

RUSS 255 - PROF. JULIA CHADAGA

# RUSSIAN CULTURE: REPRESSION, REVOLUTION, AND TERROR

What ideas and circumstances give rise to revolutionary violence? Where is the line between justifiable violence and terrorism? In an authoritarian regime, does repression breed dissent? With its rich tradition of official and unofficial terror, Russia presents an excellent case study for exploring these topics. Throughout Russian history we can follow an incendiary chain of events: repression followed by revolt, followed by reprisal, followed by revolutionary violence; terror from above answered by terror from below, and so on, ad infinitum. In this course we will trace the roots of the Russian Revolution through three centuries, focusing on moments of repression, dissent, censorship, conspiracy, and violence inflicted by and against the state.



We will learn about the persecution of the Old Believers, who were burned at the stake; the serf uprisings and popular rebellions that cut a bloody swath through Russia in the eighteenth century; and the maverick forefathers of the Bolsheviks, who gave us the Great October Revolution. We will consider the tactics and motives of revolutionary conspirators; and we will ponder why women played such a prominent role in acts of political terror. Throughout we will ask questions that these rebels asked themselves. Are there times when revolutionary violence is acceptable and even necessary? Who gets to decide the degree, extent, and targets of the violence? We will see these and other "cursed questions" dramatized and debated in our readings, and strive for a deeper understanding of how Russian revolutionary thought and action served as a model for radicals around the world.

Texts will include novels, underground manifestoes, official proclamations, letters, diaries, and film, as well as readings in cultural history and theory. All reading will be in English. Class will meet Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:30 in Humanities 215.

