

Williams College

History 140T

Fall, 2016

Mr. Wagner

**Fin-de-Siècle Russia: Cultural Splendor, Imperial Decay**

Imperial Russia on the eve of the First World War presents a complex picture of political conflict, social and economic change, and cultural ferment and innovation. Newly emergent political parties sought to enlist mass support to transform or overthrow the tsarist regime, which in turn endeavored to preserve itself through a combination of repression, reform, and the refashioning of its image. Rapid urbanization and industrialization, and the spread of education and literacy, gave rise to social conflict and dislocation, demands for social reform, and the redefinition of individual identities and beliefs. These political, social, cultural, and economic developments provided a fertile context for the burst of literary creativity and the emergence of modernist literary and artistic movements that occurred in *fin-de-siècle* imperial Russia. This course is intended, in the first instance, to explore the interrelationship between these literary and artistic trends on the one hand and the political, social, and cultural conflict and change occurring in late imperial Russia on the other. With this objective, we will examine a series of literary works and artistic and architectural movements—for example, Chekhov’s play “The Cherry Orchard” and his story “The Culprit,” Gorky’s *My Childhood*, Bely’s *Petersburg*, Russian revivalism, modernism, symbolism, etc.—within their historical context, seeking to understand both how the particular context shaped these works and movements and how the latter can help us understand the times in which they emerged or were produced. Through such an examination the course hopes to provide an understanding of both the pressures in late Imperial Russia that contributed to the Revolutions of 1917 and the reasons why this proved to be such a culturally creative period.

Intended for first- and second-year students, the course also seeks to familiarize students with the ways historians study and understand the past. An important aspect of the course therefore will be the critical assessment both of competing arguments made by historians about developments in late Imperial Russia and of how historians can use literary, artistic, and other visual sources to understand and interpret the past.

Finally, the course also is intended to help students develop their ability to present arguments both orally and in writing. After the first week, students will meet weekly in tutorial pairs for approximately one hour, with one student writing an essay of no more than seven double-spaced typed pages and presenting a summary of it orally in class and the other student being responsible for offering a constructive critique of the paper of his or her partner. The essay must be given to the responding student (and to me) no later than the evening preceding the day when the tutorial will take place. ***For this reason, no extensions are possible.*** In each tutorial pair, students will alternate each week in the roles of presenting a paper and acting as critic.

## BOOKS AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS

The following books can be purchased at the Williams College Bookstore:

Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance. A Cultural History of Russia*  
Dominic Lieven, *Nicholas II* \*Note: available at the packet distribution center  
Paul Schmidt, *The Plays of Anton Chekhov*  
Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*  
Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories*  
Maksim Gorky, *My Childhood*  
Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*

In addition, a packet of photocopies should be obtained from the distribution center for a charge that partially covers reproduction costs.

All images for the course are available on the course website, the link to which can be found on my personal page on the History Department website.

Since students may not be familiar with this period in Russian history, the following general histories of Russia have been placed on reserve in Sawyer Library and may be consulted for further background or reference:

Gregory Freeze, *Russia: A History*  
Nicholas Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia*

In addition, the following cultural history of Russia also has been placed on reserve and may be used to supplement Figes, *Natasha's Dance*:

Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell. The Story of a Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia*

## REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements include thoughtful and active participation in each class and tutorial, five tutorial essays based on class readings, the thoughtful and constructive critique of the essays of one's tutorial partner, and a final essay. ***Because each tutorial depends on the thoughtful engagement of the student critic with the arguments made in the essay by his or her partner, extensions for tutorial essays are not possible and it is imperative that essays be delivered to the student critic in a timely fashion.*** The student critic should either write out or prepare an outline of his or her comments and will be expected to give a copy both to the essay's author and to me at the end of the tutorial meeting.

*Final Essay:* In an essay of no more than 8 pages, discuss what insights and conclusions you have drawn from your work this semester in this course regarding the usefulness of literary, artistic, and other visual sources for understanding and interpreting the past. ***Due by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, 16 December, in my mailbox in Hollander.***

## CLASS MEETINGS

There will be one meeting of all the students in the course in the first full week of classes, and thereafter tutorial pairs will meet separately each week. The times for the common class meeting and all tutorial meetings will be arranged.

