This course explores Soviet film as a historical source, as well as the institutional and ideological history of Soviet film production, distribution, and exhibition from the early years of the Soviet regime to World War II. It is aimed at students with a background in Russian history, film, or media studies who wish to develop their knowledge in either area or experiment with interdisciplinary approaches. This course will examine the creation of a revolutionary society and state socialism through the lens of the Soviet school of montage, popular films of the 1920s, and the rise of socialist realism in filmmaking. Other aspects of Soviet cinema of the 1920s-1940s include the nationality question, the “women question,” the relation between entertainment and propaganda in Soviet musicals of the Stalin era, and the question of resistance and dissidence.

By examining the relation between fiction and documentary film, specific questions of form, such as editing, narrative, or sound, will be used to investigate ways to analyze the complex interaction between reality, ideology, and their representation on screen. Issues of film reception will be considered through the unique Soviet institution of “cinefication,” i.e. the dissemination of film to every town and village, to every collective or state farm, to the most remote corners of the Soviet Union, using trains, boats, planes, trucks, and other means of transport. Over two consecutive sessions, consisting of film screenings, presentations, and class discussion, this course extends far beyond the limitations of traditional Soviet film courses based on a smaller number of films with English subtitles. Students will view never before seen archival footage, as well as rare films and film clips, subtitled by the instructor.
Learning Goals:
By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

• Provide an overall synthesis of the key themes of film history in the Soviet Union, from the 1917 Revolution to the beginning of the Cold War
• Analyze fiction and documentary films as historical (primary) sources
• Understand the impact of political, social, cultural, and economic history on artistic creation and collaboration
• Understand and communicate the basic arguments put forward by various authors of the assigned sources, as well as discuss and critique those arguments
• Make an oral argument and lead student discussion through an in-class presentation with an audio-visual component
• Present ideas clearly and concisely in written and oral form

Required Texts:
This class requires students to purchase or otherwise acquire four texts: a collection of primary source documents (with scholarly commentaries) and three historical monographs. I have also included a two “textbooks,” recommended (but not required) for those students looking for additional background material. All books are available for purchase in the college bookstore and are available on reserve at the Mudd Center library.

• Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (I.B. Tauris, 2007)

Recommended Texts:

• Ronald G. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford University Press, 1997)

Other required texts (articles and book chapters): see course schedule. Book chapters or articles indicated as “Course Readings” are required. These readings materials are available online or will be uploaded on Blackboard.

Course requirements:
1. Participation. Attendance is mandatory and students are expected to participate actively in class sessions. Please come prepared to discuss course content. Students are recommended to bring copies of assigned text in order to ground discussion in documentary evidence. Absence from class lectures and discussions will, obviously, have a negative impact on your participation.

2. Book Review. Students will review of Tsivian’s *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*. A book review should be, in the words of the American Historical Review, “a thoughtful critique
that explains the basic argument of the book and assesses its strengths and weaknesses. This assignment should be about 1000 words in length, with footnotes.

3. **Film review.** Students will review one or more films of their choosing from Weeks 1 through 7. This assignment should offer a critical analysis of the film’s narrative in the context of the historical period in which it was made. Please feel free to incorporate any of the course readings into your review. The film review should be about 1000 words in length, with footnotes.

4. **In-class presentation** (approximately 2500 words): Students will write and present in class a short conference paper. Depending on the size of the class, these papers will either offer an in-depth critical analysis of a given week’s film screenings and primary and secondary readings or they will represent a trial run of the students’ topic and ideas for the Final Research Paper. A final determination in this regard will be made in the first two weeks of class.

5. **Final Research Paper** (approximately 6000 words). Topics can focus on any aspect of Soviet history or film but they should have an interdisciplinary character, based on the general question of film as a historical source. Students will submit a draft well in advance of the final product.

I will provide more detailed instructions about these assignments during the semester.

### Percentage Value of Final Grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>September 29 (Week 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Review</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>October 27 (Week 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Date TBD in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>December 18; draft due December 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Cumulative</td>
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</tbody>
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Late assignments will receive deductions of one-third of a letter grade per day. So, an “A” paper handed in one-day late will receive a “B+”, two-days late, a “B”, and so on. You will also not be allowed to turn in further assignments until late work has been submitted.

Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be given in case of emergency/illness or if you ask for an extension because of a heavy workload during the week. In the latter case, an extension will be granted if students provide me with no less than seven (2) days notice.

All written work must be turned in for students to achieve a passing grade. All course work must be received by Friday, December 18, 2015 at noon (12 PM).

### Course Etiquette:

1. Be sure to turn off cell phones prior to class. Please do not answer calls, text, tweet, update social networking sites during lectures and discussion sections – this is a sign of respect for the instructor, your colleagues, and the atmosphere of learning in the classroom.

