

Module title: Culture and Revolution: Russia and China

Module code: SML5067

Credit value: 15

Level: 5

Pre-requisite modules:

Content Description

This module examines the notion of culture as a central instrument in the transformation of society as it was adopted and deployed in the 20th century's two most influential Communist revolutions, in Russia and China. The module covers themes including the representation of the revolution, the image of the Communist and debates around Socialist Realism, tracing their evolution and expression in a variety of media including film, prose fiction and art.

Module Aims

1. To provide a comparative overview of the development of Russian and Chinese revolutionary culture in the context of cultural policy and the ramifications of the revolution/s for respective cultural institutions.
2. To introduce students to the debates surrounding these works and to sensitise them to the contributions they made to discussions of the political and social issues of the day.
3. To equip students with key theoretical, critical, and analytical tools to analyse Communist cultural discourses, their forms and functions in social, political and historical contexts.
4. To develop a comparative understanding of the distinctiveness of Russian and Chinese culture.
5. To encourage the development of essay writing skills.

Learning Outcomes

Academic Content:

A1 Students will have acquired a comparative understanding of the key tendencies in Revolutionary culture.

A2 Students will have acquired an ability to situate texts in their historical and political contexts.

A3 Students will have understood the meaning of relevant theoretical and critical concepts and learned how to use such concepts.

Disciplinary Skills – able to:

B1 Demonstrate the understanding and application of key theoretical and critical concepts.

B2 Demonstrate the study habits and the interpretive skills required to comment on a range of relevant cultural artefacts.

B3 Define the relation between the stories discussed in class and the political, philosophical and social debates of the day.

Attributes:

C1 Learn Continuously in a Changing World.

C2 Engage Critically with Knowledge.

C3 Clarity of Communication.

Activity Hours

Activity Type	Time spent (hours)
Lecture	11
Seminar	11
Guided independent study	128
Total	150

Indicative Reading List

Week 1

- Concept of culture; Propaganda, agitation, didactic art

Week 2

- Representing the revolution Battleship Potemkin, 1926 (Film)

Week 3 and 4

- The Image of the activist/conversion/education narrative: the novel
- Nikolai Ostrovsky, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, (1931)
- Debates from 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers

Week 5

- Art and Posters: the enemy; industrial mobilisation; leader cult;

Week 6

- Contemporary afterlife: SotsArt; Pastiche

Week 8

- Yuan Muzhi, dir., *Street Angel* (1937) [film]

Week 9

- Ding Ling, "When I was In Xia Village" (1940)
- Zhao Shuli, "The Marriage of Little Blackie" (1943)

Week 10

- *The Red Detachment of Women* (1962 ballet/1971 film)

Week 11

- Yu Hua, "On the Road at Eighteen" (1986)
- Jiang Wen, dir., *In the Heat of the Sun* (1994) [film]

Week 12

- Essay Workshop