## OFFICE HOURS

I am happy to meet with you at any time by prior arrangement. My formal office hours will be set once weekly tutorial meeting times have been arranged. *My office is 336 Hollander (ext. 4881).*

## HONOR CODE

*I expect you to abide by the terms of the Honor Code in all your work in this class. Any violation of the Honor Code will be cause for failing the course. Please come talk to me at any point during the semester if you are uncertain about what might constitute a violation.*

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

1. September 8 Organizational Meeting (all students)
2. Week of 12-16 September (common meeting of all students)

*Historical Understanding, Visual Sources, and Imperial Images*

Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, "Truth and Objectivity," packet

Burke, excerpts from *Eyewitnessing*, packet

Wortman, excerpts from *Scenarios of Power*, packet

*See images for class no. 2 on the course website*

*View the video (about 5 minutes) of Nicholas II on Glow, accessible through the course website*

3. Week of 19-23 September (tutorial meetings)

*"Modernizing" the Autocracy: Possibilities and Obstacles*

Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 1-21, 68-203, 247-62

McDonald, "United Government," packet

review Wortman, excerpts from *Scenarios of Power*, packet

4. Week of 26-30 September (tutorial meetings)

*Empire, Nation, and Nationalism*

Tables on ethno-religious composition of the Russian Empire

Weeks, "National Minorities in the Russian Empire," packet

Crews, "Empire and the Confessional State," packet

Jersild, "From Savagery to Citizenship," packet

Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 358-416

Layton, "Nineteenth-Century Russian Mythologies," packet

Tolstoy, *Hadji Murad*, all

*See maps and images for class no. 4 on the course website*

5. Week of 3-7 October (tutorial meetings)

*The Provincial Nobility: Decline or Adaptation?*

Shanin, excerpts from *Russia as a 'Developing Society,'* packet  
Becker, excerpts from *Nobility and Privilege,* packet  
Wcislo, “*Soslovie or Class?*,” packet  
Wagner, excerpts from *Marriage, Property, and Law,* packet  
Figes, *Natasha's Dance,* pp. 191-211, 346-9, 408-11  
Chekhov, “*The Cherry Orchard*” (in Schmidt, *Plays*), all

**10-11 October—Fall Reading Period**

6. Week of 10-14 October (tutorial meetings)

*Peasant Russia: Isolation and Stagnation or Adaptation and Integration?*

Shanin, excerpts from *Russia as a 'Developing Society,'* packet  
Hoch, “*The Serf Economy,*” packet  
Burd, excerpts from *Peasant Dreams,* packet  
Figes, *Natasha's Dance,* pp. 220-36, 255-64, 318-22, 349-53  
Frank, “*Popular Justice,*” packet  
Burbank, “*Legal Culture,*” packet  
Farnsworth, “*The Litigious Daughter-in-Law,*” packet  
Chekhov, “*The Culprit,*” packet  
Eklof, “*Peasants and Schools,*” packet  
Shapir, “*The Settlement,*” packet  
*See images for class no. 6 on the course website*

7. Week of 17-21 October (tutorial meetings)

*Women and the “Woman Question”*

Engel, excerpts from *Women in Russia,* packet  
Wagner, “*Trojan Mare,*” packet  
Figes, *Natasha's Dance,* pp. 236-55  
Tolstoy, “*Kreutzer Sonata,*” in *Kreutzer Sonata*  
review Farnsworth, “*Litigious Daughter-in-Law,*” and Shapir, “*Settlement*”

8. Week of 24-28 October (tutorial meetings)

*Religion, Modernization, and Identity*

Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 292-354  
review ch. 11 in Wortman, excerpts from *Scenarios of Power*, packet  
Freeze, "Church and Politics," packet  
Freeze, "Going to the Intelligentsia," packet  
Dixon, "The Church's Social Role," packet  
Herrlinger, "Orthodoxy and the Experience of Factory Life," packet  
review ch. 7 in Burds, excerpts from *Peasant Dreams*, packet  
Shevzov, "Icons, Laity, and Authority," packet  
*See images for class no. 8 on the course website* (brief biographical information on the artists is in the reading packet)

9. Week of 31 October-4 November (tutorial meetings)

*Refashioning Urban Russia*

Fedor, statistics on urban growth, packet  
Bradley, "Moscow," packet  
Bater, "Between Old and New," packet  
Ruane, "Caftan to Business Suit," packet  
Brumfeld, "Aesthetics and Commerce," packet  
West, "Visions," packet  
Evtuhov, "Nizhnii Novgorod," packet  
Brumfeld, "Creating a New Style," packet  
Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 171-216  
*See images for class no. 9 on the course website*