2. Students should use proper written etiquette when sending me an email (formal address, correct grammar, clearly stated question or comment. Remember that this is a formal exchange and part of your scholarly persona.
3. Most importantly: the classroom is a space for respectful discussion of ideas and events. All students have a right to express themselves – to wrestle with ideas, pose questions, and engage in productive debate and conversation. Differences of opinion are a natural product of discussion between individuals of different personalities and experiences. It is our responsibility to create an open and cordial atmosphere. Feel free to disagree with each other (and me!), but please do so in a respectful manner.

**Plagiarism & the Honor Code:**
“The word plagiarism derives from the Latin roots: *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal. The expropriation of another author’s work and the presentation of it as one’s own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship.” [American Historical Association, Statement on Standards of Professional Contact]. Presenting the work of others as one’s own goes against everything that a liberal education is about. It is a serious affront to the other students in the course, to me as a member of the course, and to the plagiarizer him/herself. The College requires that students sign an “Honor Code” for all assignments. This pledge states: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard > Lookup/Directories > Honor Code. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly in the context of joint or collaborative projects, please see me or raise it in class.

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in or out of class, and for which you may require accommodations, please let me know how your learning needs may be appropriately met. For documentation, please visit the Office of Disability Services in Peters Hall, Room G-27/28. For more information: [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/)

NB: I reserve the right to modify the syllabus over the course of the semester. Any changes will, however, be introduced at least one week prior to their implementation.

**Course Schedule**

**WEEK 1**
Tuesday 9/1: Organizational Meeting
• Course requirements and goals. Review Syllabus. Introduction of themes and historiography.

  **Film Screenings:** *Twilight of a Woman’s Soul* (Bauer, 1913); *The Dying Swan* (Bauer, 1916)

**WEEK 2**
Tuesday 9/8: Pre-revolutionary Cinema

  *The Film Factory*, pp. 25-26, 27-31, 33-38, 39, 41-43

  Blackboard:
• William Hughes, “The Evaluation of Film as Evidence,” in *The Historian and Film*, pp. 49-79

**Film Screenings**: *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (Kuleshov, 1924); *Kino-Eye* (Vertov, 1924); *Kino-nedelia* (Vertov et al., 1918-19)

**WEEK 3**

**Tuesday 9/15: The Early Soviet Film Industry**

Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, chapters 3-5

Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov*, pp. 1-38


**Blackboard**

- Lev Kuleshov, “Our First Experiences” and “The Principles of Montage,” in *Kuleshov on Film*, pp. 159-177, 183-195
- Mikhail Yampolsky, “Kuleshov’s Experiments and the New Anthropology of the Actor,” in *Inside the Film Factory*, pp. 31-50
- “In the Cinema Committee,” in *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, pp. 38-39

**Film Screenings**: *Aelita* (Protazanov, 1924); *Interplanetary Revolution* (Komissarenko et al., 1924)

**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday 9/22: Utopia in the Air…**

Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, chapters 6-8

**Blackboard**

- Ian Christie, "Down to earth: Aelita relocated," in *Inside the Film Factory*, pp. 80-102
- Denise J. Youngblood, “The Return of the Native: Yakov Protazanov and Soviet Cinema,” in *Inside the Film Factory*, pp. 103-23

**Film Screenings**: *Bed and Sofa* (Room, 1927)

**Week 5**

**Tuesday 9/29: …Reality on the Ground**

Blackboard:
- Alexandra Kollontai, “Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle” (1911), in Selected Writings of Aleksandra Kollontai, pp. 237-249.

Film Screenings: October (Eisenstein, 1927); ALSO The Revolutionary (Bauer, 1917); The End of St. Petersburg (Pudovkin, 1927)

Book Review Due

Week 6
Tuesday 10/6: Montage and Marxist Cinema: Sergei Eisenstein
The Film Factory, pp. 87-89, 144-149, 161-162, 171-174, 178-183, 195-200, 204-206, 208-234, 239-246

Blackboard:
- James Goodwin, Eisenstein, Cinema, and History, pp. 79-97
- Yuri Tsivian, “Eisenstein and Russian Symbolist Culture: An Unknown Script of October,” in Eisenstein Rediscovered, pp. 79-109
- Frederick C. Corney, “Narratives of October and the Issue of Legitimacy,” in Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practice, pp. 185-203

Film Screenings: Man with the Movie Camera (Vertov, 1929); ALSO A Sixth Part of the World (Vertov, 1927) and The Eleventh Year (Vertov, 1928).

WEEK 7
Tuesday 10/13: The Factory of Facts: Dziga Vertov
Jeremy Hicks, Dziga Vertov, 39-70.

The Film Factory, pp. 112-114, 115-120, 129-131, 150-154, 184-187, 200-203

Blackboard:
- Kino-Eye: The writings of Dziga Vertov, pp. 82-85, 283-289
Film Screenings: Peasants (Ermler, 1934); ALSO The General Line (Eisenstein, 1929); Earth (Dozhenko, 1930)

October 17-25: Fall Recess!

