



The Power of the Word: Freedom of Speech in the US and Russia

RUSS 287
Fall 2023

Carillon Mission

Carillon Communities creates an inspiring and supportive living and learning environment for first-year students. Carillon promotes an environment where students develop a sense of belonging and trust to support their academic success and innovative thought. In Carillon, students consider their own interests and knowledge, and become active agents in their own education.

Course Description

The central theme of Russian 287 and our Carillon community is *the abiding human propensity to ask questions, to use language to pursue inquiry*. To be a “critical thinker,” one must develop the habit and discipline of asking questions and challenging assumptions.

Through a comparative approach to the US and Russian experiences, we will explore the role of language and its power in different political and social systems. We will explore such questions as: Why is free speech so fiercely defended in a democracy and such a threat to totalitarianism? What is the relationship between free speech, political power and dissent? Is the pen still mightier than the sword, even in the nuclear age? What has shaped our current attitudes toward freedom of expression? How has the concept of political free speech been extended to include freedom of expression in general, such as in the creative arts? What role do new technologies play in the arena of free speech debates?

We will explore how freedom of speech and expression has been defended or its suppression justified in both the US and Russia. We will practice the art of questioning and constructing counter-arguments throughout the course.

Learning Outcomes

This course is NOT just about mastering a body of knowledge and arriving at “correct” answers. You should certainly come away from this course with increased knowledge of the subject, but you should also have developed a more sophisticated ability to subject any and all ideas to critical inquiry. You should be a deeper thinker with the ability to apply new questioning skills to ideas you encounter in other fields and endeavors, both inside and outside the classroom.

After successfully completing this course you will know more about:

- The Russian and American experiences related to freedom of speech
- Seminal documents that still influence our attitudes toward freedom of speech and expression in a wide range spheres of human activity
- The role of the creative arts in political discourse, i.e. art as activism and as dissent

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

Dr. Cynthia Martin

cmartin@umd.edu

Class Meets

M, W, F 12-12:50

Office Hours

Mondays & Wednesdays

11:00-12:00

and by appointment

Teaching Assistants

TBD

Prerequisites

None

Course Communication

The best way to get in touch with me is via email directly from the course site in ELMS. You may also email me directly at cmartin@umd.edu, but all emails submitted on ELMS are forwarded to this email. I usually respond to emails within 24 hours. In the rare case that you do not get a response from me within 48 hours, please resend – sometimes emails do get lost or buried. Please check ELMS regularly, as I will post announcements directly on our course site. (For guidance on writing professional emails, see ter.ps/email ☺).

- Engage in civil discourse and debate surrounding controversial issues
- Put into practice the skill of critical inquiry, subjecting diverse views to analysis
- Articulate your ideas more clearly both orally and in written form
- Work as part of a team toward a common goal

Required Resources

Course website: elms.umd.edu

You will be automatically enrolled in the course site.

All required print materials will be posted on ELMS or you will be provided with a link.

Activities, Learning Assessments & Grading

Percentage of Final Grade

Weekly Assignments/Participation

30%

You can expect to have reading and very brief reflections due each week before our Monday class. These weekly assignments are not assigned a grade per se, rather they are “graded” as Complete (Submitted)/Incomplete (Not Submitted). These are what you might consider “low stakes” in terms of *your* grade, but these are “high stakes” for the success of the course overall, hence, they count for 30% of your final grade. If you do not do these assignments, you will not be prepared to participate in our class discussions, and that affects the entire class. I expect all students to come to class prepared. Our course website on Canvas is organized by week – you will find a “Module” for each week, with all assignments and materials linked there. Each week, the reflection will be due before our first class of the week and be relevant for our discussions for that week. In rare cases, a reflection assignment will be due before the second class of the week. You should expect to spend between 4-6 hours each week reading and reflecting! As a rule, I will not give credit for a late assignment; however, if there are special circumstances preventing you from completing one of these weekly assignments on time, please let me know.

