Please type or select the requested information. Print completed forms, add appropriate paper attachments, and route through MSU's curricular process for recommendations and decisions.

(Check all that apply):  
- [ ] Undergraduate  
- [ ] Graduate

Department: N/A  
Program: Humanities  
Type of Change: COURSE PROPOSALS  
Proposed: New Course  
Title Current:  
Title Proposed: Topics in Humanities  
24-Char. Abbrev.: Topics in Humanities  

Include a course or program description for the Bulletin (30-40 words maximum for courses, 100 for programs):

Rationale or Justification for change:
The Humanities Program currently offers no course at the 400-level. Offering a "380" topics course would provide a bridge between its lower-level courses filled primarily with General Education students and the Humanities 400 seminar which all majors and minors must take. A "380" option would foster a stronger program identity among its majors and minors and provide an opportunity to study interdisciplinary and cultural topics and issues in greater depth.

***For General Education or Cultural Diversity Courses Only***

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> For Writing Intensive Courses, attach a description of the kind and quantity of writing.  
> For Upper Division Courses, include a description of the respects in which it is broad and general rather than narrow and specific, and so suitable as GE.

Attach paper copies of the following:
1. Syllabus or course outline.
2. Course's student learning outcomes associated with each GE competency or CD designation.
3. List of strategies to be used to assess students' achievement of each GE competency or CD designation.

For New Courses

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Course will be offered:
[ ] Fall Semester  
[ ] Spring Semester  
[ ] Summer Session  

Course content or title is similar to courses in other departments. (Attach copy of letter of agreement with other program(s) contacted. Indicate the nature of the discussions and resolution of differences or potential conflicts.)

Attach paper copies of the following:
1. Syllabus or course outline.
2. Course's student learning outcomes.
3. A list of resources required to offer and support this course.
4. A description of how teaching this course will affect department staffing.
5. If 400/500 level course, an explanation of added expectations of graduate students.
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a. COURSE SYLLABUS OR OUTLINE

Please see the attached syllabus of a course that I am presently teaching that conforms perfectly to the kind of “380” variable topic course that I am proposing.

b. COURSE'S STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. To develop students' knowledge and understanding of a culture, or to develop an ability to draw comparisons between/among cultures in relation to the topic being studied.
2. To develop students' ability to read TEXTS (written, musical, artistic, architectural, religious, mythic, photographic, iconic, political, historical, etc.) and to become more adept at understanding texts as windows into a particular culture believing (this is a function of an interdisciplinary study).
3. To develop students ability to read and write analytically.
4. To develop students ability to work cooperatively toward the solution of interdisciplinary and cultural problems.
5. To develop students ability to focus a topic, perform research on it, assemble and organize that research and an analysis of it into a paper, and then to present that material to their peers in a clear and interesting way.
6. To provide students some focused insights into the ways of seeing, being, and believing of a culture and, in the process, develop a greater sensitivity towards that culture.

b. A LIST OF RESOURCES REQUIRED TO OFFER AND SUPPORT THIS COURSE:

No additional materials or resources will be needed beyond current library holdings, support materials in the ERC, and resources owned by and housed within the Humanities Program. Speakers who will be able to add to the materials being studied and topics being discussed will be recruited as needed.

A DESCRIPTION OF HOW TEACHING THIS COURSE WILL AFFECT DEPARTMENT STAFFING:

No additional staffing will be required. Expertise for the “380” courses to be offered will be recruited from those currently teaching Humanities courses, other faculty across the university who wish to offer an interdisciplinary topic of their own design (or to do so in a team-taught manner), and adjuncts with particular knowledge and experience in specific topics.
HUMANITIES 380: Topics in Humanities

Topic: Russian Literature, History, and Culture from Peter to the Revolution

To be offered: Twice Weekly
Instructor: William D. Dyer

TEXTS:

Pushkin, Alexandr. Eugene Onegin
Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Crime and Punishment
Tolstoy, Leo. Anna Karenina
Chekhov. Three Plays
Pavlova, Karolina. A Double Life

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The participants in this course will be focusing on a pivotal period of time in the development of Russian culture—a span of a little over two hundred years during which a society that had largely isolated itself, by religious orientation, geography, Czarist rulership, and disposition, from the western world came into a more complex understanding of itself. During that period of time, a native art was rediscovered, developed, and sophisticated, a peculiarly native music and dance came into being, and a real literature beyond oral folk tales began to flower. A capital city, St. Petersburg, was invented by the forced labor of hundreds of thousands of serfs who perished in the process, an entire bureaucracy was forced to move there from Moscow at their own expense, and its seven-foot mad genius responsible for its design used his construction to drag his unwilling culture to a new engagement with the west. The story is much more complex than my little synopsis indicates—Katherine the Great constructs the Academy of Arts and one of the great monuments to western art at the end of the 18th century in her Hermitage in St. Petersburg; Katherine creates the first institute for women in Russia to study at during the same time frame; Dostoevsky agonizes over his love/hate relationship with St. Petersburg in some of the greatest and psychologically true pieces of literature ever penned; he portrays some of his most important characters consistent with the way he saw his adopted city, the Venice of the North, as absolutely divided, split personalities; and the late 19th century is filled with philosophies—nihilism, utilitarianism, positivism, utopic socialism—that will occupy the thinking of some its greatest writers, shape politics, and move Russia irretrievably toward the Bolshevik Revolution.