WEEK 8
Tuesday 10/27: Screening the Village
Jaime Miller, Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin, introduction, chapter 1

The Film Factory, pp. 234-246, 250-257, 264-282, 286-295, 305-311

Blackboard:
• Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stalin's Peasants, pp. 3-79.
• Peter Bagrov, “Ermler, Stalin, and Animation: On the Film The Peasants (1934)”

Film Screening: Chapaev (Georgi & Sergei Vasiliev, 1934)

Film Review Due

WEEK 9
Tuesday 11/3: Socialist Realism on Screen
Jaime Miller, Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin, chapters 2-4

The Film Factory, pp. 318-320, 321-325, 327-330, 331-337, 348-355, 358-369

Blackboard:
• Katerina Clark, The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual, pp. 3-45, 82-89
• Julian Graffy, Chapaev, pp. 19-26, 67-92
• Marc Ferro, “The Fiction Film and Historical Analysis,” in The Historian and Film, pp. 80-94
• Jeremy Hicks, “Educating Chapaev: From Document to Myth,” in Russian and Soviet Film Adapts of Literature, 1900-2001, pp. 44-58
• Dmitrii Furmanov, Chapaev (excerpts), in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 56-68

Film Screening: Circus (Aleksandrov, 1936)

WEEK 10
Tuesday 11/10: Hollywood in Moscow: The Soviet Musical Comedy
Jaime Miller, Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin, chapters 5-8, conclusion

The Film Factory, pp. 373-377, 381-385, 386-397

Blackboard:
• Vasilii Lededev-Kumach & Isaac Dunaevsky, “Song of the Motherland,” in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, p. 271
• Josephine Woll, “Under the Big Top: American Goes to the Circus,” in Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema, pp. 68-80
• Thomas Lahusen, "From Laughter 'Out of Sync' to Post-Synchronized Comedy: How the Stalinist Film Musical Caught up with Hollywood and Overtook It," in Socialist Cultures East and West: A Post-Cold War Reassessment, 31-42

Film Screenings: Three Songs About Lenin (Vertov, 1934); excerpts from Lullaby (Vertov, 1936) and The Vow (Chiaureli, 1946); ALSO The Fall of Berlin (Chiaureli, 1949)

WEEK 11
Tuesday 11/17: “Stalin is Lenin Today”
Jeremy Hicks, Dziga Vertov, pp. 90-136

The Film Factory, pp. 299-305, 340-343, 357-358, 377

Blackboard:
• Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 86-89
• Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov, pp. 115-137; 145-157, 176-179, 200-203
• Hans Günther: "Wise Father Stalin and His Family in Soviet Cinema" in Socialist Realism without Shores, pp. 178-190

Film Screenings: Seekers of Happiness (Korsh-Sablin, 1936)

WEEK 12
Tuesday 11/24: The Soviet Nationalities & The Jewish Question

Blackboard:
• J. Hoberman, “A Face of the Shtetl: Soviet Yiddish Cinema, 1924-36,” in Inside the Film Factory, pp. 124-150
• Gabrielle Chomentowski, “Vostokkino and the Foundation of Central Asian Cinema,” in Cinema in Central Asia, pp. 33-44

Film Screening: She Defends the Motherland [No Greater Love] (Ermler, 1943); ALSO The Fall of Berlin (Raizman & Svilova, 1945); Alexander Nevsky (Eisenstein, 1938)

WEEK 13
Tuesday 12/1: The Great Patriotic War
The Film Factory, pp. 398-401

Blackboard:
• Pavel Lidov, “Tanya,” in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 341-344
• Vasily Grossman, “Good is Stronger than Evil,” in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 380-386
• Ilya Ehrenburg, “The Justification of Hate,” in Mass Culture in Soviet Russia, pp. 401-405
• Howard Barnes, “No Greater Love’ – Victoria,” New York Herald Tribune (review)
• Karel C. Berkhoff, Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II, pp. 223-243
• Richard Taylor, Film Propaganda, pp. 85-122

Film Screenings: Ivan the Terrible, Part One (Eisenstein, 1944) & Ivan the Terrible, Part Two (Eisenstein, 1946)

Final Research Paper Draft Due

WEEK 14
Tuesday 12/8: Ivan the Terrible: History as Allegory?
Blackboard:
• James Goodwin, Eisenstein, Cinema, and History, pp. 179-209
• “Stalin, Zhdanov, and Molotov on Ivan the Terrible, Part Two,” in The Eisenstein Reader, 160-66
• Joan Neuberger, Ivan the Terrible, pp. 13-24
• Joan Neuberger, “Eisenstein’s Cosmopolitan Kremlin: Drag Queens, Circus Clowns, Slugs, and Foreigners in Ivan the Terrible,” in Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema, pp. 81-95

Final Research Paper is due on December 18