Classroom Debates

30% (20% team grade/10% individual grade)

Teams will be formed by the third week of the semester to prepare for class debates to be held in class during the last two weeks of the semester. Teams will be assigned an issue and then paired for classroom debates. Your work as part of these teams will comprise 30% of your final grade. I will allow teams to meet a few times during the semester during our regularly scheduled class periods, so while you will need to prepare outside of class, as a team you should not have to meet too often outside of class. I will provide guidance to keep your team focused and on track, and to get updates on your progress as a team. Each debate (two teams debating a single issue) is expected to take 30-45 minutes, followed by discussion. Those of us who are watching the debates will provide feedback about the various arguments and points made and effectiveness of debate strategies. I will provide feedback forms to the “audience” and I will take classmates’ comments into consideration in assessing the team performance. More detailed rubrics will be provided.

Two Graded Written Reflections

30% (15 % each)

For these “graded reflections,” I do not expect you to produce an argument that is “right” or “wrong.” Rather you will be given a thought-provoking question related to our discussions and assigned material and asked to articulate your response (which may include your own views, multiple viewpoints, etc.). You cannot “prepare” per se for these graded written reflections. You will write the essay during class and you may use any resources you wish while writing the essay. Responses can be typed directly on ELMS, or uploaded, and I will also accept handwritten essays if you wish (you would need to scan or photograph and upload to ELMS). For these in-class assessments, I will only offer a make-up if arranged ahead of time as a result of an unavoidable conflict or due to a true emergency. A good rule of thumb for this and all your classes is to speak to your professor in advance any time you think you will have a problem completing an assignment or assessment on schedule.

Final Assessment

10%

Written, in-class, during regularly scheduled final time

Each assessment will be graded in the following way:

Exceeds expectations	A
Meets expectations fully	B
Meets expectations minimally	C
Does not meet expectations	D

No evidence of the expectations F

I will provide detailed rubrics for what it means to exceed/meet/not meet expectations for each graded assignment. Remember that these grades are yours to be earned! I will assign +/- in grading your work and in the final grade. All grades will be posted on ELMS. I do not grade on a curve and I would be delighted if each student were to earn a final grade of A! I am happy to meet with you at any time to discuss your grades, expectations or a particular assignment. If you have a concern about your performance in the class or a particular grade, please see me immediately; don't wait until it is too late to make a course correction!

Graded Assessments	#	Category Weight
Weekly assignments and participation: pre-class reading and reflections submitted on ELMS, graded pass/fail	10 - 12	30%
Graded Reflections: 2, in-class announced ahead of time	2	30%
Debates Teamwork 10% individual grade, 20% team grade	1	30%
Final Assessment: in-class, during exam week	1	10%
TOTAL		100%

FINAL GRADE will be calculated as follows:

- 95-100% = A
- 90-94% = A-
- 85-89% = B+
- 80-84% = B
- 75-79% = C+
- 70-74% = C
- 65-69% = D+
- 60-64% = D
- 59% or below = F

Tentative Course Schedule of weekly topics and major assignments (subject to change, please check ELMS regularly for changes or updates)

Tentative Course Schedule of weekly topics and major assignments (subject to change, please check ELMS regularly for changes or updates)

WEEK	TOPIC & IMPORTANT DATES
Week 1 8/28	Introductions, Course overview Philosophical underpinnings and core documents pertaining to freedom of speech
Week 2 9/5	Philosophical underpinnings and core documents pertaining to freedom of speech (No class 9/5, Labor Day)
Week 3 9/11	John Stuart Mill "On Liberty" Fyodor Dostoevsky "The Grand Inquisitor" Totalitarianism and freedom of speech/thought

