

Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2026

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area Slavic Languages & Literatures
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org Slavic/East European Eurasian - D0593
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences
Level/Career Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog 3380
Course Title Female Environments: Lived Experience of Spaces of Socialism and Post-Socialism
Transcript Abbreviation Slavic Fem Environ
Course Description This course explores the lived environments of socialism and post-socialism through the lens of women, with a focus on home, natural environments, and war-time environments. Using fiction, film, visual arts, architecture, and interdisciplinary research, we study the intersection of personal experience and collective history.
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No
Grading Basis Letter Grade
Repeatable No
Course Components Lecture
Grade Roster Component Lecture
Credit Available by Exam No
Admission Condition Course No
Off Campus Never
Campus of Offering Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites
Exclusions
Electronically Enforced No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 16.0400
Subsidy Level General Studies Course
Intended Rank Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

Requirement/Elective Designation

Lived Environments

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- 1. Analyze home environments, natural environments, and war-time environments in their full complexity, while using appropriate critical vocabulary and creative self-expression.
- 2. Explain the diversity and complexity of ideological processes and their impact on various environments during periods of state socialism and post-socialism, while distinguishing between various regions, countries, and cultural traditions.
- 3. Engage critically and logically with cultural representations of homes and natural environments from various cultures under state socialism and post-socialism, while differentiating between various artistic means and methods.
- 4. Reflect on the tensions and interplay between ideological conventions and personal strategies of self-expression, as employed by female authors and visual artists.
- 5. Connect and distinguish various experiences and environments in various countries under state socialism; understand and articulate the fragility and vulnerability of both human-made homes and natural environments.
- 6. Write complex research that is sensitive to cultural differences.

Content Topic List

- home as an environment; transitions from childhood to adolescence, girlhood and home environments; youth, love, and home environments; home: generational comparisons; home and the unhome; home in late socialism and the era of transition
- women, home, and natural environments; nature related values and ways of living; environmental agency; natural environments and human violence; indigenous environments; Destruction of indigenous environments and women's activism
- Women, indigenous environments, and agency; environments of war and resistance - women in war; Environments of WWII. Women as war refugees; agency and ideology in wartime environments; after WWII: body-memories, new imperial warfare
- Russian war against Ukraine – destruction and ways of re-existence; Women against war

Sought Concurrence

No

Attachments

- Slavic 3380 E Theme course submission worksheet_31 July 2025[95].docx: Slavic 3380 9/2 GE Theme Sheet
(GEC Model Curriculum Compliance Stmt. Owner: Ernst, Joseph)
- Slavic 3380 E Theme course submission worksheet_31 July 2025[95].docx: Slavic 3380 9/2 Syllabus
(Syllabus. Owner: Ernst, Joseph)

Comments

COURSE REQUEST
3380 - Status: PENDING

Last Updated: Vankeerbergen,Bernadette
Chantal
09/08/2025

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Ernst,Joseph	09/02/2025 02:38 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Ernst,Joseph	09/02/2025 02:38 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	09/08/2025 10:16 AM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Neff,Jennifer Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	09/08/2025 10:16 AM	ASCCAO Approval

Slavic 3380 Female Environments: Lived Experience of Spaces of Socialism and Post-Socialism

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3 Credit Hours

Course description

This course explores the lived environments of socialism and post-socialism through the lens of women, with a focus on home, natural environments, and war-time environments. Using fiction, film, visual arts, architecture, and interdisciplinary research, we study the intersection of personal experience and collective history.

This course is part of the Lived Environments Theme

In Person

Two eighty-minute class meetings per week

Weekly meetings: *tba*

Course overview

Instructor:

Epp Annus, PhD, Lecturer, Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures
annus.1@osu.edu

Office hours: *tba*

Course description

Our lived experience as embodied beings is conditioned by a variety of factors, including dominant ideologies, cultural memories, pressures of technological innovation, dreams of good life, but also most directly the surroundings of our everyday interactions. Under state socialism, in countries within the Soviet Union and within its wider sphere of influence in Eastern and Central Europe, the ideology and practices of state socialism produced specific conditions for both home lives and natural environments; at the same time these countries were part of developments of technologies and ideologies of modernity. The legacy of WWII with its challenging war environment was later commemorated in books and films, and recently wartime environments have again become topical in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine, which has devastated lives, homes, and natural environments.

This course explores the lived environments of socialism and post-socialism through the lens of women's experience, with a focus on home, natural environments, and war as an environmental factor. Using fiction, film, visual arts, architecture, and interdisciplinary research, the course highlights the intersection of personal experience and collective history. Particular attention is given to how environments — domestic, natural, and wartime — shape women's lives and how women, in turn, respond to, inhabit, and interact with these environments. The course also explores how representations of the lived environment have changed over time, covering the period from the 1940s to the present day. It develops students' analytical and reflective capacities in line with the Lived Environments GE Theme, while emphasizing cultural diversity, gendered perspectives, and

historical transformation. All works discussed are created by women authors. Films will have English subtitles.

