

Teaching the Five Cs with Cinema

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Abstract

This paper discusses teaching the five Cs (as noted in the following introduction), delineated in the “National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century,” through a college content course based on cinema. It provides an overview of a 2009 Berkeley workshop, “Teaching Language and Culture with Film,” that addressed larger issues related to such courses within the curriculum, their design and teaching. The paper goes on to describe three Russian courses based on the same textbook, *KinoTalk*, yet designed for different student audiences: for traditional third year students and for various kinds of non-traditional students, for heritage speakers, and for former missionaries with two-years experience in the target country but minimal formal training in the language. In conclusion, the paper suggests ideas for further courses taught using the same textbook and for teaching the five Cs through language and cinema in general.

Introduction

To reach your destination, whatever it is, you have to have a clear goal in mind and a good map in hand (or these days, a GPS). Specialists in foreign language education have developed a roadmap for the study of foreign languages in America: *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*. They have identified aspects and levels of language acquisition as well as desirable language learning outcomes and boiled them down to the five Cs: COMMUNICATION (communicate in languages other than English), CULTURES (gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures), CONNECTIONS (connect with other disciplines and acquire new information), COMPARISONS (develop insight into the nature of language and culture), and COMMUNITIES (participate in multilingual communities at home

and around the world).¹ This document, in addition to outlining a comprehensive approach to teaching a foreign language, also offers ideas for teaching specific languages, including Russian, both in secondary and postsecondary institutions.²

Now that a comprehensive and insightful plan of action has been developed, how should it be implemented? Foreign language learning and teaching in this country faces an array of problems: financial, psychological and administrative.

Recent budget cuts have affected most areas of today's American economy and have severely impacted academia. Perhaps no other part of the university curriculum has been hit as hard as foreign language programs, particularly in the case of the "less commonly taught" languages. Many programs are struggling to survive on smaller budgets, with fewer faculty and more limited resources. The financial crisis in foreign language study in the United States is recognized by educators and politicians alike. This state of affairs has lasted a number of years and is not likely to change for the better. Yet budget cuts are not the only problem facing foreign language programs in American colleges today. There are also problems of a psychological nature.

A 2010 article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* argued for the cognitive benefits of language study, especially when it is begun early and continued long-term, and offered a realistic description of the present situation surrounding foreign language studies in America. This article was aptly titled "English is Not Enough":

Many Americans have come to believe, consciously or not, that it's just too hard to learn a second language... College students often perceive language requirements as obstacles to be avoided or impositions to be endured... Thus, generation after generation, our society produces large numbers of adult citizens who have never tried to

¹ *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, 2006, pp. 3-4.

² "Standards for Russian Language Learning," in *Standards*, pp. 433-474.

learn another language or who see themselves as having tried and failed.³

While learning a foreign language in America often appears as an unnecessary and doomed endeavor, the teaching side is also plagued with problems: schools do not offer many foreign languages, quite rarely “less commonly taught” ones; at the college level the number of contact hours is not related to the complexity of a language and the educators are either insufficiently prepared to be language teachers or end up as language instructors by default, forced into such positions by the tough competition in the job market.

The teaching of non-Western European languages, like Russian, in schools is more the exception than the rule, and college instructors usually have to start from the very beginning, teaching this language, with its particular set of phonetic and grammatical challenges, to students who have never studied any foreign language whatsoever.

The situation is further fraught with complications, namely, the complexity of the Russian language for English native speakers and the ambiguous role of instructors of foreign languages, including Russian. Russian is a more complex language for native-speakers of English than languages like Spanish, and thus it takes more hours of instruction to reach a comparable level of proficiency, a fact that is not recognized by college administrations and not reflected in curricula. Military and government language programs categorize languages in terms of relative difficulty for English native speakers, placing Russian in the third category out of four. The first category includes the least difficult languages for English native speakers to learn and acquire, like French and Spanish; the second, languages such as Indonesian and German; the third, Hebrew and Russian; and the most difficult, the fourth category, languages like Arabic and Japanese.⁴ According to their categories of difficulty, languages

³ C. Porter, "English Is Not Enough," p. A64.

⁴ While Defense Language Institute operates with a 4-categories classification of languages, the Foreign Service Institute uses a 3-tier division merging the first and second DLI's groups into “languages closely related to English” (that includes French and Spanish, as well as Indonesian and German). In this system, Russian belongs to the

require various numbers of contact hours to achieve comparable levels of proficiency, and government military language schools design their programs on this principle. This is not the case within the academy.

Furthermore, there is another sensitive issue involved – the self identity of those college language instructors who are usually specialists in literature and culture, but whose job description and the needs of the language programs force them to serve predominantly or exclusively as language teaching specialists.⁵ This is not a new problem – it was also examined in a 1993 article by Sylvie Debevec Henning, in which she points out: “By virtue of our degrees and accomplishments, we are fundamentally not language instructors and tend to resist attempts to comprehend our careers largely in terms of a paradigm appropriate to secondary school instruction.”⁶

Thus, instructors of Russian in today's American colleges are facing the following dilemma: at a time when budget cuts are complicating our lives and endangering and/or eliminating Russian language programs. When students come to us with no previous knowledge of Russian, and, often, no other foreign language, we are expected, with limited resources and too little time, to produce language learners aware of cultural issues who are able to communicate with native speakers of the language and to apply this knowledge to other disciplines. How can we do that? The cluster of problems that afflicts college studies of Russian may appear insurmountable, and I do not have a magic potion for our students or a magic wand to fix the problem once and for all. And yet I believe that advanced "content" courses in the language, specifically, cinema and language courses, can help teach these five Cs and provide a unique window onto another culture that will help our students enormously in their motivation, knowledge and language proficiency.

second category – of “languages with significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English.”

