

**Professor Kate Graney**

**Peer Mentor Emma Kurs**

**Fall 2010**

**T/Th 3:40-5:30 Ladd 106**

**SSP-100: Mother Russia's Daughters: Gender and Power in Russia's  
Past and Present**

**Course Description:**

What explains the fact that in a country famously and widely known as “Mother Russia” one of the most enduring proverbs is “Just as a crab is not a fish, a woman is not a human being”? In this seminar, we will apply the powerful tool of gender analysis to Russia’s past and present. In other words, we will explore what it has meant historically, and what it means currently, to be a female human as opposed to a male human living in Russia. How do the life experiences and life opportunities enjoyed by men and women in Russia differ, both historically, and currently? How have political, economic, and social rights, expectations, roles, and opportunities differed for men and women over the years in Russia? What role have various forms of Russian government and economy – Tsarist / absolutist/feudal, Soviet/totalitarian/communist, post-Soviet/“democratic”/capitalist—played in structuring both understandings of and “lived experiences” of female and male human beings in Russia over the years? **Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what do these various experiences tell us about the human experience more generally, and how human beings might organize their lives to facilitate (or impede) human flourishing ?**

We will attempt to answer these questions by exploring such topics as the lives of noblewomen vs. those of peasant women in Peter the Great’s reign, Catherine the Great’s exalted and controversial reign, the demonization of Tsarina Alexandra and changing notions of womanhood during the Russian Revolution, the radical transformations of the early Bolshevik and Stalinist gender regimes, including especially the role of Russian women and gender politics during WWII. We then will take up the crises of femininity and masculinity that emerged in the mature Soviet and post-Soviet era, paying special attention to the problems of contraception, prostitution and trafficking of women, Russian “internet brides” and the gendered nature of the transition to capitalism. Letters, diaries, works of fiction, works of art, literary criticism, anthropological accounts, and films produced by and about Russian women will provide an interdisciplinary perspective on the Babas, comrades, and Natashas who shape Russia’s past and present.

### **Course Goals:**

This course is an introduction to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on gender in Russia's history and present. In addition, this is a course about knowing, particularly about ways to identify problems, formulate productive questions, and go about answering those questions. By the end of this course, it is my hope that you will be able to:

1. distinguish among, and formulate, types of questions asked by different disciplines, particularly history, literary criticism, art history, anthropology and political science.
2. read critically, and gather and interpret evidence from different sources, including primary documents (diaries, letters, government documents) and secondary sources (scholarly articles and books about certain topics that themselves are based on analysis of primary evidence, films)
3. distinguish among the evidence and methodologies appropriate to different disciplines, in particular history, literary criticism, art history, anthropology and political science
4. consider and address complexities and ambiguities in the study of gender and history in Russia
5. make connections among ideas that are presented in different forms (primary sources, works of art and literature, ethnography, secondary sources)
6. recognize choices, examine assumptions made by different authors and ask similar questions of yourselves and your own work
7. formulate conclusions based upon evidence
8. communicate your ideas more effectively both orally and in writing
9. relate the results of this course to your immediate and future educational and life goals

As this suggests, an important aspect of this course is to alert you to the interconnections among disciplines by providing more than a single discipline-specific perspective. As such, I hope that you will learn to distinguish among, and formulate, the types of questions asked by different disciplines as well as learn to use the evidence and methodologies appropriate to different disciplines (in this case, history, literary criticism, art history, anthropology and political science).

## ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- 1. FIVE 1-2 page analyses of a primary historical document.** Specific documents from the anthology will be assigned in class—see handout for your assigned texts and due dates. **Due WEEKS # Two, Three (2), Four and Seven. (20%)**
- 2. FIVE in-class quizzes. Scheduled for WEEKS # EIGHT, NINE, TEN, ELEVEN and THIRTEEN.** Format for these short quizzes will vary. You will be allowed to use any notes you have taken on the reading for that day, but not the readings themselves. **(20%)**
- 3. Mid-Term Essay #1: Gender, Art and Power in Imperial Russia (8-10pp)**  
More details to follow. **(25%)DUE MONDAY October 25 in my office.**
- 4. Student-Led Class Discussion:** Working in pairs, students will be responsible for formulating and distributing discussion questions at the beginning of one class meeting. **WEEKS: Nine – Thirteen (see syllabus for your assigned date)(10%)**
- 5. Final Essay(8-10pp) :** Considering the Construction of Specific Gender Roles During the Soviet Era in Russia and their Transformation Since the Collapse of Communism: More details about assignment to follow. **Due Friday December 17 at Noon (25%)**