10. Week of 7-11 November (tutorial meetings)

*Representing Urban Russia*

Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 263-4  
Figes, "Maxim Gorky and the Russian Revolution," packet  
Gorky, *My Childhood*, all  
*Review images of Nizhnii Novgorod for class no. 9 on the course website*

11. Week of 14-18 November

*No meetings—begin reading the next assignment*

12. Week of 21-25 November

*No meetings—Thanksgiving Vacation—continue reading the next assignment*

13. Week of 28 November-2 December (tutorial meetings)

*Avant-Garde Reactions to 1905: Symbolism and Apocalyptic Vision*

Evtuhov *et al.*, excerpts from *History of Russia*, packet  
review Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 132-60  
Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 211-16, 411-26  
Bely, *Petersburg*, all  
*See images of the Bronze Horseman on the course website*

14. Week of 5-9 December (tutorial meetings)

*Avant-Garde Reactions to 1905: Modernism*

Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 211-16, 265-87, 426-9  
Bowlit, Introduction to *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, packet  
Bowlit, "Orthodoxy and the Avant-Garde," packet  
Wood, "The avant-garde in the early twentieth century," packet  
Day, "The Futurists: transcontinental avant-gardism," packet  
"Natalya Goncharova," packet  
Goncharova and Larionov, documents, packet  
Sharp, "Redrawing the Margins," packet  
*See images for class no. 14 on the course website*

**FINAL ESSAYS DUE, Friday, 16 December, by 4:00 p.m., in my mailbox in Hollander (or via e-mail).**

***Have a pleasant and relaxing vacation!!***

## Class Images

### Class no. 2: Historical Understanding, Visual Sources, and Imperial Images

#### *From The Romanov Family Album (photographs of the empress and her daughters):*

1. The charity bazaar: Prepared room.
2. The charity bazaar: Empress Alexandra selling wares.
3. The charity bazaar: Crowded room.
4. Empress Alexandra and her daughters serving as nurses in World War I.

#### *Images from Nicholas and Alexandra:*

1. The coronation of Nicholas II.
2. Emperor Nicholas II presenting regimental colors to an infantry regiment.
3. Court dress of Empress Alexandra.
4. Commander-in-Chief uniform of Grand Duchess Olga.
5. Nobles' ball in St. Petersburg.
6. Emperor Nicholas II's speech opening the First Duma.
7. Military banners.
8. Nicholas, Alexandra, and others dressed in costumes for a ball, 1903.
9. Emperor Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra, and their children.

#### *Faberge Egg: The Imperial Tercentenary Egg*

### Class no. 4: Empire, Nation, and Nationalism

#### *Maps*

#### *Paintings from The Russian Museum:*

1. Vasily Surikov, "Yermak's Conquest of Siberia," 1895.
2. Ilya Repin, "The Zaporozhian Cossacks Writing a Mocking Letter to the Turkish Sultan," 1880-1891.
3. Vasily Vereschagin, "Shipka-Sheinovo (Skobolev outside Shipka)," before 1890.

***Photographs from M. Lyons, Russia in Original Photographs, 1860-1920:***

1. Abkhazian chieftan (Caucasus), c. 1890.
2. A Khabardin (one of the largest Caucasian groups).
3. The Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky (constructed 1894-1912), Saxon Square, Warsaw, Poland, c. 1912.
4. Shop of a market vendor in Tiflis, Georgia (Caucasus).

***Photographs from K. Fitzlyon et al., Before the Revolution:***

1. The Empress Alexandra with the Emir of Bokhara at the imperial residence in the Crimea, 1909.
2. Buriat soldiers of the Trans-Baikal Cossacks.
3. Kalmuck chieftan and bodyguard.
4. The Tiflis branch of His Master's Voice, c. 1914.

***Photographs from S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii, Photographs for the Tsar:***

1. Chinese master tea-grower Lau Dzen-dzhan (Georgia, Caucasus).
2. Tea gatherers, Greek women and girls (Georgia, Caucasus).
3. Weighing room, Chakva tea works, near Batumi (Georgia, Caucasus).

**Class no. 6: The Peasantry: Isolation and Stagnation or Adaptation and Integration?**

1. Nikolai Bogdanov-Belsky, "Oral Reckoning," 1895.
2. Nikolai Bogdanov-Belsky, "At the Ferry Landing," 1915.
3. Sergei Ivanov, "Death of a Migrant Peasant," 1889.
4. Sergei Korovin, "Meeting of the Village Community," 1893.
5. Nikolai Orlov, "Tax-Collecting," 1895.
6. Nikolai Pimonenko, "Haymaking," 1907.