⁵ See H. Byrnes, "Perspectives on Curriculum Construction."

⁶ See S. D. Henning, "The Integration of Language, Literature, and Culture."

The development of such courses, and the steadily increasing role of technology in them, is reflected in research and critical literature.⁷

"Content" courses, the advanced language courses that combine language as a tool and subject matter as content are popular and are considered desirable additions to college curricula today. Among "content" courses, the ones that deal with video are usually the most widespread and well-liked. They are popular with our students, who seem to prefer video input to any other; they are popular with some instructors, often younger ones, as well as junior faculty. "Serious" professors look down on these content courses as "selling out" to the new generation of attention-deficit kids who want to be entertained at any cost. However, there are dedicated teachers of various languages out there who believe in teaching language and culture with film and who approach this subject as a respectable research field.⁸

The interest in such courses and materials is growing not only among students and educators, but among textbook authors and publishers as well. One publishing house, *Focus*, for example, has published a number of textbooks on cinema in foreign languages over the past decade. There are textbooks for Spanish, French and German as well as books for some of the less commonly taught languages: there are textbooks on Italian, Portuguese and Russian cinema, all released in the last few years (see Appendix A for a list of video-based Russian textbooks).⁹ Moreover, besides the series "Cinema for [specific language] Conversation," *Focus* has launched another impressive series, focused specifically on culture: "[specific language] Culture through Film." There is no book on Russian culture through film yet, but Russian is the "leading" language among less commonly taught languages as represented by this publishing house: while Italian and Portuguese each have only one textbook

⁷ See M. R. Salaberry, "The Use of Technology for Second Language Learning and Teaching," C. Kramsch and R. W. Andersen's "Teaching Text and Context Through Multimedia," T. Pica's "Subject-Matter Content."

⁸ See articles by J. L. Stephens, M. J. Raby, C. Herron et al.

⁹ A similar textbook exists for Polish as well - W. Oleksy and O. E. Swan, *Labyrinth of Life*, 1993.

devoted to cinema, Russian has three – two that deal with feature films, and one that deals with animation.

But that is not all: other publishers have begun offering additional educational materials for teaching cinema. A textbook on Russian cinema from Hermitage Publishers offers background on, and materials for, teaching 18 films for advanced learners.¹⁰ And finally, a textbook released by Slavica in 2006, Mesropova's *KinoTalk: Russian Cinema and Conversation*, focuses on eleven films from the 1990s and offers activities for high-intermediate and advanced students of Russian, allowing them to develop their language proficiency and work on the five Cs, particularly on the culture component.

Richard Blakely argues for the need for courses that can introduce a foreign culture at its most authentic, that is, in the original language, wryly making the point that: "At a more devout time in human history ... anyone who practiced the diabolical art of dubbing would be burned at the stake. For the 'monstruosité' of putting one person's voice into the soul and body of another is certainly 'against all divine and human law.'"¹¹ Neither dubbing nor subtitling can adequately render the richness and all implications of foreign humor and cultural allusions, and studying films in the target language is one great way towards a better comprehension of the culture that produced it.

This paper offers some insights into how one and the same textbook for teaching Russian cinema and language, namely *KinoTalk*, can be used as the foundation for a variety of content courses. It discusses three university courses based on this book – a course for "traditional" third-year-language students; a course for heritage speakers; and a fourth-year course for another type of "non-traditional" student – those who have spent about two years in Russia on a religious mission. Not only was each course designed for a specific student audience, each had its own theme, and this textbook allowed for and supported a variety of options. This compact book offers chapters on eleven Russian films from the 1990s and a wealth

¹⁰ Unfortunately, Pichugina's *Advanced Russian Through Film* is no longer in print.

¹¹ See R. Blakely, "Teaching Film With Blinders On" (1984).

of material to choose from. After incorporating films into my language courses, and teaching film courses in the target language, for many years, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to attend a workshop on this topic.¹² This opportunity came before my third course based on *Kinotalk*, and it helped me resolve many issues that, with only my intuition to guide me, I had never resolved to my satisfaction in the past. A cinema and language course can be tailored to students with the most varied of backgrounds and levels and can be an ideal way to teach the five Cs outlined in the "Standards." Before discussing my three courses based on *KinoTalk*, I will give a brief overview of this unforgettable workshop on teaching cinema.

The Workshop

This four-day workshop explored various practical issues that arise when a nation's cinema is used as a mine of linguistic and cultural information in college foreign language "content" courses. It featured an array of dedicated and knowledgeable professionals working with the most varied facets of films who came to share their insights on the possible implications of using cinema for teaching.

