RUSS 213: INTRODUCTION TO SOVIET CINEMA
FROM THE AVANT-GARDE TO THE RETURN OF THE STALINIST
RERESSED
(1917-1991)

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The history of Soviet cinema traces the conflicting ideologies and social anxieties of the USSR. This course aims to acquaint students with these ideologies and anxieties through the films of major and minor Soviet directors. It offers a broad survey of the pivotal transformations of Soviet cinema from the pre-Soviet silent era through the Russian avant-garde (1920s), Socialist Realism (1930s and 40s), New Wave (1950s and 60s), Stagnation (1970s), Perestroika and the fall of communism (1980s). Special attention will be payed to women and minority filmmakers including Larissa Shepitko, Kira Muratova, and Sergei Parajanov. Key questions we will ask include: How does film function as propaganda or entertainment? How does it foster a multi-ethnic Soviet community? And what are the implications of its stylistic choices? By the end of the course, students will be able to give a close, shot-by-shot analysis of a particular scene, situate a film in its cultural and historical context, as well as explain its relationship to issues in film theory. Each week we will screen one feature length film or a series of shorts. Students are
required to attend all screenings unless they have a documented medical reason.