That’s the cultural space we’re going to occupy—the art, the music, some important literary pieces by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Pavlova’s wonderful feminist. There will be short weekly writing prompts to keep us engaged as a discussion group, a research task, an annotated bibliography, and an oral presentation required for each participant.
As we proceed, we’ll be considering important issues that each of these novels and plays that center our study has chosen to express, but in ways that carry some of the uniqueness of the culture from which it originates: a culturally indigenous religion or religious response to the world; family, family relationships, and family values; ways of representing women; ways of understanding the complex relationship between culture and technology; the relative importance of “myth”; legal, cultural, and moral definitions and expressions of “crime” and “the criminal”; the varying and relative importance of the “individual” vs. “the group”, “the tribe or clan”, or society; self vs. other; generosity and uncommon hospitality on the one hand and crushing violence and reminiscences of torture sanctioned by the state. In other words, where we can, we’re going to try to use whatever resources that may be available to us (i.e., the Internet; MSU library materials; videos; etc.) to collectively get just a little bit closer to the cultures about which we’ll be reading—their ways of seeing, being, and believing.

Looking at this texts and resources will enable us to do three things: (1) to “read” these culture-specific works more respectfully; (2) to reach some determination where WE are or are not in relation to them and this complex culture (i.e., in what ways might we be able to see US and our own culture and values and beginnings as a culture in any of what we’ll experience); (3) to begin to see this culture as unique and distinctly different, in some significant ways from.

Toward these ends, the course will culminate in the development, composition, and presentation of a research “unit” (either a teaching unit, for those who may be preparing to proceed toward middle school or high school licensure or who see themselves in other teaching situations; or a “personal research unit,” which represents the sources you’ve found that have led you to a better understanding of the “texts” you’ve found concerning one important area of the Russian culture that seriously interests you. That unit will consist of the following items:

For the “Teaching Unit”:

1. A clear sense of the audience for whom you’ll be planning to introduce the area you’ve determined to study (i.e., age level, grade; what this audience is likely to know and not know about its own culture and the culture represented in your novel choice; a sense of what your audience needs and how that audience needs that material delivered);

2. A description of the materials you’ve chosen (the key works; the key issues; the principle characteristics of those materials; the major points of similarity between the materials from the Russian culture you’ve been studying and some things from the same area in OUR the major points of difference between the two cultures; in terms of what you’ve been able to discern; why you think this book is an important one for the audience you’re targeting);
3. An annotated bibliography of at least five sources that you think are crucial to your audience's understanding of your cultural area of focus, and why/how they are important.

For the “Personal Research Unit”:
1. A clear sense of YOU as the “audience” for whom you’ll be introducing this book (i.e., who ARE you? how culturally sophisticated ARE you? To what degree have you had a chance to view your own culture from an “external” position, or to hear/read about others from another culture expressing views about your culture? What do you ALREADY KNOW about the Russian culture that will be represented in the area you’ve chosen to study? Some sense of what YOU will need in order to take partial possession of the book you’ll be reading?);
2. A summary of the materials representing the area of the culture you’ve chosen to focus on (the key characters; the key issues; the major points of similarity between the culture represented in the book or art or music or philosophical or religious material or architecture or politics or urban planning or folk material or material related to class or serfdom or military materials or ethnic materials—there are lots of other possibilities that I’m not including in the list but that you could settle upon—and our culture; the major points of difference between the two cultures; why you think this focus you’ve chosen is an important one for you to be studying);
3. An annotated bibliography of at least five sources that you think are crucial to YOUR understanding of the focus you’ve chosen, and why/how they are important.

The course will conclude with fifteen-minute presentations by all participants of the papers you’ve written which will enable presenters to share what they’ve discovered, distribute their bibliographies, and contribute to the teaching of the course. Depending upon the number of class participants, we’ll need either two or three days at the end of the course for the sharing of this important information.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
1. Develop students’ knowledge of the Russian culture.
2. Develop students’ ability to read and write analytically.
3. Develop students’ ability to work cooperatively in groups toward the solution of literary and cultural problems.
4. Make the literature that we’re reading (through our intertextual approach) more accessible and approachable and (even) enjoyable for students.
5. Provide some focused insights into the ways of seeing,
being, and believing of the Russian orientation
and, in the process, develop a greater sensitivity and
for self vs. other--what we ARE vs. what we are not and
can never be as well as points of intersection between
other cultures and our own.