Marilyn Fabe, from UC Berkeley¹³, delivered a presentation entitled "The Language of Film" that discussed film terminology, the issue of definitions, and offered memorable, vivid examples of the key concepts from some films familiar to her audience. Mark Kaiser, also from Berkeley, entitled his presentation "Teaching with Film Clips," and shared information about a monumental project – the creation of a UC Library of Foreign Language Film Clips, an unusual and useful resource for instructors of many languages made available to faculty working for the University of California system. Sabine Levet, from MIT¹⁴, presented "Cross-Cultural Comparison through Film," a session describing a ground breaking web-based project for developing intercultural competence. Her students had virtual contact with their peers in the target country, enabling them to

¹² This workshop, "Teaching Language and Culture with Film," was organized by the UC Consortium for Language Learning & Teaching, UC-Berkeley, June 15-18, 2009.

¹³ Fabe is the author of *Closely Watched Films* (2004).

¹⁴ Levet is one of the creators and developers of the *Cultura Project*.

analyze French films and their American remakes, draw their own conclusions on the differences between the films, and analyze the "what" and "why" behind these differences. Rick Kern, from Berkeley¹⁵, presented a paper entitled "Making Connections between Film and Literacy" that discussed narratives in various kinds of media and ways to develop our students' interpretation and critical thinking skills, thus contributing to their overall literacy.

Only one of the workshop's presenters dealt with Russian language and cinema. Thomas J. Garza, from the University of Texas, Austin, entitled his presentation "Film as (Con)Text: Using Visual Media in Russian Language and Culture Classes." He outlined the ideas behind the project *Rockin' Russian*, which offers videos of recent Russian songs, complete with lyrics and accompanying instructional materials for every level of language proficiency. Garza shared some fun-filled clips, entertaining even for those of us who are decades older than our students.

And finally, there was Anne-Christine Rice from Tufts University,¹⁶ whose presentation, "Implementing a Curriculum Built around Film," was perhaps the most immediately practical in this workshop. Her list of considerations involved in designing film-based courses included the nature and purposes of the course, the choice and number of films, the practical matters of film availability, activities based on the films, and finally, the creation of the syllabus. Working through such questions places both long-standing advocates and new converts to the use of film in language teaching in a much better position as they design new courses. As she outlined in her presentation, there are a number of new textbooks for just such cinema and language courses for students of various foreign languages. In short, the interest is there and the textbooks exist as well. But what should the next step be for someone with the luxury of designing a course to teach, and an interest in teaching, just that, a language and cinema course? In the pages that follow I will describe my three Russian language and cinema courses based on *KinoTalk*

¹⁵ Kern is the author of *Literacy and Language Teaching* (2000).

¹⁶ Rice is the author of *Cinema for French Conversation* (2007) and *La France contemporaine à travers ses films* (2010).

and offer some insights and suggestions that I hope will be useful to my colleagues in the field.

Traditional Third Year

A Composition and Conversation Course Based on Russian Cinema: Topics in Russian 20th-Century History (see Appendix B for the course description and semester plan)

As outlined in works by L. Dee Fink,¹⁷ course design should not start from its "end," from the textbook. Rather, it should start with its most crucial elements, namely, its topic, purpose and the target audience. The number and selection of films, the number of screenings, and the specific tasks to be assigned – all these elements of course design will be dictated by the purpose of the course. In designing my course for traditional third-year students in a university program, I was motivated by an awareness of the desperate need for a conversation course that actually helps third-year students speak the language, given the fact that they rush through the first and second year trying to deal with all four language skills plus grammar, spiced with just a dash of culture. By the third year, they are starting to wonder what the point of it all is if they cannot say anything in the language they have been trying so hard to learn. For them, a sense of accomplishment is most closely tied to one skill: speaking. And, in most cases, this is the very skill they most obviously lack.

Although the course was listed in the catalogue under the heading "composition and conversation," it focused predominantly on speaking, and to a lesser degree, on listening and writing. Having decided which skills the course would focus on, I had to determine what we wanted to talk about, and cinema was a logical and attractive candidate. I chose four films out of *KinoTalk* for a 16-week-long semester: *Burnt by the Sun*, *The Thief*, *Adam's Rib*, and *Window to Paris*. Rather than arranging the films chronologically in terms of the year they were produced, I sequenced them in accordance with the time period they depicted: the first one, *Burnt by the Sun*, focuses on the

¹⁷ L. D. Fink, "Integrated Course Design" and *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*.

1930s and Stalin's purges; the second, *The Thief*, on the post-war devastation of the 1950s; the third, *Adam's Rib*, depicts the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that is, the lead-up to the fall of the Soviet Union. The last film, Jurii Mamin's satirical masterpiece, *Window to Paris*, is the film I like to include as the last one in my cinema courses: not only does it address the crucial issue of new Russia's self-identity and deal with the centuries-long conflicting views of Slavophiles and Westernizers on the essence and the right path for Russia; this film, in a way that is both accessible and entertaining, offers a comforting note of hope for the future of this long-suffering country whose children so often want to abandon it.

