

Composition 2
ENGCMP 18750
TTH 3:30-4:50 Biddle 210
Dr. Ann Rea
Spring 2018
Syllabus and Course Description

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Office hours: MW 2:00-3:00 and TTH 12:30-2:00
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In **Composition 2**, students refine their skills in expression, working towards clarity and coherence in writing. This course aims for a sophisticated understanding of the writing process and an appreciation of the importance of audience in the presentation of their **complex** ideas. The emphasis on research requires that students learn to distinguish between scholarly and popular sources, effectively integrate evidence in support of their own ideas, gain an understanding of the research process, and produce college level research papers. But more importantly in my classes, students learn how to read complex texts and competing voices to both understand what they have read on complex issues, but also to develop a separate, individual perspective on problems that they may never have previously understood. I believe that this prepares students for the work they will do in their majors, and in their later careers. The skill to understand others' perspectives and define one's own position is one that people need in many areas of their lives. As this skill develops students will produce work that demonstrates significant depth of thinking and range of perspectives about a concept or idea.

What you will learn:

These are the “learning outcomes” for this class:

1. You will refine your ability to express yourself with clarity and coherence in writing.
2. You will learn how to examine others' ideas and positions and develop your own thinking about the question. This process results from the practical application of reading and writing strategies.
3. You will learn to understand, employ, and effectively integrate various types of evidence in your written work.
4. You will demonstrate an ability to think critically about a **complex** topic, conduct research on that topic using a variety of scholarly and popular sources, and produce college level research papers.

For this class you will write 4 essays, increasing in length, to conclude with a final research essay of 7-10 pages. You will choose the topic for this final essay, but the range of your choices will be defined by the assigned readings. I have chosen Masha Gessen's *The Future is History* as our main text. Gessen is a Russian-American journalist who writes about the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the period of potentially democratic potential that followed, and then Vladimir Putin's

assertion of control that, Gessen argues, is a version of totalitarianism that resembles Soviet communism. I chose this book because it is fascinating, because I believe that people living in the U.S. need to understand Russia's political presence in the world, and because it provides potential for research topics. Gessen focuses on the lives of seven people who lived through these changes and who provide us a glimpse of the variety of experiences.

During the first half of the semester we will read chapters from Gessen alongside additional depictions of Russia and readings relevant to Russia's political social and political organization. The short essays you will write in this part of the course will allow you to work through the important ideas that the readings provide. As with any course, I encourage you to see writing as the means by which you work out what you think. Instead of beginning with a simplistic thesis that you will argue throughout the paper, I urge you to explore the complexities in the readings in ways that might require an initial loss of control of your writing, trusting that you can use the revision process to regain control. To begin writing having already decided what you think means that you will not arrive at any new ideas or deeper understanding.

Grades work out as follows:

Paper One: Personal Stories: 3 pages 10%

Paper Two: "*Homo Sovieticus*" 3-4 pages 15%

Paper Three: Making Sense of Russia's Return to Totalitarianism 4-5 pages 20%

Paper Four: Final Research Paper 7-10 pages 35%

Class participation: 10%

Final Examination, in-class, that accounts for the rationale of your research 10%

You must pass this exam to pass the course.

Required Textbooks:

Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, Granta

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, Random House

Muriel Harris and Jennifer Kunka, *The Writer's FAQ's*, Pearson

The easiest way to get the correct editions is to shop at the bookstore where you will find new and used copies and also books that you can rent.

You must own copies of the texts, and have them for our next class, and should aim to mark them up and make them your own, lived-in copies. Please avoid Kindle or another e-reading devices because of the difficulty of finding specific passages and marking them up.

When our readings are posted on Courseweb, please be sure to print this and bring it to class. This is part of your attendance and preparation for class.

This class requires your **active** participation in a way that other classes may not, but we will have a small focused group for engaging conversation. You must prepare for class by reading thoughtfully. It is possible that you will read some material that we will not manage to discuss in class, but your exposure

to this will contribute to your understanding and you can always direct the discussion to what you have liked in the reading!

There will be regular unannounced reading quizzes which make an important contribution to your grade.

Please be reflective of your part in class discussion. If you tend to talk a lot you might need to check that you do not dominate the discussion. If you are shy and tend to leave the talking to others you might need to push yourself to speak. It is extremely important that we behave respectfully towards others in the discussions.

Class participation will contribute to your grade.

Policies and Rules

Please do not use your laptop in class.

No texting in class.