Course expected learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students should successfully be able to:

1. Analyze home environments, natural environments, and war-time environments in their full complexity, while using appropriate critical vocabulary and creative self-expression.
2. Explain the diversity and complexity of ideological processes and their impact on various environments during periods of state socialism and post-socialism, while distinguishing between various regions, countries, and cultural traditions.
3. Engage critically and logically with cultural representations of homes and natural environments from various cultures under state socialism and post-socialism, while differentiating between various artistic means and methods.
4. Reflect on the tensions and interplay between ideological conventions and personal strategies of self-expression, as employed by female authors and visual artists.
5. Connect and distinguish various experiences and environments in various countries under state socialism; understand and articulate the fragility and vulnerability of both human-made homes and natural environments.
6. Write complex research that is sensitive to cultural differences.

General Education Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes: Lived Environments Theme Goals:

1. Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than in the Foundations component. [Note: In this context, "advanced" refers to courses that are e.g., synthetic, rely on research or cutting-edge findings, or deeply engage with the subject matter, among other possibilities.]
2. Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.
3. Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g., agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.
4. Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations, and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

Successful students are able to:

- 1.1. Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.
- 1.2. Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.
- 2.1. Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.

2.2. Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

3.1. Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.

3.2. Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.

4.1. Analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.

4.2. Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.

4.3. Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments.

How this course addresses the Lived Environments GE Theme ELOs:

This course offers a multidisciplinary exploration of how lived environments—domestic, natural, and war-affected—are shaped by and in turn shape human experience under socialism and post-socialism. Focusing on women's perspectives, students examine how ideological systems and historical events—such as WWII and the ongoing war in Ukraine—have affected both physical environments and personal lives. Through fiction, film, visual art, and architecture, the course highlights how women represent, respond to, and engage with their environments. Cross-cultural and historical perspectives prompt students to reflect on the fragility of homes and ecosystems, and on the relationship between ideology, environment, and personal agency. Creative projects and reflection papers will enable students to integrate different approaches and make connections to out-of-classroom experiences and academic knowledge across disciplines.

How this course works

Credit hours and work expectations

This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy (go.osu.edu/credithours), students should expect around 9 hours of engagement with the class each week to receive a grade of (C) average. Actual hours spent will vary by student learning habits and the assignments each week.

Course communication guidelines

Important communications, reminders and announcements will be posted in Announcements on CarmenCanvas. Make sure to enable your notifications to receive email reminders of these notifications.

Reach out to the instructors via email with any questions or concerns.

Emails will be answered within two work days, Monday – Friday between 9am – 5pm.

Office hours: scheduled weekly and by appointment. Please email at least 48 hours in advance to set up a time by appointment.

Tone and Civility

Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Instructors will provide specific guidance for discussions on controversial or personal topics.

Citing your sources

Make sure to cite all sources you are using for discussion board, paper summaries and the research project (including online, primary and secondary sources). Citations should follow Chicago Manual of Style.

Protecting and saving your work

Make sure to save your work on your personal computer in a separate file before submitting it to CarmenCanvas.

Course technology

Technology support

For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at it.osu.edu/help, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- Self-Service and Chat support: it.osu.edu/help
- Phone: 614-688-4357(HELP)
- Email: 8help@osu.edu
- TDD: 614-688-8743

Technology skills needed for this course

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen (go.osu.edu/canvasstudent)

Required Equipment

- Computer: current Mac (MacOs) or PC (Windows 10) with high-speed internet connection
- Other: a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) to use for BuckeyePass authentication

Required software

Microsoft Office 365: All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found at go.osu.edu/office365help.

Carmen Access

You will need to use BuckeyePass (buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the BuckeyePass
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click Enter a Passcode and then click the Text me new codes button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the Duo Mobile application to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357 (HELP) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

Grading and instructor response

How your grade is calculated

Assignment Category Points and/or Percentage

Attendance and participation 15%

Quizzes 25%

Three reflection papers 30%

Creative/ fieldwork projects 20%

Final reflection 10%

Total 100%

Description of major course assignments

Attendance and Participation 15%

It is my expectation that you attend every class meeting, carefully prepare assigned readings and films, and actively participate in our workshops. You need contribute to our discussions by sharing your observations, addressing scholarly arguments, and asking questions.

Participation grades are posted three times per semester and the expectations for the respective grades are:

100% You are present in class, did homework assignments/readings. You actively participate with meaningful and original contributions. You engage with the contributions of others, encouraging a discussion that accommodates diverse experience, opinions, and identities.

85% You are present in class and are ready to answer questions when approached by the professor, but do not take the initiative to participate. Or: you demonstrate that you have read the assigned

texts but might not have been able to come up with your own thoughts or ideas about them. Or: you may not have done the complete homework but make up for it through active participation in class.

75% You are present in class, but do not actively participate and are not ready to actively contribute or answer questions when asked. In your in-class writing assignments you cannot demonstrate that you have read the assigned texts or retained information from them. You did not do the assigned homework.

0% You are not present in the classroom or missed more than 25% of the class meeting.

Absences: You are allowed two unexcused class meetings, no questions asked. For any additional unexcused absence, I subtract 1.5% from your final course grade.

What is an excused absence?

An absence is excused if you provide official documentation: doctors' notes (that should NEVER reveal any detailed information about your health), an honest notice telling us you're out sick (again, without medical information), an honest note about family emergencies (no need to disclose detailed information), OSU Athletics notes, ROTC notes, conference schedules featuring your name, documentation about other OSU academic activities (field trips, competitions), documentation of participation in career development.

My approach to allowing excused health absences without doctors' notes follows the university's recommendation to make such an accommodation in order to avoid the spread of respiratory disease. [Note for the reviewing committee: I anticipate updating these sections, in keeping with current public health requirements and College guidelines/recommendations.]

