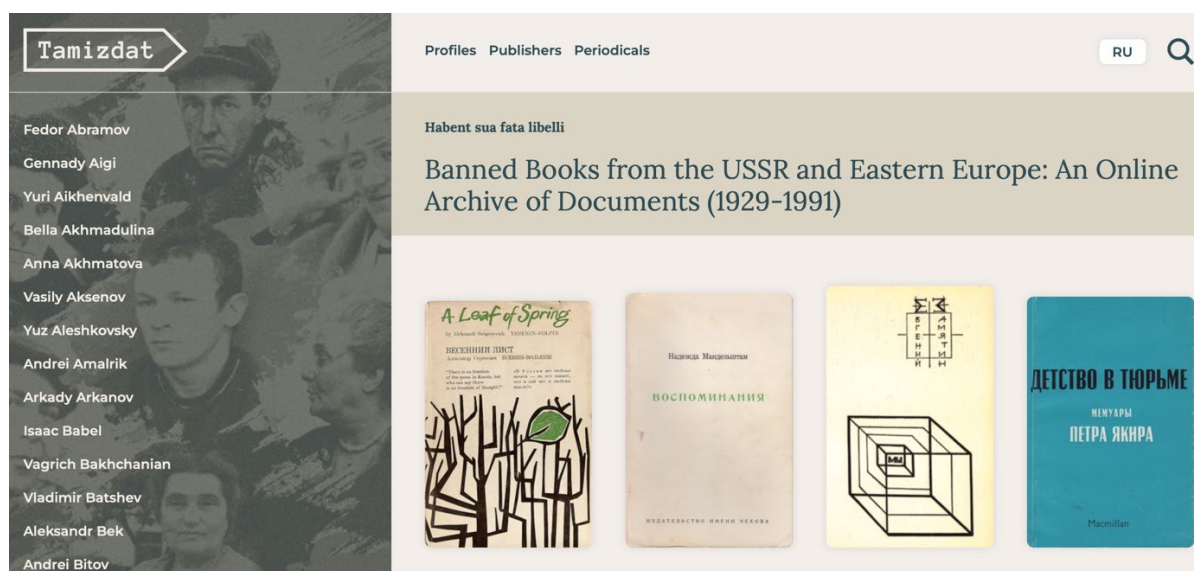


## TAMIZDAT: CONTRABAND LITERATURE FROM THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE



Russ 25674 (3 credits)

Taught by Prof. Yasha Klots

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Schedule: Monday – Friday, 2 – 4 pm

June 24 – July 19, 2024 (Tallinn, Estonia)

### DESCRIPTION

This course is an exploration of the first publications, circulation, and reception of clandestine manuscripts from behind the Iron Curtain first published abroad during the Cold War. Although our main historical framework will be 1956-1991, we will start with earlier examples of “tamizdat” in the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries (Alexander Herzen, Evgeny Zamyatin) and finish with a discussion of the present geopolitical situation, when censorship in Russia is back and many writers, artists, and journalists are forced to publish abroad and/or emigrate. Placed at the intersection of literary studies, history, political science, geography, media studies, and other disciplines, the course will consist of five lectures and seminars each devoted to a work of literature written at home but first published abroad, with or without the author’s knowledge or consent (e.g., Lydia Chukovskaya’s *Sofia Petrovna*, Varlam Shalamov’s *Kolyma Stories*, Andrei Sinyavsky’s “Pkhentz”). Exterritorial publications of contraband Russian literature will not only be situated in the context of other East European “tamizdats” (e.g., Czech, Polish, Ukrainian), but also juxtaposed to those by such Western authors as George Orwell, whose writings were likewise banned on the inner side of the Iron Curtain. The course will also offer students an opportunity to join the [Tamizdat Project](#), a public scholarship initiative for the study of banned books from the USSR and the Eastern Bloc, as interns or volunteers: depending on their interests and qualifications, students will be invited to work with archives and émigré periodicals, transcribe and translate documents for publication, conduct oral history, compile bibliographies, and more. Knowledge of Russian or another East European language is welcomed but not required.

