	Below average work
D	3	63-67	1.0	Poor work
D-	2	60-62	0.7	Very poor work
F	1	Below 60	0.0	Failing work
F	0	0	0.0	Not attempted

## Part 6: Course policies

### Build rapport

If you find that you have any trouble keeping up with assignments or other aspects of the course, make sure you let your instructor know as early as possible. As you will find, building rapport and effective relationships are key to becoming an effective professional. Make sure that you are proactive in informing your instructor when difficulties arise during the semester so that we can help you find a solution.

### Complete assignments

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline. Late or missing assignments will impact the student's grade.

### Understand when you may drop this course

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider disenrolling from a course. Refer to the Sac State Course Schedule for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is required to drop from the course. Serious and compelling reasons include documented and significant change in work hours, leaving student unable to attend class, or documented and severe physical or mental illness or injury to the student or student's family.

**Incomplete policy**

Under emergency or special circumstances students may petition for an incomplete grade. Incompletes will not be given except for a documented emergency that prevents completion of the final assignments (missing online work is not eligible).

**Communication policy**

The instructor monitors email daily and will respond when contacted with questions. Normally a response should come immediately, but students should wait at least 24 hours before sending follow-up communications. The instructor will normally give feedback on assignments only through Canvas course rubrics but is happy to provide more personalized feedback by email, Zoom, or in person.

**Part 7: Commit to integrity**

By taking this class you agree to abide by the guidelines described in this syllabus and on the academic honesty page available on the Canvas site.

Students must respect the intellectual property of others in this class. Make sure to cite sources of other people's ideas; do not pass them off as your own. Copying from other students, assigned course work, or outside web sites without quotation and attribution will be treated as plagiarism and dealt with according to university policy. Students who plagiarize will be warned and receive an F for that assignment. On the second infraction, the student will receive an F for the course.

**Turnitin tool**

Formal written essays are reviewed using the Canvas Turnitin tool for writing feedback and originality check purposes.

Consistent with Sacramento State's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a "similarity score." The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work.

Students should submit essays to Turnitin assignments without identifying information included in the paper (e.g., name or student number), the system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

**Sac State's academic honesty policy & procedures**

"The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars and teachers. California State University, Sacramento expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles, and in so doing, will protect the integrity of academic work and student grades."

**Definitions** (from the Sacramento State University Library)

At Sac State, “**cheating** is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.” For clarity, “**plagiarism is a form of cheating**,” defined by the university as “the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person’s contribution.”

The use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments without instructor permission is considered by the university to be academic dishonesty. Any work determined to be AI generated in this class will be treated as the equivalent of plagiarism according to the policies in this syllabus.

Read more about Sac State’s [Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures](#).