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS and CLASS MEETINGS**

### **Week One: Gender as a Way of Seeing and a Tool of Analysis**

#### **Tuesday September 7:**

Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender” (in packet handed out on Sept 4)

#### **Thursday Sept 9:**

Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender” (packet)

**Assignment:** Gender Scavenger Hunt (handed out Sept 7)

**\*\*4:30: Scribner Seminar Reception at President’s House**

### **Week Two: Introducing Russia: Noble Women in Public Life in Pre-Petrine and Petrine Russia**

#### **Tuesday Sept 14: Introducing Russian History**

Ascher, *Russia, A Short History*, p. 1-65

#### **Thursday Sept. 16: Early Modern Russia: Peter the Great**

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Ch. 1, “The Petrine Revolution: New Men, New Women, New Ideas”

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*, Ch. 1 “Defining Ideals,” excerpts (**Writing Assignment:** see assigned list for the documents you are responsible for).

## **Week Three: Noblewomen and Peasant Women: Similarities and Differences**

### **Tuesday Sept. 21: Noblewomen**

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Ch. 2, “The Petrine Revolution: Noblewomen at Home”

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*, Ch. 2, “Family Life” and Ch. 3, “Sexuality”, excerpts (**Writing Assignment**: see assigned list for the documents you are responsible for)

### **Thursday Sept. 23: Peasant Women**

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Ch. 3, “Outside the Circle of Privilege”

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*, Ch. 2, “Family Life” and Ch. 3, “Sexuality”, excerpts (**Writing Assignment**: see assigned list for the documents you are responsible for)

## **Week Four: Gender, Religion and Spirituality: Representations of Women in Early Russian Art**

### **Tuesday Sept 28:**

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*, Ch. 5, “Religion, Piety and Spiritual Life”, excerpts (**Writing Assignment**: see assigned list for the documents you are responsible for)

### **Thursday Sept 30:**

Gary Marker, “An Icon of Female Authority: The St. Catherine Image of 1721,” in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, Kivelson and Neuberger, eds. (packet)

Vera Shevzov, “The Message of Mary,” from *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, p.214-226 and 244-256 (packet)

## **Week Five: Catherine the Great**

### **Tuesday October 5:**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p. 66-79

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*, Ch. 4. Work and Schooling, p.165 – 173, and p. 216-220.

### **Thursday October 7:**

“Catherine the Great and the Problem of Female Rule”, Brenda Meehan-Waters, (packet)

Richard Wortman, from *Scenarios of Power*, p. bottom 52-top 62, “Minerva on the Throne” and “Empress and Legislatrix” (packet)

FILM “Catherine the Great: A Lust for Art” (in class)

## **Week Six : Gendering Russia’s Silver Age of Art and Culture (the 19thc)**

### **Tuesday October 12:**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p.80-130

### **Thursday October 14:**

“Mothers and Sons in Russian Literature”, GS Smith, *Journal of European Studies*, 34 (4): 291-307 (packet); excerpts from Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons* (packet)

## **Week Seven: The Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Transformation and Tragedy**

### **Tuesday October 19:**

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Ch.4-5, “Rebels and Reformers”, “Peasants and Proletarians”

*Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression: An Anthology of Sources*,

Ch. 6, "Opposition and Activism", excerpts (**Writing Assignment:** see assigned list for the documents you are responsible for)

**Thursday October 21:**

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Ch.6, "A Widening Sphere"

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p.131-148

**\*\*MIDTERM ESSAY DUE MONDAY OCTOBER 25 @ NOON \*\***

**Week Eight : Amazons of the Avante-Garde : Russian Women Artists at the Turn of the Century**

**Tuesday October 26 :**

*Amazons of the Avante-Garde*, Bowit and Durtt editors, New York: Guggenheim Museum Press, 2004, **p.21-37**, "Women of Genius" by John Bowlt, and **p.95-107**, "Dressing Up and Dressing Down" by Nicoletta Misler and **p.109-127**, "Creative Men, Creative Women", by Ekaterina Dyagot. (packet)

