

# Ukrainian History On Film

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To understand the true reasons behind Putin's brutal war in Ukraine, we will turn to Ukrainian two thousand year-long history, both modern and medieval. The key moments of that history, as well as colourful customs and folklore of this ethnically diverse land, have been captured on camera by talented Ukrainian filmmakers. Lectures will be followed by clips from documentaries and drama, followed by discussion and a question period. I will also share the overview of the situation from Ukrainian and Russian-opposition analytical sources.

## **Six weekly topic descriptions:**

Because of the topical nature of events in Ukraine, we will start with the most recent history defining what happens in Ukraine now.

### **Week 1**

Geography and Land. 1991 Disintegration of the USSR and formation of an independent Ukrainian state. Fighting for independence: The *Revolution of Dignity* (Euro-Maidan Protests) of 2014; Orange Revolution (protests of 2004, 2005). Relationship with Russia. Why this War?

Films: *Maidan*, by Loznitsa (2014); *Broken Ties*, by Loshak (2023)

### **Week 2**

Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism; Languages and Ethnicities of Ukraine; Cultural divisions: Eastern versus Western Ukraine. The story of Crimean Tatars. Chernobyl and its role in the national awakening.

Film: *Chernobyl: The Lost Tapes*, by James Jones (2022)

### **Week 3**

WWII and Holocaust. Stalin's collectivization and induced Terror Hunger of the 30s. (known as *Hlodomor* in Ukrainian); Soviet industrial projects in Ukraine.

Film: *Enthusiasm*, by Dziga Vertov (1930); *Mr. Jones*, by Agnieszka Holland (2019)

### **Week 4**

Between two empires: Austro-Hungarian and Russian. The aftermath of WWI: Ukrainian failed fight for independence. The Cossacks: it's Heroes and Anti-Heroes; Wars with Poland and Turkey; Ukrainian Religions; Formation of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569).

Film: *Taras Bulba*, by Bortko (2009) (based on Gogol's story)

### **Week 5**

The Viking Age; Foundation of the Kievan state (Kievan Rus'), the largest and most prosperous medieval state in Europe; Prince Volodymir brings Christianity from Byzantium; literacy and

education.

Film: *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, by Paradjanov (1965)

### **Week 6**

Mongol Invasion and the collapse of Kievan Rus. Rise of Moscow. Revision of the material. The geopolitical meaning of war against Ukraine. Its consequences for Ukraine and Russia.

film: *Cherkassy*, by Yashenko (2022)

### ***Recommended Literature:***

Serghii Plokhy: *The Gates of Europe: A history of Ukraine*

Nikolai Gogol: *Taras Bulba* (any edition)

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- to be able to place the present situation in a wider context by learning about history of the country
- to appreciate and learn the ethnic, cultural and linguistic complexity of Ukraine
- to appreciate the art of Ukrainian filmmakers
- to understand better the relationship between Ukraine and Russia and the future for both countries