

# Putin's Russia

FALL 2017

Special Topics  
RUSN 3060 / HIST 3091 / POLI 3820

Tuesday, 14:35-17:25  
MONA CAMPBELL BUILDING, 1107

## Professor Yuri Leving

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:30-2:30 pm, and by appointment

McCain, Room 3016, Tel.: 494-1082

<http://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/russian-studies.html>



The course website:

<http://www.yurileving.com/putins-russia.html>

## Course Description

Vladimir Putin has confounded world leaders and defied their assumptions as they tried to figure him out, only to misjudge him time and again. “The Putin Mystique” (Anna Arutunyan’s term) will take us on a journey through the Russia of Vladimir Putin, named by Forbes magazine in 2013 as the most powerful man in the world. This is the man who, allegedly, three years later sealed fate of the US presidential elections. While looking at Putin’s rise to power, we will also seek during this course to go beneath politics and policy to look at how human beings experience state power within the cultural phenomena including visual arts, literature, cinema, TV, Internet, popular music, and photography.

The course will include lectures, discussions, and film screenings.

## Required readings:



Scholarly resource [historical context]:

\*Myers, Steven Lee. *The New Tsar. The Rise and Reign of V. Putin* (2015)

Fiction:

\*Sorokin, V. *Day of the Oprichnik. A Novel* (2006, Engl. Transl. 2011)<sup>1</sup>

\* All available at the Dal bookstore

### **Recommended readings:**

Arutunyan, Anna. *The Putin Mystique: Inside Russia's Power Cult* (2014) (supplied as a PDF file, this book will prove an invaluable supplementary resource)



*“The Russians backed my homework.”*

- No, as a Russian Canadian myself, I won't believe you.  
So, please, do both of us a little favor: complete your readings prior to coming to class at Dal.

### **Other literature required for discussions:**

*Articles* = Some assigned materials for the **Politburo panel** will be provided by instructor as electronic documents.

## **ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICIES**

**1. Quiz on key concepts, dates and personae** (10-15 minutes in the beginning of the class): 10%

**2. “Radio Rus: Breaking News”:** Presentation of a piece of news related to Russia, unfolding in real time. Pick up any news item from the week immediately preceding our class, give us a sampling along with your short personal debrief (for ex.: analyze style, rhetoric, overt and covert messages, whether it is objective or not, etc.).

Each class several students will have an opportunity to briefly present the news, either taken from Internet, print press or TV – for diversity of opinions and objectivity

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<sup>1</sup> An *oprichnik* was a member of Tsar Ivan the Terrible's secret police during the 1560s. In modern Russia, the term is often used negatively to describe security officers. Read about the “Radio Rus” in Sorokin's novel (p. 6 & p. 11).

reasons, we will seek to access both pro-Russian Western media outlets (i.e. *Russia Today*) and major US/Canadian networks (CNN, FOX, CBC, BBC, and so on) or even local Russian-based sources: 6%.



### 3. **Creative assignments:**

Analysis of a clip: 2% -- September 12

Write your (very) short story: 2% -- October 17

### 4. **Midterm exam:** 20% (Short essay questions).

### 5. **The Politburo panel:** 15%



This class will be divided into three or four smaller working groups: “Kremlin”, “Sputnik,” “Balalaika,” and “Cheburashka” (make sure you know what your group name means by the next meeting). The purpose of this activity (ironically titled Politburo<sup>2</sup>) is to initiate a lively group discussion following tightly focused *case studies* based on a particular article or chapter to be studied by the panel members prior to class. This is a student-led activity that will last approximately 15 minutes per group (see the next paragraph for further guidelines).

### 6. **Abstract, panel discussion questions, and key concepts:** (4 + 3 + 3 = 10%)

Each Tuesday, every group will select a different *discussion leader* who will supply both the instructor and members of the **Politburo** with a list of 5-7 prearranged questions based on the assigned chapter that would serve as key points for ensuing discussion – the aim of the exercise is to highlight some ideas outlined in that chapter relevant to our broader topic. Another, second *representative* should prepare an abstract of that chapter to be distributed and read out loud in class for all working groups.

Both **abstract** (max. 1 print page) and **questions** are due each Monday, 24 hours before our Tuesday class starts. Make sure to email abstract and questions to members of your group and to me in advance.

The **key concepts** are presented in class to all four groups. The *third person* responsible for this assignment should be reading his/her chapter carefully and selecting 3-5 core ideas or phrases that in a concise manner represent texts’ main points; communicated to others in class they would give a general understanding of the subject.