Christine Rice, in her workshop presentation, suggested that no more than eight films should be included in a semester-long-course. I chose "only" four films for a number of reasons. And this choice proved its validity – the pace was comfortable enough both for the students and for me. My hope was to be able to dedicate three weeks to each film. In these three weeks I assigned two screenings of the same film, each time with a different specific task to focus on, concentrating on "Who, What, Where?" with the first screening, and on "Why, What For, How and Why So?" during the second. We were able to work with each film first on the factual and then on the abstract level, thus expanding not only the students' vocabulary, but also working on "text type," advancing from awkward, timid separate sentences to minimal coherent paragraphs.

The textbook itself did an excellent job of supporting this increasingly complicated work and promoting student progress as we worked with the first three or four sections of each chapter in depth. The first section in each chapter ("Preparing for the Screening") offered general information about the film and the most useful vocabulary, and served as an advance organizer. The second section ("Let's Talk About the Film") contained specific factual questions that the students had to find answers to during the first screening and that could be answered with short sentences. The following section ("Discussing the Film") contained more abstract open-ended questions that encouraged more elaborate, paragraph-length answers about the characters, their behavior, motivations, and socio-cultural context. These questions were assigned for the second screening, preparing students for a discussion that went beyond the factual and

obvious. The subsequent sections of each chapter (critics' reviews, various opinions on films, their context, and sociological questionnaires) offered more opportunities for advanced discussion, however, they were not appropriate for the traditional students at this level. With the non-traditional students, however, we were able to delve into these opportunities and found them very helpful and stimulating.

This schedule allowed us to have two weeks at the beginning of the semester to work on the introductory chapter of the textbook and cinema terminology and to figure out practical issues of accessing and watching the films. Two weeks at the end of the semester provided an opportunity to work on the textbook's concluding chapter, give all students a chance to make oral presentations, complete a final review, and address thematic and language-related issues that required attention.

Three of the twelve students in this course were at a higher proficiency level. There were not enough of these heritage speakers to justify a separate course, so to provide additional individualized help, I arranged to offer separate sessions for these more advanced students once a week.

Overall, this course proved to be a successful addition to the existing Russian program: the students got to practice and develop their speaking, many of them encountered the first Russian films they had ever seen, and the thematic thread of the course, the historical and political changes in the USSR, made it possible to present new cultural information in a personal way. They learned to care about the characters in the films and often would try to put themselves "in their shoes."

Some additional comments on the linguistic and technical aspects of teaching such a course might be helpful. When it became obvious that some of the students were considerably more comfortable speaking than others and an additional weekly hour was arranged for the hesitant ones, classes began to flow more smoothly. *KinoTalk* offers motivating and useful exercises of increasing difficulty that help develop speaking. Listening and writing assignments were related to those in the book and did not take much time on the part of the instructor to design. Grammar points were

addressed as needed, usually when some construction presented a common difficulty for a number of students.

When I taught this course back in 2007, the films were not digitized and I placed the copies I was able to obtain in the language lab for students to watch. Most of the copies were on video cassettes, so if some of them had English subtitles it was not possible to switch them on and off, an advantage later offered by DVDs. I tried to obtain copies of the films for this course without subtitles, but naturally it was not always possible. There is no single ideal way for all students to work with subtitles given their varied language backgrounds, learning styles, and strategies. Unless my students could understand the plot of the film and the motivation of the characters well enough to care about them, they were not comfortable talking about them in class. So if some copies of our films had no subtitles, I had no problem suggesting that students find a copy with subtitles and watch it at some point. Since there were two assigned screenings of each film I believe that a variety of experiences and varied ways of working with films was the key to successful language learning.

KinoTalk does not contain detailed information on specific scenes for screenings and discussion in class as some other textbooks do, for example, *Cinema for Russian Conversation*. But it would be easy for an instructor to dedicate a lesson to particular clips, and this activity adds both variety and greater specificity to the process of studying a film. The classical sequence of previewing, viewing, and post-viewing exercises, as well as double screening of the same scene, are not difficult to prepare for a busy instructor. In addition, they provide some of the most memorable moments in the course and help further motivate the students.

This course was taught a few years ago, but one exercise we did in that class was so successful that it is still alive in my memory. After the second screening of the film *Adam's Rib*, at which point students were already focusing not on “what” but on “why,” “how” and “what for,” I asked them to reenact the key scene at the table, when the teenage girl reveals her pregnancy to her family, and each character reacts to this shocking news in a unique, character-driven way. My students blossomed – in spite of the halting pace and searching for words, they enjoyed role-playing enormously, and one

bulky athlete who asked to play the part of the teenage girl delivered such an original comic rendering of this scene that many students wrote about it in their end-of-semester evaluations and regretted this type of activity was not done more often.

Heritage Speakers:

Language and culture course: *Two Genders, Two Worlds: Masculine and Feminine in Russian Cinema* (see Appendix C for the course description and semester plan)

Before I arrived at the university where I designed this course, heritage speakers were "rare birds," and there were no courses in the catalogue specifically for them. However a small group of these unusual students, five of them, appeared in the Department at the same time, all looking for an appropriate course to take, a course that would inform them, challenge their intellectual abilities, and help them develop their Russian language skills. I was given an opportunity to design and teach such a course.

