This special subject examines the late imperial period of Russian history from the perspective of the fin de siècle. Its goal is twofold: to rediscover the richness and complexity of the era; and to rethink the meaning of the revolutions of 1917. In the years around 1900, questions of both modernity and decay, civilisation and cultural standards were at the heart of intellectual discussions and public debates. They occupied people’s minds and spurred artistic creativity at a time when the country as a whole experienced major economic and social changes. Topics for investigation will thus include the rise of mass movements and the revolution of 1905, but also consumer culture and the “sexual question,” as it was called at the time. Special attention will be paid to the world of the Russian village, the life of factory workers, the decline of the nobility, the pitfalls of the modern urban landscape, popular utopian fantasies, and the momentous changes in literature and the arts. The documentary material for this course will be in English. In addition to more conventional sources (memoirs, decrees, petitions, strike resolutions, programmes of political parties, articles and tracts), they will include literature and a broad variety of audio-visual materials (popular song, film, architecture, posters, paintings, and other works of art), which are available as tape or CD recordings, on video cassettes, and as reproductions in books.

Sources:
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Anton Chekhov, ‘The Cherry Orchard’ in Chekhov Plays (Penguin Classics, several editions) [68pp.]
‘Father Gapon’s petition to Nicholas II, January 22, 1905’ in Dmytryshyn (ed.), Imperial Russia, pp. 308–313 [5pp.]
‘The October Manifesto, October 30, 1905’ in Dmytryshyn (ed.), Imperial Russia, pp. 314–315 [2pp.]
‘The Constitution of Imperial Russia, April 23, 1906’ in Dmytryshyn (ed.), Imperial Russia, pp. 316–324 [8pp.]
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‘Attitude of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on the Question of Participation in the Provisional Government’, McC no. 1/8 [2pp.]

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‘Appeal of the Soviet Executive Committee to the Citizens and Soldiers, 22 April 1917’, BK3, no.1069 [1p.]

‘Soviet Approval of the Declaration and the Coalition, 6 May 1917’, BK3, no.1096 [1p.]

‘Appeal of the Provisional Government Concerning the Land Question, 23 April 1917’, BK2, no.470 [1p.]

‘Izvestiia on the Agrarian Question, 14 May 1917’, BK2, no.474 [2pp.]

‘Resolution [of the 1st All-Russian Congress of Peasants’ Soviets] on the Land Question, 26 May 1917’, BK2, no.518 [4pp.]

‘An Adverse Comment on the Work of the Central Land Committee’, BK2, no.480 [1p.]

‘Order of the Minister of Food to the Food Supply Committees, 18 July 1917’, BK2, no.489 [2pp.]

‘Telegram from the Commissar of Kazan’ Guberniya, 31 July 1917’, BK2, no.512 [1p.]

‘Appeal of the Soviet to the Workers, 9 March 1917’, BK2, no.621 [1p.]
‘Civil War in the Pipe Factory, 20 May 1917’, BK2, no.631 [1p.]
‘An Appeal from the Minister of Labor, 28 June 1917’, BK2, no.642, [1p.]
‘A Resolution on Lockouts by the Conference of Factory Committees in Moscow, 24–28 July 1917’, BK2 no.666 [1p.]
‘The Circular of August 28 of the Minister of Labor on the Inadmissibility of Workers’ Meetings During Working Hours’, BK2, no.634 [1p.]
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‘Declaration of Soldiers’ Rights, 11 May 1917’, BK2, no.773 [3pp.]
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‘Kamenyev Dissents’, McC no.2/17c [1p.]
‘The Soviet Appeal, 4 July 1917’, McC no.2/8a [1p.]
‘The Bolshevik Proclamations of the Nights of July 4 and 5’, BK3, no.1157a [1p.]
‘Statement by Prince L’vov Concerning his Resignation, 9 July 1917’, BK3, no.1186 [2pp.]
‘Kerensky’s Telegram to All the Country, 27 August 1917’, McC no.2/11a [1p.]
‘Violence in Vyborg, 2 September 1917’, BK3, no.1309 [1p.]
‘The Bolsheviks take over Direction of the Petrograd Soviet, 10 September 1917’, BK3, no.1369 [2pp.]
‘Lenin Calls for an Uprising, 12–14 September 1917’, McC no.4/1 [2pp.]
‘Kamenev and Zinoviev Oppose Uprising, 11 October 1917’, McC no.4/2 [3pp.]
‘The Decree on Peace, 26 October/8 November 1917’, McC no.5/4 [2pp.]
‘The Land Decree, 26 October/8 November 1917’, McC no.7/10a [3pp.]
‘The Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, 6/19 January 1918’, McC no.6/6 [2pp.]
‘Establishment of the Cheka, 7/20 December 1917’, McC no.6/3 [1p.]

-Gypsy Romances, Revolutionary and Popular Songs (some of them will be available as recordings in class)

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Visual sources
Films
A selection of pre-1917 films will be shown in class

For Reference

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Denise Younblood, The Magic Mirror: Moviemaking in Russia, 1908–1918 (Madison, 1999)
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