3 students per each working group = in total, we expect to have 9 to 12 students actively contributing to these panels while the rest are involved by offering responses and comments.

### 7. **Film Reflection:** 5%.

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<sup>2</sup> The principal policymaking committee of a Communist Party in the former Soviet Union, founded in 1917.

From time to time we will be watching feature films in class, which tend to be longer than documentaries. Not everyone will have an opportunity to speak in class; moreover, the experience of careful watching often requires some time to ponder. I want to hear everyone's opinion though – and this is why I ask you to write down your notes and critical thoughts about each film that we watch in class. Max. 1 print page, general questions to be provided. Due in my Mailbox, each Thursday, by noon (i.e. you will have two nights to sleep on it).

**8. Student Final Presentations: 5%.**

In the second half of the semester, you will be required to give a brief presentation of your final research in progress, with visual support if you need it. The assignment will be explained in class.

**9. Final Research Paper: 20%.**

Final research paper (14 pages + bibliography) on the topic of your choice, approved by the instructor, incorporating materials from academic articles and course readings. We will discuss this assignment in detail as our semester progresses. This paper will be due on the last day of the course – **December 5**.

**10. Attendance and Participation: 5%.**

If you want to keep up with the material, you need to do the readings and be able to identify and understand the key arguments of the essays. To this end, you will be asked to participate in the discussion of the readings and I will call upon you to answer or ask questions as I lecture.

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting, and you will be marked absent if you are late. To attend classes, to be awake, to participate, to absolutely not talk on your phone or read the paper and solve crossword puzzles during class — all these are crucial requirements for your participation in class.

DO NOT WALK OUT OF THE CLASSROOM DURING THE LECTURE. SINCE THIS IS A LONG, THREE-HOUR CLASS I WILL ALLOW A 5-MINUTE BREAK BEFORE OR AFTER THE SCREENING OF THE MOVIE.

You should attend all classes and screenings. Your overall grade will drop by half a letter grade if you have more than 1 unexcused absence. (An excused absence is when you submit a written excuse such as a doctor's report or a letter about a family emergency. An unexcused absence is when you just decide to not show up). It is your responsibility to make up any (excused or unexcused) classes missed. Absence is not an excuse for ignorance about the material covered on that day. The in-class writing assignments cannot be made up later, so attendance is critical to keep up with that area of your grade.

**Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale**

<b>A+</b> (90-100)	<b>B+</b> (77-79)	<b>C+</b> (65-69)	<b>D</b>	(50-54)
<b>A</b> (85-89)	<b>B</b> (73-76)	<b>C</b> (60-64)	<b>F</b>	(<50)
<b>A-</b> (80-84)	<b>B-</b> (70-72)	<b>C-</b> (55-59)		

## Policy on Electronic Devices:

You can use laptops and iPads on an *honor system* that presumes you will *not* use your screen for email, Google, Facebook and so on. I can easily notice if your mind is “absent” and roaming elsewhere even if you are present in class; your grade will suffer accordingly, and public humiliation might ensue.

## SCHEDULE

### Topic 1. How to Become a Dictator<sup>3</sup>

*The course overview.*

September 5.

Vladimir Putin's Rise To Power



**Creative assignment for next class:** Analysis of a clip: 2%

Pick up a video clip showing a world leader (your choice) and analyze his/her body language, try to delve into psychology of your character and his/her mind in that particular situation that you observe.

(Up to one page; print out is due in class, September 12.

ALSO send me the same file from your preferred email address along with the clickable link to the selected video. I will be using this **email** for our communications during the semester.)



Meet Mr. Putin; a documentary about Putin’s native city, St. Petersburg, 2017.

### Topic 2. How to Stay in Power

September 12.



Case study 1: **The Red Web** – 1 (Trump, Putin and Elections)



Present your creative assignment in class (show & comment).

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<sup>3</sup> The topics in this syllabus are inspired by M. Hem’s tongue in cheek book, *How to Be a Dictator: An Irreverent Guide* (2017), which will provide us some entertaining epigraphs in the beginning of our classes.

Read:



- Myers, Chapters 1-4, pp. 7-68.
- Beumers, “Music and Word” (PDF supplied)
- About Shnur / “Leningrad” (read *The Economist* article “Rocking The Kremlin”, PDF supplied)

**Recommended:** *The Putin Mystique*, Part I. “The Subjects”.

The Programmer Pavel Durov, often called “Russia’s Zuckerberg”:

<https://telegram.org/press>



**SCREENING:** *The Student* (2016, Dir. K. Serebrennikov)

### Topic 3. Cultivate Yourself

September 19.