Week 4	9/18	Legislating speech Criminal codes of US, USSR and Russian Federation related to speech 9/22 Team Meetings during class
Week 5	9/25	Legislating speech Criminal codes of US, USSR and Russian Federation related to speech Supreme Court cases
Week 6	10/2	Freedom of speech in the Internet age What is the role of social media? The Press/mass media? Major Internet companies?
Week 7	10/9	Freedom of speech in the Internet age What is the role of social media? The Press/mass media? Major Internet companies?
Week 8	10/16	Freedom of speech in the Internet age What is the role of social media? The Press/mass media? Major Internet companies? Graded Reflection #1 on Oct 20 online but during our regularly scheduled class time (12:00-12:50)
Week 9	10/23	10/23 Team Meetings during class 10/25 The creative arts and freedom of speech/expression (literature, visual arts, music, comedy, etc.).
Week 10	10/30	The creative arts and freedom of speech/expression (literature, visual arts, music, comedy, etc.).
Week 11	11/6	The creative arts and freedom of speech/expression (literature, visual arts, music, etc.).
Week 12	11/13	Contemporary Issues Evgeny Zamyatin's "We"
Week 13	11/20	NO CLASS 11/22 for Thanksgiving Break Graded Reflection #2 on Nov 20 online but during our regularly scheduled class time (12:00-12:50)
Week 14	11/27	Debates Contemporary Issues Evgeny Zamyatin's "We"
Week 15	12/4	Debates Contemporary Issues Evgeny Zamyatin's "We"
Week 16	12/11	Final thoughts and Wrap-up Final exam (reflection) during our scheduled exam period

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Course-Specific Policies: In addition to campus policies, please pay particular attention to the following:

Accommodation

Students with ADS (Accessibility and Disability Service) accommodations should contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss any accommodation for this course. I am happy to work with you to make sure you can participate fully in all aspects of the course.

Code of Academic Integrity

The University has approved a **Code of Academic Integrity** which prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Plagiarism policy: all quotations taken from other authors, including from the Internet, must be indicated by quotation marks and referenced. Paraphrasing must be referenced as well. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student, you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>

The following University of Maryland **Honor Pledge** has been proposed by the Council and approved by the University Senate:

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination." This pledge should be included at the beginning of your take-home mid-term and research paper, both of which are to be exclusively your work. You may discuss with classmates the weekly assignments, and you are encouraged to study together for the final exam.

Religious observance

Please inform me of any intended absences for religious observance in advance of the Add/Drop period. I will not schedule graded assessments or debates on these days.

In the event of my absence

If there should be an emergency preventing me from attending our class meeting, I will post an announcement to ELMS. Unless otherwise directed, university policies states that students are expected to remain in the classroom (on zoom) for 15 minutes in the unlikely event that the instructor should not arrive on time. After 15 minutes, it may be assumed that class will not be held.

Attendance, class preparation and participation: This refers to quality as well as quantity. It means preparing for class by doing the assignments on time (whether written or just reading assignments) and then participating in class discussions. You will not be able to participate in class discussions if you have not done the assignments on time, hence, multiple absences will lower the participation part of your grade. Of course, things come up and life can be complex, so if you do have to miss a class and you know ahead of time, please let me know. If you miss because of

something unexpected and are unable to let me know ahead of time, I ask that you please send me an email and let me know all is well.

Please refrain from using phones, tablet, or other electronic devices during our class meetings. We only have 3 hours together per week to inquire, analyze, discuss and exchange ideas about some very important issues. During that time, I ask that you focus on our discussions and interacting with your classmates. Researchers have found that electronic devices do interfere with learning and active participation. For that reason, the use of such will not be permitted during class meetings (except when required for ADS accommodations). If a computer will be required, such as for our two reflective writing assignments, I will be sure to announce it ahead of time and make arrangements for you to have one available should that be required. If you are expecting an important call (such as from a family member) for some reason, please advise me ahead of time, keep your phone on vibrate, and step out of the room to take the call. Otherwise, please keep cell phones turned off or to silent throughout the class. For more information about the science behind the policy, watch: <http://youtu.be/WwPaw3Fx5Hk>

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for you own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation. Consider visiting <http://ter.ps/learn> and schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting <http://ter.ps/writing> and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit <http://www.counseling.umd.edu>.



Everything is **FREE**, and **everyone needs help sometimes**... all you have to do is ask for it.

Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications

The University of Maryland embraces a diverse student body, and expects us all to fostering equitable classroom and community environments. Please feel free to let me and your fellow classmates know how you wish to be addressed at the start of the semester as we get to know each other, including preferred pronoun use.

Aspects of your personal identity (gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, others) are yours, and it is entirely your choice whether and which aspects to disclose (e.g., should you wish to share it if it comes up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives). We should all refrain from presuming or imposing aspects of identity on others.