## **Requirements and Grading**

- 50% attendance and active participation in class and on field trips
- 20% class presentations
- 30% contributions to Tamizdat Project or a research paper

## **Learning Objectives**

Students will learn to analyze the relationships between literature, politics, and geography. By analyzing a wide range of literary texts written at home but first published abroad across the “Soviet century,” students will gain a historical insight into Russian and East European cultures from the Cold War to the present. Students will be trained to read primary texts closely and analytically, make connections between different texts and contexts, authors and cultural institutions (such as publishing houses and journals), and improve their research and writing skills. They will also gain familiarity with methods of archival and field research.

## **Academic Integrity**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

## **Office of AccessABILITY**

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call 212-772-4857.

## **Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct**

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose ([jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu) or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry ([colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu) or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

## SCHEDULE\*

June 24 Arrival. Orientation. Introduction to the course: state censorship in tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. Banned books from the Russian Empire, the USSR, and the Eastern Bloc. The Iron Curtain and the Cold War.

### Dystopia at Home and Abroad

June 25 Evgeny Zamyatin. *We*.

- First publications and translations of *We* abroad
- Early responses to *We* in émigré and western media

June 26 Evgeny Zamyatin. *We* (cont.).

- Later editions of *We* during the Cold War
- Later responses to *We* in émigré and western media

June 27 George Orwell. *Animal Farm* and *1984*

- East European translations of *Animal Farm*
- Orwell, Zamyatin, and the East-European diasporas

June 28 George Orwell. *1984* (cont.).

- *1984*: the “hottest” book of the Cold War
- Zamyatin, Orwell, and twentieth-century dystopia
- Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*

### Stalinism and the Cold War

July 1 Anna Akhmatova. “Requiem”

- First publications and translations of “Requiem” abroad
- East European diasporas read “Requiem” (reviews and personal correspondence)

July 2 Lydia Chukovskaya. *Sofia Petrovna*

- *Sofia Petrovna* abroad: first publications, translations, and reception

July 3 Lydia Chukovskaya. *Sofia Petrovna* (cont.).

- *Sofia Petrovna* vs. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
- The West reads Gulag narratives (journalism, scholarship, propaganda)

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\* The syllabus is subject to change. All primary readings and secondary sources will be available as PDFs or links. Students should read major works of literature on the syllabus before the start of the program.

July 4 Varlam Shalamov. *Kolyma Stories*

- First publications, translations, and reception of Shalamov’s “new prose” abroad

July 5 Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian narratives of the Gulag in the West

### **The Late-Soviet Period**

July 8 Abram Tertz (aka. Andrei Sinyavsky). “On Socialist Realism” and “Pkhentz”

- The tamizdat project of Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak

July 9 Nikolai Arzhak (aka. Yuly Daniel). *The Atonement*

- The tamizdat project of Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak (cont.)

July 10 Milan Kundera. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

- The Prague Spring and Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia
- Natalya Gorbanevskaya. *Red Square at Noon* (excerpts)

July 11 Milan Kundera. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (cont.)

- The dissident movement and its publications abroad
- Russian and East European diasporas in 1968

July 12 Sergei Dovlatov. *The Outpost: Notes of a Correspondent*

- Dovlatov’s three cities: Leningrad, Tallinn, New York
- Joseph Brodsky, Czeslaw Milosz, and Tomas Venclova: a Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian triumvirate in exile

### **From Perestroika to Russia after 2014**

July 15 The Baltic Way and the End of State Censorship

- The West responds to Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian independence

July 16 Elena Kostyuchenko. *I Love Russia: Reporting from a Lost Country* (selections)

July 17 Russian publishing at home and abroad today

- Meduza, Babel, The Fifth Wave, and other “tamizdat” publishing houses after 2014

### **Student Projects**

July 18 Presentations

July 19 Presentations (cont.).