Although I allow for these excuses, it is my expectation that you schedule your commitments in ways that minimize your absence from classes.

Five Quizzes 25%

Throughout the semester, we have five in-person quizzes (mix of multiple choice and open answer). Each one consists of ten questions that ask you for basic information about historical and cultural context, foundational knowledge about the environments we cover, concepts around human-environment interaction, and particular novels, films, and other specific class material. Each quiz features at least three questions that explicitly address the environmental dimension of our topic.

Three Reflection Papers 30%

In your three reflection papers (5 pages each), you need to reflect on the environmental dimension of women's lived experiences. Based on our readings and discussions, you need to compare different cultural environments (Ukrainian and Latvian, for example), their ideological context, and how these environments impact women's experience at a given place and time. Each paper needs to cite from primary and secondary sources, including at least one additional reading from our reading list on Carmen and/or library research that was not addressed in class. Detailed instructions, rubrics, and a sample paper are provided on our Carmen page.

Creative/ fieldwork projects 20%

During the semester you need to work with several small projects, individually or in a small group, which connect class material with your prior cultural experience and/or material from other courses (for example, the beginning of the semester project of interviewing friends or family members about

their lived environments). Detailed instructions, rubrics, and a sample paper are provided on our Carmen page.

Final Reflection: Female environments: lived experience of spaces of socialism and post-socialism 10%

At the end of our class, you need to write a three-page reflection about how the class and the study abroad have changed your understanding of home environments, natural environments, and the impact of war-time environments. In particular, you need to address how this course has changed your perception of the cultural dimension of our surrounding environments. You also need to revisit your three reflection papers and comment on the trajectory of development in your thinking about women's experience of their lived environments.

Academic integrity and collaboration guidelines

All activities and assignments in this course, except for the final, are 'open book,' though it is crucial that you cite your sources. You are encouraged to discuss your research and writing assignments with the instructor and with other students. However, you should still produce your own work, and it is not permissible to pass off others' work as your own.

Use of AI for any assignments is strictly prohibited.

Late assignments

No late work will be accepted without consent from instructors (this consent will only be given in the rarest emergencies). Do your assignments well in advance, save your work frequently and in multiple locations, know where the nearest computer lab is in case of technical problems, do whatever you need to do to ensure that assignments will be handed in on time. We recommend you write your Carmen posts in a separate document or copy them before you attempt to post so you have them if the post fails to go through.

Grading Scale

- 93-100: A
- 90-92: A-
- 87-89: B+
- 83-86: B
- 80-82: B-
- 77-79: C+
- 73-76: C
- 70-72: C-
- 67-69: D+
- 60-66: D

- Under 60: E

Instructor feedback and response time

Emails will be answered within 48 hours, Monday – Friday between 9am – 5pm.

Office hours: weekly schedule will be announced at the beginning of the semester; also available by appointment. For the latter, please email the instructors at least 48 hours in advance with your questions and availability (at least three different dates or times).

Grading and feedback

Grading for assignments and feedback will be provided within 15 business days after submission.

Preferred contact method

Reach out to the instructor via email with any questions or concerns.

Please Review Academic Rules and Policies Here:

<https://ascas.osu.edu/submission/development/submission-materials/syllabus-elements>

Reading list

Three books you need to buy

Nora Ikstena, *Soviet Milk*. Peirene. ISBN: 9781908670427(novel, 192 pages).

Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*. Riverhead Books (novel, 288 pages)

Elin Toona Gottschalk, *Into Exile: A Life Story of War and Peace*. Evershine Press. ISBN: 9780989566131 (autobiography, we will read first half only)

Shorter primary readings, mostly available online

To be added, see course schedule for content

Secondary readings (pdf-s available on Carmen. From the books we only read short selections)

Annus, Epp. "Comparative Spatial Intimacies and the Affective Geography of Home: Imaginaries and Sense-Regimes in the Soviet-Era Baltics." *Space and Culture*, 2023, 1–16.

- Bhabha, Homi. "The World and the Home." *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 141–53.
- Ilic, Melanie. *Soviet Women - Everyday Lives*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020.
- McKeithen, Will. "Queer Ecologies of Home: Heteronormativity, Speciesism, and the Strange Intimacies of Crazy Cat Ladies." *Gender, Place & Culture* 24, no. 1 (2017): 122–34.
- Neimanis, Astrida. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Reid, Susan E. "Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era." *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 465–98.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2009.01564.x>.
- Sideri, Eleni. "Female Genealogy and Cultural Memory in Georgia." *Genealogy*, 2024.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8030082>.
- Spain, Daphne. *Gendered Spaces*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–313. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Tsybalyuk, Darya. *Ecocide in Ukraine: The Environmental Cost of Russia's War*. Cambridge: Polity, 2025.
- . "What Does It Mean to Study Environments in Ukraine Now?" *Arcadia*, no. 12 (2022).
- Young, Iris Marion. "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme." In *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*, edited by Nancy Holland and Patricia Huntington, 252–88. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.