As usual, this small group of "heritage" speakers was extremely varied, but we were compelled to find a way to fit them all into the same mold. In fact, two students out of the five were actually not heritage speakers, but they were not traditional students either. One was an international student from Yugoslavia, a native speaker of another Slavic language, who had studied Russian for a number of years. The other was an American, a talented language student, who spent a few years in Russia with his parents, then on a mission there, and attended a Russian school during that time. The remaining three students were "real" heritage speakers, yet they represented a broad range of backgrounds, from the one who came to America as a preschooler and barely knew the Russian alphabet, to another who graduated from high school in Russia and thus had proficiency close to that of an educated native speaker.

This was my group, and I had to face the challenge of designing a language and content course appropriate and useful for them all. I decided to turn once again to *KinoTalk* and to supplement it with a language textbook, Kagan's *Russian for Russians*, created specifically

for heritage speakers, as well as a book on Russian culture, Genevra Gerhardt's *The Russians' World*.

An article by Herron, Cole, Corrie and Dubreil, "The Effectiveness of a Video-Based Curriculum in Teaching Culture," provides a helpful overview of the two facets of culture: "culture with a capital 'C'" and "culture with a small 'c'". The article defines the former as "cultural products, artifacts and institutions," and the latter as "cultural practices, daily life, and acceptable behavior (what to do, where and when)." It describes a study where beginning students of French were taught a course based on a video program, "French in Action," after which they were tested on these two aspects of culture. There were noticeable gains in students' knowledge of both.

My second course taught using *KinoTalk*, the one for heritage speakers, was a very different course from the previous one, yet also a successful one. It strove to present various aspects of a "culture with a small 'c,'" and the book about everyday life in Russia was a huge help and a fount of information on this topic. The films provided an excellent illustration of the most varied elements of people's attitudes and behaviors. The thematic selection and grouping of the films allowed a novel approach to the social dynamics in Soviet and emerging post-Soviet society. The inclusion of a specially tailored language textbook for heritage speakers was also justified – it facilitated a concise overview of those language aspects that were familiar to the students and a thorough examination of more difficult aspects of the language. The whole group was interested and very satisfied with all three textbooks, which complemented each other in terms of course content and helped the students reach their goals. We met twice a week, with one day focused on our films (discussing them, going over cultural issues raised in them, related homework and exercises from *KinoTalk*), and the other dedicated to language and culture study. For this second class they worked on assignments from *Russian for Russians* and Gerhart's book.

Since two of the five students could not yet read or write in Russian, I arranged for one additional hour to meet only with them to work on the alphabet, on cursive, then on spelling, and finally, their emerging reading and writing skills. Although this placed an

extra burden on me as the language instructor, the students' accelerated progress paid off. Because of their passionate involvement with the subject matter and enthusiasm for learning the aspects of the language they needed to communicate with their families as educated adults, this was a truly rewarding educational experience, both for them and for me.

Other Non-Traditional Students – Former Missionaries

Russian 20th-Century History through Film (see Appendix D for the course description and semester plan)

This course grew out of the need for the Russian program to offer a challenging and informative course for a unique group of students that had one-and-a-half to two years of experience in the target country. The group consisted of seventeen outspoken, motivated, and genuinely interested students. Most of them had a rather advanced level of language proficiency in speaking. The course had to deal with deficiencies in their language skills and at the same time, offer interesting content. I chose to design one more cinema and language course, once again using *KinoTalk* as my primary textbook. But this course was to focus on the content aspect, and thus the topic of the course became "20th-Century Russian History through Film." The language component was to deal predominantly with speaking and listening.

While my earlier course on Russian history through film for traditional students was focused mostly on the language and touched on selected topics in Russian history as an overview and introduction to them, we were able to delve more deeply into each historical period of the 20th century and to focus not only on the facts, but on the complex array of issues connected to each tumultuous historical event.

The eight films chosen for this course were ordered according to the times depicted in them: from the 1920s (*Heart of a Dog*) to the post-Soviet period represented by three films: *Peculiarities of the National Hunt* (1995), *Brother* (1998) and *Window to Paris* (1993). *KinoTalk* did not offer films dealing with the 1960-1970s, and so I brought one film "from outside"; from another similar textbook,

Cinema for Russian Conversation. It was the Soviet classic, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979).

Supplementing the screenings and discussions with background information on Russian history,¹⁸ we discussed the burning issues of every period of Soviet history depicted in our films. Thus, for the 1920s (*Heart of a Dog*) we reviewed the wars and revolutions of the tumultuous beginning of the 20th century in Russia, as well as the drastically changing ideas and cultural norms of that period. For the film depicting the 1930s (*Burnt by the Sun*) we looked into the nature and practices of Stalin's cult of personality and purges, into the contrasting ideas circulating in the aftermath of the revolution, and the implications these ideas had for specific characters. The post-WWII period (1940s and 1950s) is memorably depicted in *The Thief*; and the film that I included in this course even though it was not covered in *KinoTalk*, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, allowed us to see and discuss the issues confronting the Soviet Union in the 1960s and '70s. *Adam's Rib*, made in 1990, is a great choice for delving into the uncertainty and confusion of the time that immediately preceded the fall of the Soviet Union in December of 1991.