Case study 2: **Art on Trial** – 1

(From the Pussy Riot Affair to the Gogol-Center and actionist Pavlensky)

*TrumPutin, and where is Canada in that picture?*

**Discussion paper:** “Trump, Putin, and the Future of US-Russian Relations,” *Slavic Review*. Volume 76, Issue S1. August 2017, pp. S41-S56.



**SCREENING:** Excerpts from *Brother, Brother-2* (Dir. A. Balabanov),  
Episodes from the Russian TV series *The Brigade* (2002)

Read:



Myers, Chapters 5-7, pp. 71-118.

Article on Balabanov’s bandits by Fred White (PDF)

Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 3-28.

**Recommended:** *The Putin Mystique*, Part II. *The Oprichniki*

### Topic 4. How to Get Rich

September 26.

! Quiz (10-15 minutes in the beginning of the class)



Case study 3: **Power and Money** – 1 (Putin’s Oil and Oligarchs)



**SCREENING:** *The Tycoon (Oligarch)*

Read:



Myers, Chapters 8-10, pp. 119-176.  
Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 29-50.

**Recommended:** *The Putin Mystique*, Part III. *The Boyars*

### Topic 5. How to Spend Your Fortune

October 3.

**The Russian cuisine** (Restaurant guides and a guest talk)

*Nicole Marcoux* (Dalhousie, BA '13) is a crafter, holistic nutritionist and community organiser. Her past academic work in Russian Studies focused on a political and social analysis of the Soviet cookbook, *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*. She is a curator of *AgitProp: Soviet Propaganda 1905-1945* (17 June – 30 July 2017) at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery and supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and Halifax Regional Municipality.



Case study 4: **Corruption and Protests** (Alexei Navalny, the prime-minister Dmitri Medvedev and the Panama papers scandal)

Read:



Beumers, “Consumer Culture and Food” (PDF supplied)  
Myers, Chapters 11-15, pp. 177-280.  
Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 51-69.

**Recommended:** *The Putin Mystique*, Part IV. *The Sovereign As God*

### Topic 6. Be Sure to Sleep Around

October 10.



Case study 5: **Sex, Politics, and Putin**

Olympics 2014 and Corruption. Sports as distraction at the times of war.

Read:



- Myers, Chapters 16-18, pp. 281-344.
- Following **Index** in Myers's book read all pages that have to do with the "Olympics" as well as a chapter about Russian sports: Beumers, "Entertainment, Sports, and Fiction" (PDF supplied).
- Ostrovsky on "Sports and War", film *Night Watch*, from *The Invention of Russia* (2015) (PDF supplied).
- Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 71-91.



**Creative assignment for next week:** I will supply you with a photograph featuring a person or a couple. Closely study this shot and make up a fictitious story about what and whom do you see here – feel free to give him or her a (Russian) name, pay attention at such details as clothes or elements of an interior design, try to make connections between objects and people, and/or between the depicted humans themselves – who are they, what are they doing here, what does their pose or face expression tells you?, and so on. (One page; print out is due in class, October 17)

## Topic 7. Write Your Literary Masterpiece

October 17.



Present your (very) short story today! (2%)



Case study 6: **Contemporary Russian Media**  
**Art on Trial – 2** (Modern Russian Art and the actionist Pavel Pavlensky)

### **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Note: *Midterm will take half of the allocated class time.*

Please, **bring your laptop** to class – you'll be asked to type your answers.

Read:



- Myers, Chapters 19-21, pp. 345-400.
- Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 93-129.



## Topic 8. Keep Styling

October 24.

### Guest lecture

Professor MARK LIPOVETSKY (*University of Colorado-Boulder*)

“Is Reactionary Postmodernism Possible At All?”

MARK LIPOVETSKY – Professor and Chair of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Colorado-Boulder. Born and educated in the USSR, since 1996 he works in the US. He is the author of eight books and more than a hundred articles published in the US, Russia, and Europe. He also co-edited ten volumes of articles on Russian literature and culture. Among his monographs are the following: *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (1999), *Modern Russian Literature: 1950s-1990s* (2001), *Performing Violence: Literary and Theatrical Experiments of New Russian Drama* (2008), and *Postmodern Crises: From Lolita to Pussy Riot* (2017). In 2014, Lipovetsky received an award of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages for the outstanding contribution to scholarship.