6. Develop students’ ability to focus a topic, perform research on it,
assemble and organize that research and an analysis of it into a
paper, and then to present that material to their peers in a clear
and interesting way.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

Week 1
--Introductions and Guidelines
--Some Historical Underpinnings:
Vladimir Monomakh, Alexander Nevsky, Andrei Rublev, early
medieval Kiev, Yaroslav, Andrew Bogulyubsky, Prince Vladimir,
Suzdal, Genghis Khan and the Tartars, Dimitri Donskoy, Boris
Gudonov, and Ivan the Terrible

Week 2
--An articulation and explanation of the course PROJECT
--And, so it begins....The emergence, planned and chaotic, of the
Russian state under Peter Mikhailovich

Week 3
--The “Pushkin” Template:
1. A look at Catherine the Great
2. The Academy of Arts of 1757
3. The Russian nobility (not, to say, the intelligentsia)
4. Some biography on Pushkin
5. The War of 1812
6. The Decembrists of 1825
--Pushkin’s ground-breaking Eugene Onegin and the true
beginning of Russian literature
1. Let’s look closely at this “novel” and its characters and scenes
2. A quick and preliminary view of St. Petersburg, the NEW
capitol
3. Let’s hear a little Glinka (A Life for the Tsar), a ground-
breaker (so to speak) in Russian native music

Week 4
--Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin
1. Let’s talk a little about what’s unique and special about it(and
we might be able to do that by thinking a little about our OWN
American literature that was beginning at about the same time)
2. Let’s look a little at some of the neoclassical and romantic art
that was being produced at about the same time
3. Russian Painters represented at the Russian and
Tretiakov Museums
a. Borovikovsky, Mateev, Kiprensky
The “Gogol” Template:
1. Let’s get a little feel for the Russian bureaucracy that began under Peter the Great and had exploded into full bloat during the regime of Tsar Nicholas I
2. And let’s look a little at the administration of Nicholas I, his cultural priorities, his prejudices, his paranoia, and the intellectual battle being staged between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles
3. Let’s get a little thumbnail sketch of Gogol and his creative context
4. Some important art of the late ‘40s: European influences start blending into folk and nativist elements

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Week 5

--Gogol’s “The Inspector-General”: Shades of Peter the Great’s time with a big twist
1. Let’s do a little character analysis of this strange little work
2. It’s time to look at the OLD capitol of Russia, now made almost new again after having been torched by Napoleon in 1812
5. Representational Art—The nativist elements enter with Briullov, Ivanov, Fedotov, Tolstoi, Soroka, Zelentsov,
3. Venetsianov, Tropinin, Shishkin
--The “Dostoevsky” Template:
1. Vissarion Belinsky’s political and social criticism
2. The Petrashevsky Circle

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Week 6

--Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment
1. The Emancipation of the Serfs (1861) and Alexander II
2. The Nihilists
3. The Crimean War
--Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment
1. The City of St. Petersburg—A Functional Map
2. Bentham’s Utilitarianism and Le Comte’s Positivism

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Week 7

--Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment
1. Sophia and Raskolnikov, Svidrigalov and Dunya: Fever, Dreams, and Religious Orientation
2. Another Look at Russian Orthodoxy
--Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment:
1. The Epilogue
2. Dostoevsky’s Perspective on Apocalyptic Christianity
3. The Realist School: Levitan, Serov, Repin, Surikov, Denisov, Plakhov, Shchedrin, Perov
Week 8

--The “Tolstoy” Template
1. A portrait of a Maverick
2. A necessary contrast with Dostoevsky
   --Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (Book I)
   1. The novel as epic, and why there is nothing at all in the
      World like the Russian novel, and probably nothing better
      in literature
   2. Tolstoy’s beloved Yasnaya Polyana
   3. A novel (and first book) that bestrides the Russian old and
      New, Moscow and Petersburg, the city and the Russian
      Countryside, the nobility and the peasants
   4. Tolstoy’s encyclopedic and authentically pictorial
      Representations of landscapes, interiors, architectural
      Structures, cultural events and ceremonies, and members
      of social classes that are unforgettable Russian

Week 9

--Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (Book II)
--Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (Book VII)
1. Levin, Kitty, Vronsky
2. A Political Subversive’s Portrait of the Peasants