It would have been possible to address the post-Soviet period with just one or two films, but I felt it was important for my students to understand as much as possible the issues that shaped the mentality and behavior of the Russians they encountered when in Russia and to be exposed to various viewpoints about those historical transformations. Any one film on post-Soviet Russia I might have chosen would offer only a limited perspective on today's Russia and culture. So I chose to show three films, and the order in which I showed them, I realized, had to be carefully considered. Even though Mamin's *Window to Paris* (1993) was made before the other two films (*Peculiarities of the National Hunt* [1995] and *Brother* [1998]), it is the film that best shows how genuinely concerned Russians continue to be about the centuries-old question of Russia's identity. It best shows the tension Russians feel between West and East and is the only film out of these three that offers glimpses of hope for the future. The other two films depict a depressingly recognizable world of violence and drunken resignation.

¹⁸ W. J. Comer's "Russia's History," in Gerhart's *The Russian Context*.

As for the language component of this course, we worked on expanding the students' vocabulary using the concise and very helpful topical word lists provided in each chapter and had regular vocabulary quizzes. To develop their writing skills, there were regular essays with constructive feedback and obligatory rewrites. And most importantly, in order to further develop the students' ability to express their thoughts coherently, both in speaking and in writing, I provided them with a list of cohesive devices that we worked on throughout the semester in addition to the materials in *KinoTalk* (see Appendix E for the list of cohesive devices).

By the end of the semester, my students reported noticeable progress in their language skills, as well as improved listening comprehension and speaking and writing ability. Judging by the end-of-semester evaluations, the students enjoyed watching the movies and discussing them; they found the course exciting; and they appreciated an opportunity to learn about Russian culture through film. Most gratifying of all, some of them reported to have "learned a lot." Most importantly, in my opinion, they acquired not only additional knowledge about the language and country, its history and culture, but a deeper, more compassionate understanding of the people living there.

Conclusion

When the goals of the course, dictated by the needs of the students and the program, are clearly defined, one and the same textbook can become the cornerstone of a number of great courses, one that teaches the five Cs in an efficient and memorable way. Hardly any other resource we use in our foreign language programs offers the vividness, impressiveness, and effectiveness of cinema. Teachers of Russian have the luxury of choosing, at this point, from five recent textbooks dealing with Russian cinema and even animation. Using just one of them, *KinoTalk*, a busy instructor can create a number of exciting cinema courses, thematically focused on Russia's history and social issues, as in the courses I have described. There is a wide array of organizing principles around which cinema-

based courses can be designed, such as literary adaptations,¹⁹ music in Russian cinema,²⁰ or comedy, to name just a few (see Appendix F for ideas on further possible courses based on *KinoTalk*).

If we want the situation with foreign language study in this country to change, if we want to contribute to the national effort to promote the five Cs, yet another "c," for cinema, offers us a highly effective means to this end.

¹⁹ See V. Béguélin-Argimón, "Faciliter l'accès aux textes littéraires par le cinéma" (2007).

²⁰ See "The sight and sound of Russian film" in Gillespie's *Russian Cinema*, 2002.

Appendix A

Video-Based Russian Textbooks for Various Levels of Instruction

Title	Comments
<i>Animation for Russian Conversation</i> , 2008	This is an unusual textbook: not only is it based on animation (I have not seen animation used in textbooks for any other languages yet), it is designed for less advanced students than other similar textbooks (Novice High to Intermediate Mid on ACTFL scale).
<i>Advanced Russian through Film (A Collection of Transcripts and Exercises)</i> , 2005	This book is difficult to obtain, and it is not designed like similar textbooks, but it can be a helpful reference in a cinema course or used as a supplement in an advanced Russian grammar course. It is designed for heritage speakers and traditional advanced students (beyond third and fourth year of instruction).
<i>Cinema for Russian Conversation (Volumes 1 & 2)</i> , 2005	Designed for Intermediate to Advanced Plus students (on the ACTFL scale), this two-volume series offers individual chapters on a number of popular films (7 in each volume) from the 1930s to the 1990s and can be used for a variety of topic-oriented courses on Russian cinema.
<i>KinoTalk</i> , 2006	Designed for high-intermediate to advanced students of Russian, this book examines 11 prominent post-Soviet films and, as this paper strives to demonstrate, can serve as the basis for a number of varied cinema courses.

Appendix B

TRADITIONAL THIRD-YEAR: *A Composition and Conversation Course Based on Russian Cinema: Topics in Russian 20th-Century History*

Course Description

This Intermediate Russian course will improve your written and spoken Russian and will provide you with a rich depository of cultural material. We will watch and discuss four films (*The Thief*, *Window to Paris*, *Adam's Rib*, *Burnt by the Sun*,) which will enable us to explore the impact of the Soviet state on Russians' mentality and behavior. This course focuses primarily on speaking and writing, but we will also devote attention to listening and reading, and we will address relevant grammar whenever necessary. This course strives to enrich your vocabulary and improve your fluency by providing you with an opportunity to speak Russian. Our discussions will range from concrete to abstract topics and will improve your ability to communicate in Russian. Weekly writing assignments will hone your ability to express yourself more lucidly on paper.