Refer to our Carmen course page for up-to-date assignment due dates.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 | Intro Week: This Course

Day 1 | Introduction to This Course

Prepare:

- Carefully review syllabus

In Class:

- Discussion of syllabus, assignments, class logistics.
- Discussion of the introductory fieldwork task:
 - The fieldwork task: conduct an interview with female friend(s), family member(s), or acquaintance(s) on the following topics: how do surrounding environments impact

your mood, well-being, and productivity? What in your surrounding environments make you feel comfortable, what do you find irritating? Why? Is contact with natural environments important to you? What spaces were important to you as a child? Prepare an oral flash presentation: length 4-6 minutes. Detailed instructions are provided on our Carmen page.

Day 2 | Introduction to the study. Women and their environments in socialism and post-socialism

Prepare:

- Read Susan E. Reid, "Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era," *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 465–98, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2009.01564.x>.
- Watch the film *Some Interviews on Personal Matters*, Directed by Lana Gogoberidze, 1978
- Optional: read Eleni Sideri, "Female Genealogy and Cultural Memory in Georgia," *Genealogy*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8030082>.
- Work on the fieldwork assignment

In Class:

- Lecture on women in state socialism and post-socialism, with intermittent discussion of the film. Themes: changing policies, ideologies, and practices, Soviet ideals of domesticity and official discourse of home-making; representation of Soviet ideals of domesticity in film.
- short writing assignment (5 min) and discussion: homes in the Khrushchev era, women's agency vis-à-vis official ideologies.
- lecture following by map-study in small groups: East European political geography from WWII to the present

Week 2 | Introduction of methodology, presentations of fieldwork results

Day 1 | Home as an environment

Prepare:

- Read Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*, ed. Nancy Holland and Patricia Huntington (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 252–88.
- Work on the fieldwork assignment

In Class:

- Presentations of fieldwork results
- Lecture on Women and environments: methods of research. Home as an extension of the self.
- Discussion of the article in relation of the fieldwork results: diversity of experiences, impacting factors
- Worksheet and work in groups: political map of Eastern Europe

Day 2 | Presentations of fieldwork results, political geography review (map study), methodology

Prepare:

- study political maps of Eastern Europe in the state socialist and post-socialist era
- read sections from Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
- read ahead: start reading Nora Ikstena, *Soviet Milk* (novel)

In Class:

- Map quiz (1)
- presentation of fieldwork results continued
- general discussion: interpreting fieldwork results; gendered spaces

UNIT 1 | HOME ENVIRONMENTS

Week 3 | Transition from childhood to adolescence

Day 1 | Girlhood and home environments

Prepare:

- Read Elin Toona-Gottschalk, *Into Exile*, ch 1-2
- Watch *Colourful Dreams*, directed by Virve Aruoja, Jaan Tooming, 1974 (60 min)

In Class:

- Short introductory lecture with intermittent discussion of readings: Eastern Europe and the establishment of Soviet rule, from the perspective of home environments
- Short writing assignment (5 min) and discussion: child's home environment as a sphere of possibilities (environment as affective presence and a site for knowledge production)
- Discussion of in small groups, followed by general discussion: home environment in Toona-Gottschalk: memory, cultural traditions, and environment

Day 2 | Youth, love, home environments

Prepare:

- Watch film *Brief Encounters* (1967), directed by Kira Muratova
- Read for next week: Nora Ikstena, *Soviet Milk* (novel, 192 pp, read first quarter)

In Class:

- Short introductory lecture: Soviet urbanization: modernity vs tradition
- Film discussion in small groups, followed by general discussion.

Week 4 | The experience of home under Soviet authoritarian regime: generational comparisons

Day 1 | Home: generational comparisons

Prepare:

- Read Ikstena, *Soviet Milk* (novel, read second quarter, review first q)

- Read selections from Melanie Ilic, *Soviet Women - Everyday Lives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

In Class:

- Quiz 2
- Lecture: political repression, its impact on home environments and the sense of the self; recap of the post-WWII situation in the Eastern bloc. Difference between three generations of women (grandmother, mother, daughter)
- General discussion: interpreting Ikstena, group work

Day 2 | Home and the unhomely: transitions

Prepare:

- Read Ikstena, *Soviet Milk* (third quarter)
- Read Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 141–53.
- Read interview with Ikstena

In Class:

- Group discussion based on worksheet: unhomely homes
- General discussion of women and their environments as represented in the novel.

Week 5 | Home in late socialism and beyond

Day 1 | Home in late socialism and the era of transition

Prepare:

- Read Ikstena, *Soviet Milk*, fourth quarter
- Read Epp Annus, "Comparative Spatial Intimacies and the Affective Geography of Home: Imaginaries and Sense-Regimes in the Soviet-Era Baltics," *Space and Culture*, 2023, 1–16.

In Class:

- Quiz 2
- Recap of the novel, discussion – women and their environments across decades, comparative perspectives

Day 2 | women artists in their home environments

Prepare:

- review Young, *House and Home*
- peruse images by the Ukrainian artist Maria Primachenko and by the Moldavian artist Valentina Rusu-Ciobanu
- read Liina Jänes, *Position Of The "Other": The Architecture Of Valve Pormeister* (a short text about buildings designed by the Estonian architect Valve Pormeister)
- Read ahead: Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, 2009 (288 pages)

In Class:

- Art discussion, comparative approach
- Group work followed by general discussion – wrap-up of home environments with a focus on women's agency and creativity

UNIT 2: NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Week 6 | Women, homes, and natural environments

Day 1 | Introduction to women and natural environments in state socialism and beyond

Prepare:

- Read selections from Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).
- Read Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, 2009 (288 pages, first quarter)
- First reflection paper due by end of day

In Class:

- Short introductory lecture with intermittent discussion of readings: natural environments in state socialism and in post-socialism; posthumanist approach
- Group discussion about Tokarczuk followed by general discussion: posthumanism, more-than-human bodies, human responsibility, women's agency

Day 2 | Naturecultures, nature-related values and ways of living

Prepare:

- Read Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, 2009, second quarter

In Class:

- Group work followed by general discussion: natural environments, values and cultural practices, area-specific particularities. Nature as home – mapping home with one's footsteps.