Case study 7: **Russia’s Foreign Policy**: Ukraine and Crimea Annexation; Syria War; the Chechnya legacy (see Ostrovsky on Ukrainian’s simulacrum, *Invention of Russia*, pp. 312-327)

Watch “Crimea For Dummies (RT Documentary)”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xURFKxliGh8>

Q: Is there any hidden agenda? Where is the truth? Tip: as you are watching the documentary, take notes where you feel the narrator bends the facts and/or tries to implant a certain line of thought. What difference does it make that the narrator is a English-speaking reporter?

Read:



Myers, Chapters 19-21, pp. 401-481.

Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 131-158.

## Topic 9. Share the Benefits (with Your Friends)

October 31.

! Quiz – 2 (10-15 minutes in the beginning of the class)



Case study 8: **The Red Web** – 2 (Snowden, espionage)



**SCREENING:** *Elena* (Dir. A. Zvyagintsev, 2013)

November 6-13	Fall Study Break – no classes (University open)
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### Topic 10. Get Out in Time

November 14.



**SCREENING:** *Leviathan* (Dir. A. Zvyagintsev, 2014) in collaboration with the Dalhousie Art Gallery and the Russian film series

### Class 11. STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATIONS – 1

November 21.

Read:



Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik*, pp. 159-191 [end].

### Class 12. STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATIONS – 2

**Putin’s Russia: Where Do we Go from Here?**

November 28.

**Class 13.** December 5 \* Classes end, fall term  
Tuesday, December 5 - Monday classes will be held

**Your paper is due!**

### ACADEMIC DATES 2017/2018

Please go to the following link for important academic dates:

[https://www.dal.ca/academics/important\\_dates.html](https://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html)

Please Note:

\* **Tuesday, December 5, 2017 - Monday classes will be held**

\*\* **Monday, April 9, 2018 - Friday classes will be held**

\*\* **Tuesday, April 10, 2018 - Friday classes will be held**

	<b>Last Day to Drop without “W”</b>	<b>Last Day to Drop with “W”</b>
Fall Term	October 2, 2017	October 31, 2017
X/Y	October 31, 2017	February 5, 2018

## EXAMINATIONS & TESTS

Tests are normally scheduled during class time. Tests scheduled outside class time should not conflict with regularly selected courses. Dates and times must be included in the course syllabus. There shall not be any written tests or examinations, with the exception of project presentations and major papers, worth more than 25% of the final grade held in the last two weeks of a term, without the explicit approval of the appropriate faculty, school or college. As well, there shall not be any tests held between the end of classes and the beginning of the official examination period with the exception of those activity modules and laboratory classes in Health Professions in which special facilities are required.

**Students should contact the Dean's/Director's Office of the appropriate faculty/school/college for assistance if they are scheduled for more than two examinations on the same day.**

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## UNIVERSITY POLICIES, STATEMENTS, GUIDELINES and RESOURCES for SUPPORT

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the [University Calendar](#) and the Senate.

### University Statements

#### *Academic Integrity*

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all of our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Click [here](#) to read more.

#### *Accessibility*

The Advising and Access Services Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for student accessibility and accommodation. The advising team works with students who request accommodation as a result of: a disability, religious obligation, or any barrier related to any other characteristic protected under Human Rights legislation (NS, NB, PEI, NFLD). Click [here](#) to read more.

#### *Student Code of Conduct*

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner—perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. Click [here](#) to read more.

#### *Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect*

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Click [here](#) to read more.

#### *Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory*

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit the office in the McCain Building (room 3037) or contact the programs at [elders@dal.ca](mailto:elders@dal.ca) or 902-494-6803 (leave a message).

### University Policies and Programs

- Important Dates in the Academic Year (including add/drop dates)  
[http://www.dal.ca/academics/important\\_dates.html](http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html)
- University Grading Practices: Statement of Principles and Procedures  
[https://www.dal.ca/dept/university\\_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practices-policy.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practices-policy.html)
- Scent-Free Program  
<https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupational-safety/scent-free.html>