Tentative Semester Plan

Weeks & Dates	Chapters	Films & Stuff
Week 1 August 20-24 Week 2 August 27-31	Chapter 1: Introduction Quiz on cinema terms	Introduction to the Course
Week 3 Sept 3-7 Week 4 Sept 10-14 Week 5 Sept 17-21	Chapter 6 Lexical Quiz Chapter Test	<i>Burnt by the Sun</i>
Week 6 Sept 24-28 Week 7 Oct 1-5 Week 8 Oct 8-12	Chapter 9 Lexical Quiz Chapter Test	<i>The Thief</i>
Week 9 Oct 15-19 Week 10 Oct 22-26 Week 11 Oct.29 - Nov. 2	Chapter 3 Lexical Quiz Chapter Test	<i>Adam's Rib</i>
Week 12 Nov 5-9	Chapter 4	

Week 13 Nov 12-16	Lexical Quiz	<i>Window to Paris</i>
Week 14 Nov 19-23	Chapter Test	
Week 15 Nov 26-30	Chapter 13: Conclusion	Oral Presentations
Week 16 Dec 3-7		Review
		Conclusions
Exam Week Dec 10-14	Final Exam Time and date according to the University schedule	

Appendix C

HERITAGE SPEAKERS: Language and culture course
Two Genders, Two Worlds: Masculine and Feminine in Russian Cinema

Course Description

This course is designed with the particular needs of heritage speakers in mind. Unlike traditional courses for students who learn Russian as a foreign language, this course takes advantage of the strengths of heritage speakers (speaking and oral comprehension) while working to improve typical weaknesses (reading, writing, recognition of register, formal grammar and cultural knowledge). This course will help you develop reading and writing skills while providing a concise introduction to grammar and fine-tune your stylistic repertoire. At the same time, it will help you deepen your knowledge of Russian culture in its various aspects through the Russian films of 1990s we will watch and discuss and through the readings on Russian culture. The goal of the course is to help you fill in the gaps in your practical skills and in your knowledge of the language, country and culture – an essential step in attaining a higher level of proficiency in Russian, one that more closely resembles that of educated native speakers. The final presentation will allow you to use your language skills in a meaningful way – in order to gain new information as well as a deeper understanding of Russia's past and present.

Tentative Semester Plan

Weeks	Mondays: Chapters in <i>KinoTalk</i> & Films
Weeks 1 & 2	Introduction to the course; Chapter 1: Introduction
PART I: MEN, MACHO, MASCULINE	
Weeks 3 & 4	Chapter 7: <i>Peculiarities of National Hunt</i>
Week 5	A documentary on alcoholism in Russia <i>War in a Glass</i>
Weeks 6 & 7	Chapter 8: <i>Prisoner of the Mountains</i>
Week 8 & Week 9 (Week 10 – Spring break)	Chapter 11: <i>Brother</i> Midterm
PART II: WOMEN, MOTHERHOOD, FEMININE	
Weeks 11 & 12	Chapter 3: <i>Adam's Rib</i>
Week 13	Chapter 5: <i>Anna</i>
Weeks 14 & 15	Chapter 6: <i>Land of the Deaf</i>
Week 16	Chapter 13, Conclusion & Review
FINAL EXAM: Time and date according to the University schedule	

Appendix D

OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS - FORMER MISSIONARIES:

Russian 20th-Century History through Film

Course Description

This advanced Russian course will improve your written and spoken Russian and will provide you with a rich depository of cultural material. We will watch and discuss Russian films (among them the classic melodrama of the Soviet epoch, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, a gangster drama *Brother*, and a fantastic comedy *Window to Paris*) that will enable us to take a closer look at the dramatic history of twentieth-century Russia, and at how it shaped Russians' mentality and behavior.

This course focuses primarily on speaking and writing, but we will also devote attention to listening and reading, and we will address relevant grammar points whenever necessary. It strives to enrich your vocabulary and improve your fluency by providing you with an opportunity to speak Russian and by working on coherent discourse of paragraph length. Our discussions will range from concrete to abstract topics and will improve your ability to communicate in Russian. Writing assignments will hone your ability to express yourself more lucidly on paper. Hearing authentic Russian dialogue in the films will, over the course of the semester, improve your listening skills.

General Semester Plan

Weeks	Films & Topics
Week 1	Introduction to the course / Chapter 1 in <i>KinoTalk</i>
Part I, 1920s-1970s	
Week 2	1920s: Chapter 2, <i>Heart of a Dog</i>
Weeks 3&4	1930s: Chapter 6, <i>Burnt by the Sun</i> *Test 1
Weeks 5&6	1940s-1950s: Chapter 9, <i>The Thief</i>
Week 7	1960s – 1970s: * <i>Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears</i> *Test 2
Week 8	NO CLASSES: fall break: October 12-17, Monday-Saturday
Part II: 1990s: Pre- and Post-Dissolution of the USSR	
Weeks 9&10	1990s: Chapter 3: <i>Adam's Rib</i> (1990)
Weeks 11&12	1990s: Chapter 7: <i>Peculiarities of National Hunt</i> (1995) *Test 3
Weeks 13&14	1990s: Chapter 11, <i>Brother</i> (1997)
Week 15	1990s: Chapter 4, <i>Window to Paris</i> (1993)
Week 16	Presentations and Review, Chapter 13, Conclusion
Week 17:	*Final Exams (day and time according to the University schedule)