Week 7 | Environmental agency

Day 1 |

Prepare:

- Read Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, third quarter
- Read Will McKeithen, "Queer Ecologies of Home: Heteronormativity, Speciesism, and the Strange Intimacies of Crazy Cat Ladies," *Gender, Place & Culture* 24, no. 1 (2017): 122–34.

In Class:

- Group discussion followed by general discussion: home as more-than-human ecology. The role of animals, co-existence of animals and humans. The use of dichotomies in the novel as a strategy of representation (hunters, clergy and politicians as the “enemy”)

Day 2 | Natural environments and human violence

Prepare:

- Read Olga Tokarczuk, *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, 2009, final quarter
- Work on reflection paper

In Class:

- Quiz 3
- Discussion: natural environments and more-than-human ethics; communal agency. Transgression. What is ethical behavior? Law vs ethics. Murder mystery as a strategy for environmental fiction.

Week 8 | Indigenous environments

Day 1 | Indigenous environments: traditions and environmental catastrophes

Prepare:

- Read Burnasheva, Daria. "Indigenous Women as Water Protectors, Men as Firefighters." Gender and Indigeneity in the Context of Climate Change in Sakha (Yakutia). *Arctic Yearbook* (2022).
- Watch the roundtable discussion *Indigenous liberation struggles and sovereignty*, participants Seseg Jigjitova, Madina Tlostanova, Lidia Zhigunova (The RUTA Association)
- Read an interview with the Buryat illustrator Seseg Jigjitova about her upcoming graphic novel “Deep Freeze.”

In Class:

- Group work followed by general discussion: the changing role of women in indigenous communities. Indigenous liberation struggles in Russia.

Day 2 | Destruction of indigenous environments and women’s activism

Prepare:

- watch the documentary *Aral: Fishing in the Invisible Sea*, directed by Carlos Casas and Saodat Ismailova, 2004
- peruse works by the Uzbek film director and artist Saodat Ismailova
<https://saodatismailova.com/>
- compare to Aigerim Kapar, *Memories of lake Balkhash*
<https://antiwarcoalition.art/texts/ffa8cfa6-be92-41dc-ad9e-647a91ea007b>

In Class:

- Short introductory lecture with intermittent discussion
- Discussion: destruction of indigenous environments and women's activism: the Aral sea and lake Balkhash.

Week 9 | Women, environments, and agency: the subaltern who speaks

Day 1 | Women, indigenous environments, and agency

Prepare:

- peruse the *Asians of Russia* website with the help of google translate: <https://asiansofrussia.com/materials/> (one of the involved activists has confirmed that the authors of the webpage are satisfied with the google translation). Search for women's perspectives, pick one essay or prepare to give an overview.
- Read Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

In Class:

- group work based on *Asians of Russia* website: indigenous women in Russia speak out. Compare different issues and methods of protest, connect with earlier class material.

Day 2 | Women create environments

Prepare:

- Read and see images about *dakh: Vernacular Hardcore* – work by the Ukrainian architect Bogdana Kosmina, Ukraine Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia 2025
- Watch video about the Lithuanian artist Aurelia Maknyte
- Peruse images about Vaike Lubi's home in the 1970s (Estonian recluse, materials compiled by the professor)

In Class:

- Introductory lecture: women designers, vernacular architecture and its connection to local natural environments
- Group project: discuss works by Kosmina, Maknyte, and Lubi. Design (draw and add verbal description) your own ideal and safe home, while using traditional techniques and/or natural environments as part of your design.
- Presentation of group projects (continues next class if needed)

UNIT 3: ENVIRONMENTS OF WAR AND RESISTANCE

Week 10 | Introduction to women in war. Environments of WWII

Day 1 | Introduction to women in war

Prepare:

- Watch the film *Ascent*, directed by Larisa Shepitko, 1977
- Read ahead: Toona, *Into Exile*
- Look though and refresh your memory about the class material so far
- Second reflection paper due by end of day

In Class:

- Introductory lecture with intermittent discussion: WWII in Eastern Europe. The role of women in WWII
- Group discussion of the film: war environments and its impact on women's lives: vulnerability. Film as medium for presenting traumatic environments

Day 2 | Environments of WWII. Women as war refugees

Prepare:

- Read Toona, *Into Exile*, chapters 3-5 (also, refresh your memory of chapters 1-2)
- Reread and/or check your notes on Young, *House and Home*

In Class

- Quiz 4
- Lecture and book discussion: political contexts and changing environments. Affect and embodiment: feelings and sensations associated with various wartime environments. The status of a refugee: loss of one's home, unhomeliness as an existential condition. What turns a temporary shelter into a homely environment?
- Group project (analysis of various locations presented in the text) followed by general discussion

Week 11 | Environments of WWII. Unhomely homes

Day 1 | Unsettling gender conventions and one's sense of self

Prepare:

- Read Toona, *Into Exile*, ch 6-8
- Work on the reflection paper

In class:

- Group work followed by general discussion. Environments and one's sense of self: the role of memory and family.