**Class no. 8: Religion, Modernization, and Identity**

1. Vasily Perov, "Village Icon Procession at Easter," 1861.
2. Vasily Perov, "Tea Drinking in Mytishchi near Moscow," 1862.

3. Vasily Perov, “Meal in a Monastery,” 1865-1876.
4. Mikhail Nesterov, “Spiritual Hermit,” 1888-1889.
5. Mikhail Nesterov, “The Young Bartholomew’s Vision,” 1889-1890.
6. Mikhail Nesterov, “Taking the Veil,” 1898.
7. Andrei Karelin/Ivan Shishkin, The Nizhnii Novgorod Convent of the Exaltation of the Cross, 1870.
8. Maksim Dmitriev, View of the St. Seraphim-All-Sorrows Convent, Ponetaevka, 1890s.
9. Ilia Repin, “Icon Procession in Kursk Province,” 1880-1883.
10. Illarion Prianishnikov, “Icon Procession,” 1893.
11. Maksim Dmitriev, Annual icon procession with miracle-working Oranki Birthgiver of God icon, approaching the city of Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890s.
12. Maksim Dmitriev, Annual icon procession with miracle-working Oranki Birthgiver of God icon, arriving at the city center, Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890s.
13. Vasily Maksimov, “The Sick Husband,” 1881.
14. Vasily Vershchagin, “Mortally Wounded,” 1873.
15. Vasily Polenov, “Moscow Courtyard,” 1902.
16. Isaak Levitan, “Evening Bells,” 1892.
17. Nikolai Ge, “The Last Supper,” 1866.
18. Ivan Kramskoi, “Christ in the Wilderness,” 1872.

## Class no. 9: Refashioning Urban Russia

### ***Paintings from The Itinerants and The Russian Museum:***

1. Abram Arkhipov, “Laundresses,” 1901.
2. Klavdy Lebedev, “To See Their Son,” 1894.
3. Vladimir Makovsky, “Bank Failure,” 1881.
4. Vladimir Makovsky, “On the Boulevard,” 1886-1887.
5. Vladimir Makovsky, “A Doss-House,” 1889.
6. Vladimir Makovsky, “The Tea Party,” 1875-1897.

7. Natalia Goncharova, "Cyclist," 1913.
8. Boris Kustodiev, "A Merchant's Wife at Tea," 1918.

***Architecture from Russian Modernism and William Brumfield, The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture:***

1. V. M. Vasnetsov and V. D. Polenov, Church of the Icon of the Savior at Abramtsevo, 1881-1882.
2. V. M. Vasnetsov, The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 1902-1905.
3. Roman Meltser, Orthopedic Institute, St. Petersburg, 1902-1905.
4. V. D. Polenov, Studio "Abbatstvo" at Polenova, near Tarusa, 1904.
5. S. I. Vashkov, Church in the village of Kliazma, near Moscow, 1913-1916.
6. S. V. Maliutin, Pertsov house, Moscow, 1905-1907.
7. S. V. Maliutin, Pertsov house, Moscow, detail, 1905-1907.
8. V. F. Val'kot, Hotel Metropole, detail of façade by M. A. Vrubel', with sculptures by N. A. Andreev, Moscow, 1899-1906.
9. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Z. G. Morozova, Moscow, 1893.
10. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Z. G. Morozova, living room, Moscow, 1893.
11. F. O. Shekhtel', House for A. I. Derozhinskaia, Moscow, 1901-1902.
12. F. O. Shekhtel', House for A. I. Derozhinskaia, Moscow, interior, 1901-1902.
13. F. O. Shekhtel', House for A. I. Derozhinskaia, Moscow, interior, 1901-1902.
14. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Stepan Riabushinskii, Moscow, 1900-1902.
15. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Stepan Riabushinskii, mosaic detail, Moscow, 1900-1902.
16. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Stepan Riabushinskii, side façade, Moscow, 1900-1902.
17. F. O. Shekhtel', House for Stepan Riabushinskii, interior, Moscow, 1900-1902.
18. F. O. Shekhtel', Moscow Art Theater, Moscow, 1902.
19. F. O. Shekhtel', A. A. Levenson Press, Moscow, 1900.
20. Aleksei Buber', Apartment House, Fontanka Quay, St. Petersburg, 1910-1911.
21. Gavriil Baranovskii, Eliseev Building, St. Petersburg, 1902-1904.

