This course is intended to introduce aspects of Russia today to a general student audience, with particular emphasis on contemporary Russia as a “multinational” country. No background in the subject is required. Among the many issues which the course will raise are: the complexities and contradictions of the multiple national identities characteristic of the country’s extraordinary ethnic mix; the attempt to recover the past in Russian culture today; the ways we see the Russians through our own media; the economic and political transformations of Russia, as reflected in culture and everyday life. Particular attention will be paid this year to the Chechen conflict, its meaning for Russia, and its representation in Russian culture. There are three hours of informal lectures per week, and a discussion section. Assignments will include readings, film viewings, and regular surveys of English-language media for news about Russia today.

For more information, write to mlmakin@umich.edu.
This course is intended to introduce aspects of Russia today to a general student audience, with especial emphasis on contemporary Russia as a “multi-national” country. No background in the subject is required. Throughout the course various features of modern Russia will be examined through such diverse materials as the literature, cinema, and political history of recent years. Among the many issues which this course intends to raise are: the complexities and contradictions of Russia as a multi-ethnic country (or, as most Russian-speakers would put it, a country of many different “nationalities”); the attempt to recover the past in Russian culture today; the ways we look at the Russians through our own media; the economic and political transformations of Russia, as reflected in culture and everyday life. Particular attention will be paid to the conflicts in the North Caucasus, their meaning for Russia, and their representation in Russian culture, and to other “hot spots” of ethnic and national content that have emerged in recent years. There are two informal lectures per week, and a discussion section. The required reading consists of the following: materials available through the course web site and the following books: Stephen Kotkin, Armageddon Averted (Oxford University Press, 2001); Lilia Shevtsova, Putin’s Russia (Carnegie Endowment, 2005); Peter Aleskhkovsky,
Skunk: A Life, tr. Tait, Glas New Russian Writing, no 15 (1997); Viktor Pelevin, Homo Zapiens, tr. Andrew Brumfield (Viking, 2002). Students are also required to watch, out of class, four feature films, which will be available for individual viewing in the Language Resource Center (2nd Floor, MLB) and will also be streamed through C-Tools. Some of the materials presented in lectures (photographs, maps, other images), will be available on the web site for this course, and students should review them there after seeing them in class. Students are also expected to follow news of Russia in the American (and any other available) media, and discussion of the news will be an important part of section meetings. Evidence of general reading, viewing, and listening will be expected in written assignments, and all students will be expected to show knowledge of current events in Russia during section meetings. Those meetings will also discuss issues raised in lectures, and will examine the reading assignments.

Written assignments for the course are: three papers, three in-class writing assignments, and a weekly journal, which should combine notes on students' own coverage of the news from Russia with students’ commentary on that news and its relationship to lectures and class discussions. Students are expected to make at least one entry in their journals for every class meeting of the course, and each entry should be at least 250 words in length. Sources should be cited, but not reproduced; entries should discuss the news item in question, the manner in which it has been reported by the source, and, where appropriate, its relevance to material studied or discussed in the course. Journals are to be submitted for grading three times in the semester. They should be kept in electronic form and submitted through the course web site as indicated on the syllabus. Papers, treating different aspects of the course, should be clearly written, making ample use of course materials. Students are encouraged to submit draft papers for advance discussion with their GSI, and to attend pre-writing workshop meetings or one-on-one consultations with their instructors. Students are expected to re-write papers as required by their instructors. It is the belief of the course instructors that careful editing and re-writing is an important part of the process of producing clear, well-argued, and effective prose. In-class writing assignments will provide students with an opportunity to present cogently brief accounts of issues addressed in class and studied in assignments. Each in-class writing assignment is worth 10% of the final grade; each paper is worth 15% of the final grade; the journals in total are worth 10% of the final grade. Work in sections (participation in discussions) is worth 15% of the final grade. There is no final examination.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

JANUARY
W 7  Introduction to class. Introduction to Russia.

M 12  How the Soviet Union ended (Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*).
W 14  Conc.

M 19  MLK Day.
W 21  The New Russia in the New Century (Shevtsova, *Putin’s Russia*)

M 26  The New Russia, cont..
W 28  After Putin, and yet before Putin (materials on course web site)?

FEBRUARY
M 2  Conflicts in the Caucasus -- Chechnya – introduction (reading -- background materials Dunlop, Lieven). Introduction to film *Prisoner of the Mountains*.
W 4  Caucasian conflict in Russian fiction – Makanin “Prisoner from the Caucasus” (course web site).

M 9  After Chechnya (materials on course web site).
(FIRST PAPER DUE).
W 11  *Prisoner of the Mountains*, discussion. Women in Russia today,. (readings – course web site). Introduction to film *Old Women* (JOURNALS DUE)

M 16  First in-class Writing Assignment
W 18  Women in Russia Today, cont. Guest lecture

M 23  Mid-term Break
W 25  Mid-term Break

MARCH
M 2  Women in Russia today, fiction (course web site).
W 4  Discussion of film *Old Women*. 
(SECOND PAPER DUE).

W 11 Ideas of Russian-ness (Aleshkovsky, Skunk: A Life).

M 16 Skunk, conc. Introduction to film The Italian

W 18 Second in-class Writing Assignment.

M 23 The strange and yet representative case of Nikolai Klyuev (poem, chronology, photographs and text, Shentalinsky, “The Arrested Word”, course web site).


M 30 Discussion of film, The Italian New versions of Russia. Introduction to Brother

APRIL

W 1 Viktor Pelevin, Homo Zapiens.
(THIRD PAPER DUE)

M 6 Pelevin, conc. Discussion of Brother.
W 8 Sport in the New Russia (readings – course web site).

M 13 Whither Russia (readings – course web site)?
(JOURNALS DUE)
W 15 conc.

M 20 Third in-class Writing Assignment

Michael Makin
3016 MLB
Tel. 647-2142
E-mail: mmlakin@umich.edu
Office Hours:
MW 2.30-3.30, or by appointment