Appendix E

Cohesive Devices / Приемы согласования (связки)²¹

1. *Порядок (время)*

Sequence/Time

во-первых, во-вторых

in the first
place, to begin
with

в первую очередь

first of all

до сих пор

until now

до тех пор, пока... не

until

до того, как

until

за... (неделю) до того, как...

before (event)

когда

when

между тем

meanwhile, in
the meantime

перед тем, как

before

по мере того, как

as

после того, как

after (an event)

прежде чем

before

сначала

at first, first, at
the beginning

с одной стороны... с другой стороны...

on the one
hand, on the
other hand

с тех пор как

since

через (неделю) после того, как

in, after (time)

²¹ This list was published in one of professional publications a number of years ago and I have been revising it to make it clearer and more complete.

2. УСЛОВИЯ

в соответствии с (тем, что)

если

согласно (чему), с чем)

Conditions

in connection
with the fact
that

if (not
whether)

according to,
in accordance
with

3. ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ ОТНОШЕНИЕ, ОЦЕНКА

*безусловно
благодаря тому, что*

вместо того, чтобы

*все-таки
действительно*

*кажется
как будто*

*к сожалению
мало того, что...*

на самом деле

Emotional

attitude
absolutely
owing to (due
to) the fact that

instead of
(doing
something)
after all
actually, really,
truly, indeed

it seems
as if (also
apparently)

unfortunately
not only, its
not enough
that

actually, in
point of fact

несмотря на то, что

despite (the
fact that)

несомненно

undoubtedly,
unquestionably

но

but

однако

however, but

по крайней мере

at least

тем не менее

nevertheless

честно говоря

to be honest,
in all honesty,
frankly
speaking

хотя

although,
though

4. Суммирование

Summarizing

в конце концов

in the end,
when all is said
and done

вообще (говоря)

generally, in
general

в результате

as a result of

значит

so, then

как ни

however, no
matter how

как оказалось

it turned out
that

одним словом

in a word

таким образом

thus, this way,
like this

5. **Заполнение паузы**

*значит
как говорится*

так сказать

6. **Причины**

благодаря тому, что

*ведь
в виду того, что*

в связи с тем, что

*дело в том, что
несмотря на (то, что)*

по следующим причинам

*потому что
так как*

тем более, что

Filling a pause

so, then
as the saying
goes, as they
say
so to speak, as
it were

Reasons

owing to (due
to) the fact that
after all
in light of the
fact that
in connection
with the fact
that
the point is
despite (the
fact that)
for these
reasons
because
since,
inasmuch as
particularly
because...

7. **Введение дополнительной информации /Introducing**

кроме того

мало того, что...

Additional Information

besides,
moreover, in
addition
not only, it is

между тем

например

8. Разное

в таком случае

из-за чего

на всякий случай

по сравнению с...

с точки зрения

судя по тому, что

тогда

что

чтобы

not enough

that

meanwhile, in

the meantime

for example

Miscellaneous

in that case

because of, on

the account of

just in case

compared to,

in comparison

with

from

someone's

point of view

judging by the

fact that

then, at that

time, in that

case

that

in order to, so

as to, so that

Appendix F

Further Possible Courses Based on *KinoTalk*

Courses	Films, Texts and Additional Readings
Fathers & Sons	FILMS: <i>Adam's Rib, Window to Paris, Anna, Prisoner of the Caucasus, The Thief</i> ADDITIONAL READINGS: on the dynamics of inter-generational relationships and changing values, recent sociological articles on Russia.
Film Comedy	FILMS: <i>Window to Paris, Peculiarities of the National Hunt, Friend of the Deceased, Adam's Rib, Heart of a Dog</i> ADDITIONAL READINGS: on irony, humor, black humor, various kinds of comedy and comic plots.
Language and (Mis) Communication	FILMS: <i>Window to Paris, Peculiarities of National Hunt, Prisoner of the Caucasus, Land of the Deaf, Brother</i> ADDITIONAL READINGS on translation, interpretation, on French and American English in Russian culture, on sign language
Music	FILMS: <i>Brother, Prisoner of the Mountains, Window to Paris, Heart of a Dog, Burnt by the Sun</i> MUSIC: Songs by "Nautilus Pompilius," Louis Armstrong, Spirituals, Edith Piaf, Tchaikovsky, Verdi's <i>Aida</i> , Tango (<i>The Tired Sun</i>)
Screen Adaptations of Literary Texts	FILMS: <i>Heart of a Dog, Prisoner of the Mountains, Anna, Window to Paris</i> TEXTS: Bulgakov's <i>Heart of a Dog</i> , Tolstoy's <i>Prisoner of the Caucasus</i> , Goncharov's <i>Oblomov</i> , Pushkin's <i>The Queen of Spades</i> ADDITIONAL READINGS on the concept of "fidelity" of screen adaptations; on this cinematic genre on Russian soil.

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