Day 2 | Agency and ideology in wartime environments

Prepare:

- Read Toona, *Into Exile*, ch 9-10
- Work on the reflection paper

In Class:

- Quiz 5
- General discussion: ways of finding agency in wartime environment; resisting dominant ideologies. Strategies of creating homely environments. Lack as the condition of life. Family ties and transnational refugee communities as structures of survival in wartime environments.

Week 12 | after WWII: body-memories, new imperial warfare

Day 1 | body-memory of WWII in postwar decades

Prepare:

- Watch the film, *Wings*, directed by Larisa Shepitko, 1966
- Work of the reflection paper

In Class:

- Lecture on post-war gender environment with intermittent discussions of the film *Wings*
- Discussion about the film: loss, solitude, alienation, re-existence. Feeling out of place. Generational differences, changing times, values, and ideologies

Day 2 | Russian war against Ukraine – destruction and ways of re-existence

Prepare:

- Read Darya Tsymbalyuk, “What Does It Mean to Study Environments in Ukraine Now?,” *Arcadia*, no. 12 (2022).
- Watch the documentary Iryna Tsilyk (director), *The Earth is Blue as an Orange*, 2020
- Peruse *Ukrainian Warchive* <https://warchive.com.ua/> (should be available by 2026, presently under construction. Alternative: <https://www.istockphoto.com/>) or the volume by Ukrainian photojournalists *13 stories of war*, edited by Emine Ziyatdinova and Misha Pedan, 2024.
- Third reflection paper due by end of day

In Class:

- Lecture: Putin, memory of WWII, Russia’s new wave of imperial warfare (1999-the present) and its impact on manmade and natural environments
- Discussion of the film and war photography: modes of representation. What can be represented, and what remains unrepresentable?

Week 13 | Russian war against Ukraine – devastation and ways of re-existence

Day 1 |

Prepare:

- Read selections from Darya Tsymbalyuk, *Ecocide in Ukraine: The Environmental Cost of Russia's War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2025).
- Watch images of Polina Rayko's home (now destroyed)
- Read selections from *Women and War. Letters from Ukraine to the Free World*. Cherry Orchard Books. 2025.

In class:

- Small group discussion: women in Ukraine and war environments. Beauty and destruction. Natural environments as war victims. Human-animal assemblages: caring for animals in war.
- General discussion

Day 2 | Women against war

Prepare:

- Watch the film *Klondike*, directed by Maryna Er Gorbach, 2022
- Watch testimonies by Botakoz Kassymbekova (from Kazakhstan) and Maria Vyushkova (Buryat activist and scientist) in: Helsinki Commission on Russia's Imperial Identity. September 18, 2024 (online)
- Watch *Full interview: European Union's top diplomat Kaja Kallas* (online)
- Revise materials about *dakh*, Ukraine Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia 2025 (online)

In class:

- Wrap-up discussion: women in war environments, women against war. Resisting imperial aggression. Creativity and re-existence. Long distance politics vs situated knowledge

Week 14 | Final Reflection

Day 1 | Final Reflection

Prepare:

- Final reflection paper due by the end of the day

In Class:

- Structured reflection discussion. Home, natural environments, wartime environments. Change, loss, continuity, agency, resilience, co-existence.

GE Theme course submission worksheet: Lived Environments

(based on [PDF](#), July 21, 2025)

Overview

Courses in the GE Themes aim to provide students with opportunities to explore big picture ideas and problems within the specific practice and expertise of a discipline or department. Although many Theme courses serve within disciplinary majors or minors, by requesting inclusion in the General Education, programs are committing to the incorporation of the goals of the focal theme and the success and participation of students from outside of their program.

Each category of the GE has specific learning goals and Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) that connect to the big picture goals of the program. ELOs describe the knowledge or skills students should have by the end of the course. Courses in the GE Themes must meet the ELOs common for **all** GE Themes and those specific to the Theme, in addition to any ELOs the instructor has developed specific to that course. All courses in the GE must indicate that they are part of the GE and include the Goals and ELOs of their GE category on their syllabus.

The prompts in this form elicit information about how this course meets the expectations of the GE Themes. The form will be reviewed by a group of content experts (the Theme Advisory) and by a group of curriculum experts (the Theme Panel), with the latter having responsibility for the ELOs and Goals common to all themes (those things that make a course appropriate for the GE Themes) and the former having responsibility for the ELOs and Goals specific to the topic of this Theme.

Briefly describe how this course connects to or exemplifies the concept of this Theme (Lived Environments)

In a sentence or two, explain how this class “fits” within the focal Theme. This will help reviewers understand the intended frame of reference for the course-specific activities described below.

This course offers a multidisciplinary exploration of how lived environments—domestic, natural, and war-affected—are shaped by and in turn shape human experience under socialism and post-socialism. Focusing on women's perspectives, students examine how ideological systems and historical events—such as WWII and the ongoing war in Ukraine—have affected both physical environments and personal lives. Through fiction, film, visual art, and architecture, the course highlights how women represent, respond to, and engage with their environments. Cross-cultural and historical perspectives prompt students to reflect on the fragility of homes and ecosystems, and on the relationship between ideology, environment, and personal agency. Creative projects and reflection papers will enable students to integrate different approaches and make connections to out of- classroom experiences and academic knowledge across disciplines.