Give yourself the privilege of being fully present in class.

Attendance is required. More than three absences and you risk having your grade lowered. If you need to schedule appointments make sure that they do not take place during class time. Be punctual at the beginning of class, and do not make plans to leave before class ends: to do otherwise will result in an absence being recorded.

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence and will not be excused. Be sure that you see the distinction between collaboration with and the kind of help with writing which involves someone else doing work for you. To present the language or ideas of others as if they are your own is plagiarism and this applies as much to internet sources as to any others.

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you should contact Counselling Services, G10 Student Union, (814) 269-7119(voice)/(814) 269-7186 as early as possible in the term. The Office of Health & Wellness Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Tuesday, 9th January

Introduction

Thursday, 11th January

Please read the opening section of Gessen, “Dramatis Personae,” “Prologue,” and Chapter One, “Born in 1984.” (18 pages)

Tuesday, 16th January

Read Gessen to page 46.

Begin work on Paper 1, "Personal Stories."

Thursday, 18th January

Rough draft of Paper 1, at least 2 pages long, due in class.

Peer revision session.

Tuesday, 23rd January

Paper 1 due in class.

Read to page 20 in the excerpt from George Orwell's *1984*, Chapter One, Part 1 (Courseweb)

Thursday, 25th January

Read to the end of the excerpt from *1984* on Courseweb.

Tuesday, 30th January

Read Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, Chapter 4, *Homo Sovieticus*," pages 46-66.

Thursday, 1st February

Work on writing to understand the concept of "Homo Sovieticus." Can the excerpt from *1984* help us with this process?

Tuesday, 6th February

Rough draft of Paper 2 due in class.

Peer Review session.

Thursday, 8th February

Read Svetlana Alexievich *Secondhand Time*, to page 11, including "Chronology: Russia after Stalin." Mark the sections that help you to understand "*Homo Sovieticus*." Alexievich uses the phrase too! Is her perspective different from Gessen's?

Tuesday, 13th February

Revision of Paper 2 to incorporate what you have learned from reading and discussing Alexievich.

Thursday, 15th February

Prepare a description of how the existence of "Homo Sovieticus" creates compliance. Write this without having your draft or books in front of you.

In-class work on reconciling your own description with your most up-to-date draft.

Tuesday, 20th February

Paper 2 due in class.

Read Chapter Five of Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, “Swan Lake” (25 pages).

Thursday, 22nd February

Read Svetlana Alexievich, “On How We Fell in and then Out of Love with Gorbby,” “On Falling in Love with Tanks under your Windows,” and “How Stuff Became Worth as much as Words and Ideas,” 20-32.

Tuesday, 27th February

Read Alexievich, from middle of page 52 to the bottom of 56, 58-63, 74-76 and Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, 103-115.

Thursday, 1st March

Read Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, from middle of page 151- 163 and 164-171.

Tuesday, 6th March

Read Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*, from page 171-9, 187-192, 196-8, 200-206.

Thursday, 8th March

Read excerpt from Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*, “The Dismantling of Democracy,” (Courseweb).

Tuesday, 13th March

Read Masha Gessen, “The Future is History” chapter from the book of that title.

Thursday, 15th March

Prepare notes on an explanation of how Russia slipped towards totalitarianism. Bring all the readings to class. In-class work on reconciling the various readings.

Tuesday, 20th March

Read Alexievich, page 135-9
Write 2 pages of draft of Paper 3.

Thursday, 22nd March

Rough draft of Paper 3

Peer review session in class

Tuesday, 27th March

Library session: class meets in Owen Library

Paper 3 due in class

Thursday, 29th March

Bring to class a description of your plan for the research paper.

Laptops allowed in class today! Borrow one from the library if you need to.

Work on the research.

Read Alexeivich, 154-9

From now on please bring all of your sources to class as well as the latest draft of your work towards the final paper.

Tuesday, 3rd April

Read your sources!

Choose the source that you believe will be most important for your research paper. We will work on this in class.

Thursday, 5th April

Complete writing assignment about sources.

Read Alexievich, from page 267 to the top of 272.

Tuesday, 10th April

Rough draft of Research Paper, at least 5 pages long, due in class.

Peer Review session

Thursday, 12th April

Read Gessen, chapter sixteen, "White Ribbons."

Tuesday, 17th April

Read Gessen, *The Future is History*, chapter twenty, "A Nation Divided."

Thursday, 19th April

Final Examination in class.

Final Draft of Research Paper due on 26th April

