

Independent Study Proposal: Russian Orientalisms and Discourses of
Chechnya
Fall 2011
Instructor: Guy Beauregard

OBJECTIVES:

The main purpose of this proposed independent study is to become familiar with and critically engage with key moments in the development of Russian Orientalisms and discourses of Chechnya. The working hypothesis of the directed reading is that Edward Said's concept of Orientalism cannot be completely applied to Russian history while the colonized Chechnya as one instance of Russia's Orient can be more accurately described in terms of sovietism and de-sovietizing.

To investigate this hypothesis, this independent study will consist of four main sections. We will start with a thorough investigation of key aspects of Orientalism developed by Said and its criticism. We will then examine in which way Russia's imperial history developed and how colonial discourses of Russia were different from the European ones foregrounded by Said. By exploring both historical accounts and literary texts we will investigate how the key concepts - the Orient, the Other and the Occident - were formed and contested in Russian discourse. The next section will focus on discourses of Chechnya by investigating images in literature, mass media, and cinema. The key texts will include works written by Russian and Chechen journalists, writers, poets, and film producers. We will finish up the directed reading with a discussion of Gayatri Spivak's important recent book *Other Asias* and her investigation of the postcolonial model in the age of globalization.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation and discussion: 20%
Eight bi-weekly journal entries: 40%
One term paper 40%
Total: 100%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Introduction to course objectives

Said's Orientalism

Week 2 - 3: Key Aspects of Orientalism (including *Orientalism* by Edward Said and its later criticism)

Week 4: Critiques of Orientalism (including *In Theory* by Aijaz Ahmad)

Russian Orientalisms

Week 5 - 7: Russian Empire and its Colonies (including *Crucifying the Orient The Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia* by Kalpana Sahni; *Orientalism and Empire North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* by Austin Jersild; *A State of Nations Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* by Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin; *Russia and Her Colonies* by Walter Kolarz)

Week 8 - 10: Russian Orientalisms (including *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind From Peter the Great to the Emigration* by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye; *Russian Orientalism: Central Asia and the Caucasus* by Roy Bolton; *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* by Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini; *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* by Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, Alexander Martin)

Week 11: Representation of Asia in Russian Literature (including *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* by Susan Layton; plus texts by Russian writers)

Week 12: Review

Discourses and Counter-discourses of Chechnya

Week 13: Representation of Chechnya in Russian Literature and Mass Media (including *Vtoraya Chechenskaya* by Nikolai Grodnensky; *Chechnya: Life in a War-torn Society* by Valery Tishkov, and articles on Chechnya in Russian mass media)

Week 14: Representation of Chechnya in Cinema (including movies *Blockpost* by Aleksei Buldakov; *Nochevala Tuchka Zolotaya* by Sulambek Mamilov; *12* by Nikita Mikhalkov)

Week 15: The Case of Anna Politkovskaya (including *A Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya*; *Vtoraya Chechenskaya*; *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*; *Nothing But the Truth: Selected Dispatches*)

Week 16: Voices of Chechnya (including texts written by Chechen writers: *Grief of My Heart Memoirs of a Chechen Surgeon* by Khassan Baiev; poems by Apti Bisultanov, *Hamzat's Journey: A Refugee Diary* by Anthony Robinson)

Week 17: Review

Spivak's Other Asias

Week 18: The Postcolonial Model and its Displacements (including *Other Asias* by Gayatri Spivak)