Connect this course to the Goals and ELOs shared by all Themes

Below are the Goals and ELOs common to all Themes. In the accompanying table, for each ELO, describe the activities (discussions, readings, lectures, assignments) that provide opportunities for students to achieve those outcomes. The answer should be concise and use language accessible to

colleagues outside of the submitting department or discipline. The specifics of the activities matter—listing “readings” without a reference to the topic of those readings will not allow the reviewers to understand how the ELO will be met. However, the panel evaluating the fit of the course to the Theme will review this form in conjunction with the syllabus, so if readings, lecture/discussion topics, or other specifics are provided on the syllabus, it is not necessary to reiterate them within this form. The ELOs are expected to vary in their “coverage” in terms of number of activities or emphasis within the course. Examples from successful courses are shared on the next page.

Goal 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations. In this context, “advanced” refers to courses that are e.g., synthetic, rely on research or cutting-edge findings, or deeply engage with the subject matter, among other possibilities.

Goal 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

ELO 1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking (about Lived Environments).

In this course, students develop an interdisciplinary mode of critical and logical thinking connected to lived experience. They discuss in depth different lived environments (homes in various cultures under state socialism, natural environments, war-time environments) and representations of various human-environment interactions in literature, art, and film. Examples include films about WWII and women’s everyday lives in major Soviet urban centers, art in response to Russia’s war against Ukraine, a novel about a woman’s fight for the welfare of animals in rural Poland, and more. Through this engagement, students develop an understanding of the cultural, physical, and social features of these environments and how they shape human lives.

The approach is modeled in class lectures and discussions and assessed through three reflection papers, creative projects, and a final reflection paper.

ELO 1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or ideas within this theme.

Engagement with the theme of Lived Environments is informed by and rooted in a broad set of scholarly works with which students engage in this class. As an interdisciplinary class, this course does not adhere to one single disciplinary approach, but rather synthesizes various angles and perspectives. In our seminar-style discussions of readings we address the variety of approaches, research and knowledge paradigms. The reading list includes scholarly works from cultural and literary studies, history, posthumanities, affect studies and phenomenology as well as primary literary texts and other materials.

Students engage critically and logically with cultural representations of homes and natural environments from various cultures under state socialism and post-socialism, differentiating between various artistic means and critical methods. For example, we discuss the principles of posthumanism and then engage in posthumanist critique in our reading of the novel by Olga Tokarczuk (which explores human-animal relations in rural Poland).

Students' scholarly engagement is assessed in the three papers and in the final reflection paper.

ELO 2.1 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences.

Students engage in continuous description of their experiences in dealing with the class material, paying particular attention to the class focus on home environments, natural environments, and wartime environments. The course requires a high level of synthesis. Students have to explain the diversity and complexity of ideological processes as well as their impact on various environments during periods of state socialism and post-socialism. They must also distinguish between various regions, countries, and cultural traditions. Students also learn to relate their own experiences to the environments depicted in primary sources (in fiction, film, and in art works) and discussed in scholarly works (especially in the creative project of week 9, but also during class discussions).

Lectures and discussions focus on deep engagement with particular case studies (e.g. shrinking of the Aral Sea or everyday life in Sevastopol, Crimea) and comparisons with previous class material and students' own experiences. A creative group project of designing one's own ideal life environment (week 9) requires students to characterize and synthesize prior case studies from the course, relating them to their own experiences.

Students' scholarly engagement is assessed through three papers, quizzes, and the final reflection papers. Basic identification questions about theories and historical experiences are asked in the quizzes.

ELO 2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

Students relate their personal experiences to historical examples from different cultural contexts, which serves to heighten their self-awareness when assessing various environments.

The repeated assignment of short papers reveals to students how their thinking develops. Moreover, the final reflection paper draws all of these elements together. Students need to reflect how their awareness of environmental dimensions of lived experience in socialist and post-socialist context has developed, and revisit and comment on their three reflection papers. During the semester students work with small projects (week 1, week 9), individually or in a small group: these projects connect class material with their prior cultural experience and/or material from other courses. For example, the beginning of the semester, students interview friends or family members about their experiences with lived environments.

Goals and ELOs unique to Lived Environments

Below are the Goals and ELOs specific to this Theme. As above, in the accompanying table, for each ELO, describe the activities (discussions, readings, lectures, assignments) that provide opportunities for students to achieve those outcomes. The answer should be concise and use language accessible to colleagues outside of the submitting department or discipline. The ELOs are expected to vary in their "coverage" in terms of number of activities or emphasis within the course. Examples from successful courses are shared on the next page.

GOAL 3: Successful students will explore a range of perspectives on the interactions and impacts between humans and one or more types of environment (e.g. agricultural, built, cultural, economic, intellectual, natural) in which humans live.

GOAL 4: Successful students will analyze a variety of perceptions, representations and/or discourses about environments and humans within them.

ELO 3.1 Engage with the complexity and uncertainty of human-environment interactions.