*Scenes of Nizhnii Novgorod:*

*Painting from The Itinerants:*

1. Aleksei Bogoliubov, "Scene of Nizhnii Novgorod," 1878.

*Photographs from Maksim Dmitriev:*

1. D. V. Sirotkin, Mayor of Nizhnii Novgorod and Chairman of the Stock Exchange Commission, 1913-1917.
2. Merchant Mikhail Rukavishnikov.
3. Members of the Credit Committee of the Trade Fair Bank.
4. Wedding of the merchant M. N. Blinov.
5. Women of the Charitable Society with the provincial governor, M. N. Shramchenko.
6. City firemen, with the provincial governor, A. N. Khvostov (front row, fifth from left).
7. Red Cross members.
8. Main street (Bolshaia Pokrovka), with the theater on the right.
9. House of Labor, named in honor of Mikhail and Liubov Rukavishnikov.
10. In the House of Labor.
11. State Bank building, 1913.
12. Lower embankment, along the Volga River. The trade fair grounds are across the river.
13. Blinov Brothers' Flour Mill, village of Filippovka, Semenovsk district.
14. Railroad station and square.
15. Bashkirov Flour Mill, Kunavino district.
16. Clerks and workers at the Sormovo factory, on the day the 100th engine was produced.
17. Shrapnel works, Sormovo factory, 1915-1916.
18. Engineers and workers at the Sormovo factory, with representatives from the military, on production of the engine for the cruiser Ochakov, 1901-1902.
19. Workers at the mining mills in Kulebaki.
20. Main building, Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Fair.
21. Fair stalls, Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Fair.

22. Merry-go-round, Samokatskaia Square, Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Fair.
23. Movie theater, Samokatskaia Square, Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Fair.
24. Gustov sisters, music hall singers, Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Fair.
25. Machines Department/Exhibit Hall, 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
26. Interior view, Machines Department, 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
27. First Russian automobile, exhibited at the 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
28. Pavilions of the Middle Asia Department and of Russian-Persian Trade, 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
29. Theater and restaurant of T. Astaf'ev, 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
30. House for public entertainment and meetings, 1896 All-Russian Exposition, Nizhnii Novgorod.
31. New Market Square.
32. Spasskii (Savior) Street and Spasskii Cathedral.
33. Junkshop in Balchug, c. 1890.
34. State wine shop, before opening, early 1900s.
35. Annual religious procession, bringing the Oranki Mother of God icon to Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890s.
36. A group of priests, with the Oranki Mother of God icon.

### Class no. 13: The Bronze Horseman

1. The Bronze Horseman, St. Petersburg.
2. The Bronze Horseman and Surroundings, St. Petersburg.
3. The Bronze Horseman, St. Petersburg.

### Class no. 14: Avant Garde Reactions to 1905: Modernism

**From: Women Artists of Russia's New Age, 1900-1935, Amazons of the Avant-Garde: Exter, Goncharova, Popova, Rozanova, Stepanova, Udaltsova, and V. N. Lasarev, The Moscow School of Icon-Painting:**

1. Natalia Goncharova, "Self-Portrait with Yellow Lilies," 1907.
2. Natalia Goncharova, "Fruit Harvest," 1909.
3. Natalia Goncharova, "Fruit Harvest," 1909.

4. Natalia Goncharova, "Haycutting," 1910.
5. Andrei Rublev, Archangel Michael, 1410-1420.
6. Andrei Rublev, The Apostle Paul, 1410-1420.
7. Natalia Goncharova, "The Evangelists," 1910.
8. School of Andrei Rublev, The Nativity, 1410-1430.
9. Workshop of Dionisy, The Birth of Eleveriy-Alexey, panel, 1480-1490.
10. Natalia Goncharova, "Nativity," 1910.
11. Workshop of Dionisy, The Descent of Christ Into Hell, 1502-1503.
12. Natalia Goncharova, "Apocalypse," 1910.
13. Natalia Goncharova, "Peasants Gathering Grapes," 1912.
14. Natalia Goncharova, "Yellow and Green Forest, Rayonist Construction," 1912.
15. Natalia Goncharova, "The Weaver," 1912-1913.
16. Natalia Goncharova, "Cyclist," 1913. (Class 9, Itinerants and Russian Museum, no. 7)
17. Natalia Goncharova, "Emptiness," 1913.
18. Natalia Goncharova, Designs for Le Coq d'Or, 1914.