

“Mother Russia Is Calling: Russian Women From Catherine the Great to Ksenia Sobchak”

There is a persistent image of Russia as very masculine from Peter the Great to Lenin, Stalin, Krushchev, and certainly today’s Putin. At the same time, from Russian Orthodox veneration of the Blessed Mother, to Catherine’s skill and ambitions to Sobchack’s commercial, media and political resilience and resourcefulness as one of the only candidates to oppose Putin, women have played a crucial role in determining the culture and destiny of the Russian, Soviet and now Post-Soviet State. How can we understand this paradox? Through a selected gallery of great Russian women and the impact they have always had from the dinner table to the Duma.

Thomas Jesús Garza is University Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies and Founding Director of the Texas Language Center. He teaches Russian language and literature, foreign language pedagogy, and contemporary Russian culture. He has been traveling to and researching in Russia since 1979 and has lived in Moscow for over six years. A native Texan, Dr. Garza received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1987. During his more than 30 years at the University, he has received numerous prizes for undergraduate and graduate teaching, including the Texas Excellence Award, the President's Associates Award, the Harry Ransom Award, was inducted into the University Academy of Distinguished Teachers in 2003, selected for a Regents Outstanding Teaching Award in 2009, and chosen a “Texas Top Ten” instructor by the Texas Exes in 2018. He recently completed a book manuscript on filmic portraits of *machismo* in contemporary Russian and Mexican cultures and is currently working on a new project on Russian actor and bard, Vladimir Vysotsky in the Americas in the 1970s.

Dr. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza is UT Regents’ and Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor of English at UT Austin. She serves as the Director of UT’s Program in Comparative Literature was the chief administrative officer of the American Comparative Literature Association from 2002-2011. She is affiliated faculty in the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Program in the Human Dimension of Organizations. She holds degrees from UC Berkeley, Oxford University and Columbia University and has held both Mellon and Fulbright Fellowships. She writes on Oscar Wilde, theatre, the gothic, detective stories, and literary theory. She teaches diversity and inclusion through literature and the fine arts and works actively in eight world languages. Richmond-Garza’s multimedia approach to teaching has been honored by a dozen teaching awards both at UT Austin and across the state of Texas.

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