Throughout the course, students engage with historical representations of how human-induced environmental changes have created uncertainty for women. Unit 3 focuses on wartime environments, exploring the loss of homes (Toona, *Into Exile*), the struggles of a pregnant woman during the war in Ukraine (film *Klondike*), the challenges women face in finding shelter while fleeing war-torn environments (several case-studies). The unit 3 also examines efforts to respond, react, and rebuild (Ukrainian pavilion in Venice biennale, 2025). The first unit includes multiple explorations of unhomey home environments (including a close reading of the novel *Soviet Milk*), while the second unit on natural environments comparatively engages with the destruction of indigenous environments in Russia.

Short papers and a final reflection paper are designed to assess this kind of learning.

ELO 3.2 Describe examples of human interaction with and impact on environmental change and transformation over time and across space.

This course covers material from various cultures under and after state socialism, spanning across eight decades (from the 1940s to the 2020s) and featuring a great variety of lived environments. Several sources provide lengthy timelines: for example, the novel *Soviet Milk* follows three generations of women from the 1940s to the 1980s. Our reading of this novel concentrates on environmental and political changes, and their impact on the lives of the characters.

Similarly, other readings and films allow for discussions and analysis of how environments have changed over time. We read sections from *Ecocide in Ukraine* by Darya Tsymbalyuk: Tsymbalyuk provides case studies of slow and quick violence in Ukraine (Russian extractivism in Ukraine has destroyed environments for centuries, whereas a missile attack provides instant destruction).

Students will explore the overarching theme of the intersection of personal experience and collective history in the experience of lived environments. Students also learn how natural and domestic environments differ across cultures, e.g. we compare works of art created by Ukrainian and Georgian women artists. We also compare home environments in various state socialist countries: film *Fishing in the Invisible Sea* explores a fishing village by the shrinking Aral Sea, while *Wings* displays an urban home and work environment in Sevastopol, Crimea.

Short papers and individual quiz questions about historical contexts assess this ELO.

ELO 4.1 Analyze how humans' interactions with their environments shape or have shaped attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors.

A central focus of this class is how women's interactions with their various environments have shaped their beliefs, values, and behaviors, and how women respond to, inhabit, and interact with their surroundings while displaying attitudes and values specific to their era. We observe this in our readings, films and discussions of visual art, and we regularly explore it in group work and general discussions.

Our analysis of the very first text in this course – the autobiography *Into Exile* – begins with an in-depth discussion of how the author's childhood home (which is described in great detail in the book) presents particular values and attitudes while also creating a particular sphere of possibilities that allows for certain behaviors and excludes others (in this case, growing up in a historic spa resort involves daily concerts and dances in the summer and very quiet winters).

In unit three about wartime environments, the impact of environmental change on human attitudes, values and behaviors is unavoidably at the heart of our group work and class discussions. We observe how wartime environments prescribe their own routines and forms of behavior, fundamentally changing attitudes towards life (e.g. the film *Ascent*).

This approach is applied throughout the course. The ELO is assessed through short papers, some quiz questions, and the final reflection paper.

ELO 4.2 Describe how humans perceive and represent the environments with which they interact.

This course focuses on exploring various representations of environments – through film, literary texts, visual art, and more. We discuss the choices that authors make about what to represent and in which modality. For example, the way in which the novel *Soviet Milk* represents its era-specific environments is strongly impacted by the author's own childhood trauma and thus provides a dark and gloomy perspective. In the film *Wings* we explore how the heroine, a former pilot, perceives her postwar home environment through the lens of her memories of WWII. In unit three on wartime environments we examine how the threat of war makes women perceive their environment in a particular way, tinted by vulnerability.

The perception and representation of environments are thus key themes throughout this course. We explore how seemingly neutral depictions involve evaluative judgements and we hone students' analytical skills to recognize value judgements hidden in "impartial" representations.

The ELO is assessed in short papers and in the final reflection paper.

ELO 4.3 Analyze and critique conventions, theories, and ideologies that influence discourses around environments.

In this class, critical readings typically focus on the conventions and ideologies that prescribe certain, generally accepted ways for women to relate to their environment. Our first reading is the article *Communist Comfort* by Susan Reid, which introduces students to official Soviet ideals of domesticity in the Khrushchev era (from the late 1950s to 1960s). Reid's article explores official Soviet discourses on home-making, emphasizing that home environments should be understood cultural products specific to their era. We will then discuss the film *Some Interviews on Personal Matters* from the perspective of women's agency in relation to official ideologies.

Next, we will read the canonical essay *House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme* by Iris Marion Young. Young surveys the traditional understanding of women's role as "serving and supporting men at home" – Young then proceeds to counter such a convention and provide her own phenomenological approach to women's involvement in home environments. This text provides a theoretical framework for approaching many of our case studies from the socialist and post-socialist eras. Throughout the course, students learn to observe and take note of cultural conventions, and explore how many of our case studies engage critically with conventions and dominant ideologies.

We also analyze how the reversal of dominant conventions can be facilitated by a change of environment: in *Into Exile*, for example, the protagonist's mother abandons her previously stereotypically feminine self-presentation, a change that is evident in her appearance, manners, and general conduct.

We also discuss conventions and ideals that influence discourses around natural environments, focusing on women's relationship with them. The novel *Drive your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* by Olga Tokarczuk provides an opportunity to critically analyze conventional views of women's relationship to natural environments. In this mystery novel, we observe how the main character uses convention to her advantage: she is treated as a harmless and annoying elderly woman, which allows her to easily get away with an extremely unconventional series of murders.

The ELO is assessed through short papers, quizzes, and the final reflection paper.