**Thursday October 28:      \*\*IN-CLASS QUIZ\*\***

*Amazons of the Avante-Garde*, Bowit and Durtt editors, New York: Guggenheim Museum Press, 2004, **p. 75-93**"Gender Trouble in the Amazon Kingdom" by Olga Matich (packet)

Louise McReynolds, "Visualizing Masculinity: The Male Sex That Was Not One in Fin-de-Siecle Russia," in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, Kivelson and Neuberger, eds. (packet)

**Week Nine: Russian Women in World War One and the Revolution**

**Tuesday November 2: World War One : \*\*IN-CLASS QUIZ\*\***

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS: Talia Apkon, Jane Dowd, Nicole McAllister**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p.148-158

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia : 1700-2000*, p.128-133

*Russian Women, 1698-1917, Experience and Expression* p.220-226, “Women’s Death Battalion”

**Thursday November 4: The Revolution**

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS : Patrick Babbit, Arissa Fram, Jessica Orcutt**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p. 158-166

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, p. 133-146

**Week Ten: Creating the “New Soviet Woman” : Lenin and Stalin eras**

**Tuesday November 9 : Lenin Era**

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS: Kirsten Brink, Erica Hamlin, Martha Prince**

Ascher, *Russia : A Short History*, p. 170-180

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Chapter 8 “Creating the New Soviet Woman”

**Thursday November 11: Stalin Era \*\* IN-CLASS QUIZ\*\***

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS: Michael Coffel, Lily Jordahl, Bridget Smith**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p. p.180-193

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Chapter 9, “The Second Revolution”

Douglas Northrup, “Envisioning Empire: Veils and Visual Revolution in Soviet Central Asia,” in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, Kivelson and Neuberger, eds. (packet)

## **Week Eleven: Soviet Women During WW 2**

**Tuesday November 16: Russian Women During WW2 \*\*IN-CLASS QUIZ\*\***

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS: William Conway, Emma Kurs, Lee Watkins**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p. 193-201

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Chapter 11, “World War Two and Its Aftermath”

Karen Petrone, “Motherland Calling: National Symbols and the Mobilization for War,” in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, Kivelson and Neuberger, eds. (packet)

**Thursday November 18 : The Stalinist Legacy**

**\*\*DISCUSSION LEADERS: \*\*Emily Culbert, Madison Lehrhaupt, Emma Kurs**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, p.202-219

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700-2000*, Chapter 12, “Grappling with the Stalinist Legacy”.

**WeekTwelve: Nov. 23-25 Thanksgiving Break : No class**

**Week Thirteen : End of Communism and What Comes Next ?**

**Tuesday November 30: Gorbachev Era**

Ascher, *Russia: A Short History*, 219-243 ; Gorbachev Film

**Thursday December 2 : Gendering Post-Soviet Russia I: Women \*\*IN-CLASS QUIZ\*\***

Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*, Ch. 13, “New Russians, New Women?”, p. 250-268.

“Houswife Fantasies, Family Realities in the New Russia,” Tania Rands Lyon, in Janet Johnson and Jean C. Robinson, eds, *Living Gender After Communism*. (packet)

“Birthday Girls, Russian Dolls, and Others: Internet Bride as the Emerging Global Identity of Post-Soviet Women” Svitlana Taraban , in Janet Johnson and Jean C. Robinson, eds, *Living Gender After Communism*. (packet)

**Week Fourteen: Gendering Post-Soviet Russia II: Men**

**Tuesday December 7**

Rebecca Kay, *Men in Contemporary Russia*, p.1-44 (packet)

**Thursday December 9**

Helena Goscilo, “Viktor Vasnetsov’s Bogatyrs: Mythic Heroes and Sacrosanct Borders Go to Market,” in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, Kivelson and Neuberger, eds. (packet)

Film: BRAT (Brother), 1991. Directed by Alexei Balabanov

**FINAL EXAM DUE Friday DECEMBER 17 @ NOON**