Week 10

--Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (the final Book)
1. The Serbo-Russian War
   --Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina ((an overview)
   1. A statement on Good vs. Evil
   2. A statement about what relationship should obtain
      Between a landowner, his land, and those who live on it
   3. A statement about the plight of women in Russian society
   4. A statement about the relationship between science,
      Darwin, and spiritual values

Week 11

--The “Woman’s” Template—Pavlova
1. Catherine the Great
2. The Smolny Institute
3. Pavlova’s A Double Life
   --Pavlova’s A Double Life

Week 12

--Pavlova’s A Double Life
1. Images of Women:
   a. Borovikovsky’s “Portrait of Maria I Lopukhina”
   b. Kiprensky’s “Portrait of Princess Sofia Shcherbatova”
   c. Venetsianov’s “Spring. Ploughing”
   d. Fedotov’s “A Choosy Bride”
   e. Shchedrin’s “Venus”
   f. Vitalii’s “Venus”
2. Images of Women:
Week 13
--The “Chekhov” Template
1. Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard
2. The “Wanderers” Art Movement
--Russian Ballet
   1. Diaghilev as Innovator and Impressario
   2. The Bolshoi and the Marinski
   3. Boris Gudonov

Week 14
--The Last Tsar: Nicholas II
1. Lenin and the Dissidents
2. “What is to be done?”—shades of Chernashevsky
3. Sophia Perovskaya, the “People’s Will, and the “Populists”
4. Rimsky-Korsakov’s rendition of Mussorsky’s
   Boris Gudonov
--Two Revolutions
1. Trotsky, “Bloody Sunday,” and the 1905 Uprising
2. Rasputin and Alexandra
3. Lenin’s Bolshevism and the 1917 Explosion

Week 15
--The Death of the Romanovs
1. The fateful performance of Sleeping Beauty
--Final “Unit” and “Personal” Presentations

Week 16
--Final “Unit” and “Personal” Presentations
--Conclusions
Course Evaluation

GRADED RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. EASTER EGG HUNTS: Each student will be responsible for
   performing some really focused research
   on a topic that will help us to open up some
   aspect of the culture of the novels that we’ll
   be reading and discussing. These activities,
   which will be DUE NO LATER THAN THE
   DATE ON WHICH THEY ARE TO PRESENTED,
   may ask students to collect one of the
   following: biographical information related
   to a text under discussion; geographical
   and/or topographical information that
   illuminates the environment(s) of the aspect or
   time period of the Russian culture
   being privileged in one of the texts;
historical information that contextualizes some of the issues developed within a novel, story, piece of art or music; historical or religious or mythological or epic material that opens up the culture; sociological information that helps us to understand class distinctions within the culture in what we’re studying; dietary or dress information that helps us to understand some of the individualizing aspects of the culture. Besides the specific factual information that is to be represented in each one of these “Easter Egg Hunts,” the writer should conclude with at least a substantial paragraph that attempts to assess what the gathered information has to do with the aspect of the culture under discussion. Each of these will be about a page and a half or two in length and will be evaluated on a 100 point scale. —10 papers, for 800 points

2. **AN ORAL PRESENTATION:** Each student must commit to prepare and lead ONE oral presentation. The purpose of this exercise is to get a focused job done of presenting, loading the necessary contextualizing cultural and historical information, and making major inroads toward jump-starting class discussion. Part of the responsibility of the person will be to develop a group of questions around the material that they and we will be discussing. Since I absolutely HATE surprises, you’ll need to meet with me to discuss what you see in the material you’ll be in charge of, the questions that occur to you, and your approach for involving the rest of us in that material.

--400 points

3. **A WRITTEN UNIT:** Please see the description of the options in the text of the syllabus. The paper will be approximately eight pages in length and will focus on the area of the Russian culture that most intrigues you. More on that later.

--800 points

4. **AN ORAL PRESENTATION OF THE “UNIT”:** As previously described in excruciating detail, this 15-minute presentation will enable each student to
share his/her focus (outside of the syllabus) that he/she has done research on and written a paper on, along with the conclusions that were reached. This component will result in each class member being able to leave with as many annotated bibliographies related to the area of the Russian culture represented in each students’ presentation.

***That means that each student will be responsible for developing an annotated bibliography of the sources used to assemble his/her “unit.” This package should include (1) the complete and formal citation of the sources that were consulted (in MLA format); (2) a careful descriptive representation of the kind of information to be found in each source; (3) a careful assessment of the usefulness of the sources, how the sources were helpful, and what they contributed to an understanding of the target area and focus of the “unit.” ---400 points

INSTRUCTOR: William D. Dyer
OFFICE: Armstrong Hall 229F
OFFICE HOURS: TBA.
OFFICE PHONE: 2350
HOME PHONE: 952-903-5112
E-MAIL ADDRESSES: straits@mnsu.edu, and linda_bill_dyer@netzero.net