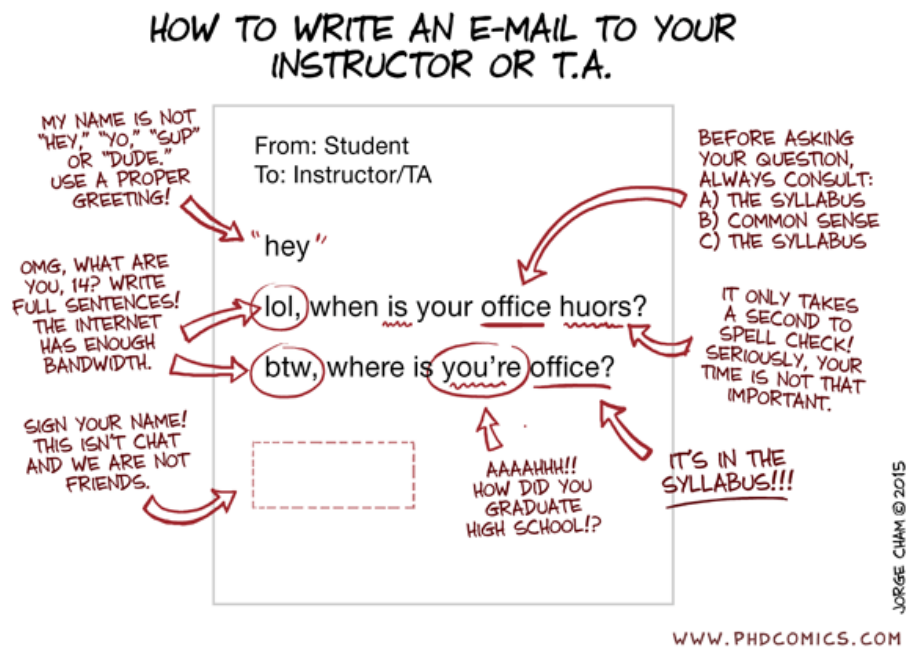
### Learning and Support Resources

- General Academic Support - Academic Advising:  
[https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/advising.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/advising.html)
- Copyright and Fair Dealing: <https://libraries.dal.ca/services/copyright-office/fair-dealing/fair-dealing-guidelines.html>
- Libraries: <http://libraries.dal.ca>
- Student Health Services: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/health-and-wellness/health-services.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness/health-services.html)
- Counselling and Psychological Services: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/health-and-wellness/counselling.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness/counselling.html)

- Black Student Advising: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/communities/black-student-advising.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/black-student-advising.html)
- Aboriginal Student Centre: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/communities/native.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/native.html)
- ELearning Website: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/elearning.html>
- Student Advocacy Services: <https://www.dsu.ca/services/community-student-services/student-advocacy-service>
- Dalhousie Ombudsperson: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/where-to-get-help/ombudsperson.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/where-to-get-help/ombudsperson.html)
- Writing Centre: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html)
- Studying for Success program and tutoring: [https://www.dal.ca/campus\\_life/academic-support/study-skills-and-tutoring.html](https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/study-skills-and-tutoring.html)

## Appendix I

**Post Scriptum** on Cyber Security – if you don't want KGB to hack your email account, follow these simple rules:



## Appendix II

### Film Reflection

Every time we watch a film in class, **you need to write up your reflections/ comments about that film.** This should be at least a page in your in-class journal. It should be neat and legible and reflect careful THOUGHT. (If it looks and reads like hurried and careless work, a lower grade will be the result.)

### Film report format

- One typed page; font: *Times New Roman*; size: 12; single-spaced.

1. Title: Name of the film, the names of the director and producer, major actresses and actors and their roles; year of the film.

2. Summary: Write a SHORT summary of the plot of the film (3-4 sentences is enough).

3. Next:

a. Intent: What do you think the "intent" of the film is?

b. Successful?: Why is or isn't it a "successful" film? How well does it fulfill its intent?

c. Connect and compare: Make connections and comparisons to other films you have seen.

d. Film techniques used: Comment on various technical aspects of the film which enhanced it in some way. (Cinematography, sound effects, musical score, etc.)

e. Impact on YOU: Discuss its overall impact upon you. What "strikes" you about the film or what do you remember most about the film? Why?

f. Additional resource material: In place of the "film notes", find a movie review or article about the film -- search the library, film books and Internet for additional information about the film or any aspect of it. Perhaps you can find further information about the director, for example, or anything relevant to this film. AND THEN. . . comment/write about your "take" on this material. Do you agree or disagree with the resource material. Why or why not?

(*Resource materials*: Provide the name of your source for your review/additional materials)

g. Does the film deserve to be on the AFI BEST 100 films and/or Oscar award winning film for Best (Foreign) Picture list and why or why not?

*No late reports will be accepted.*