

Spring 2010 – New Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar in HUMANITIES

HONORS 2116

Taught in
English.

W 2:00-4:50

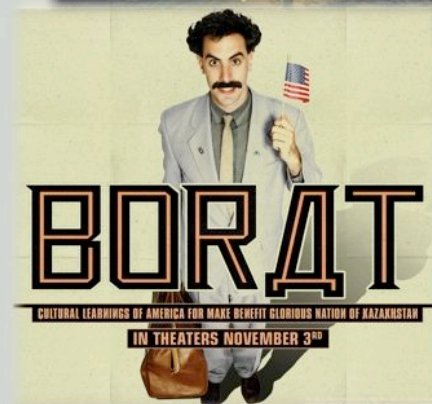
Section (001) (3) (WI) (FC:HU)

AT THE BOUNDARIES OF "THE PERMISSIBLE": ART, POLITICS, AND ENTERTAINMENT IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN CONTEXTS

Through cross-cultural examination of artistically powerful and nevertheless politically or otherwise controversial Russian and American films, books, documentaries, cartoons, photography, and other mass media forms, this interdisciplinary seminar in humanities will enable you to explore the boundaries of the permissible in the artists', authorities' and public's understanding of freedom of expression and interpretation.

Together with the discussion of the world-famous, but once banned or partially censored books and films such as *Doctor Zhivago*, *Lolita*, *Master and Margarita*, *Ivan the Terrible*, *Andrey Rublev*, *Solaris*, *The Russians Are Coming*, *Borat*, to name a few, we will try to understand why civilization is inseparable from censorship of all kinds (political, aesthetic, religious, erotic, etc.), and why since antiquity to the modern digital culture most people are in favor of censoring something. Being introduced to 'high' and 'popular' art and its creators from multiple perspectives, you will find out how the nature and methods of censorship were changed, transformed, and given new implications when it was reflected through the reality of Cold War (1945-1991) between two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Discussing the impact of state 'thought control' on the shape of national media, film, literature and the arts in the authoritarian regimes and liberal democracies, we will define how in opposed political systems the existence of censorship reflects the conflict between artistic freedom and language taboos, between the human values and human desire, between the 'textual pleasure' and canonical art forms, between private and public discourse, between creative imagination and artistic responsibility.

You will learn how to appreciate, evaluate and analyze visual and literary texts in the complexity of their historical, cultural, political, and aesthetic contexts, and how to apply critical thinking skills to address global challenges. Screenings will be preceded by lectures and followed by diverse thought-provoking activities, such as class discussions, essay questions, journal reflections, and multimedia presentations. No knowledge of Russian is required. All Russian films will be shown with English subtitles.



Dr. Elena K. Murenina

Director, Russian Studies Interdisciplinary Program, Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences,
East Carolina University, 313 Austin, (252) 328-5521, mureninae@ecu.edu