

RUSSIAN 230: INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN LITERATURE: The Individual and Society

TTH, 1:50-3:20, Miller 210, Lewis and Clark College
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Office Hours: Mon 9-10am, Tues. 11-12, ****and**** by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The Russian written literary tradition is very young - just over 300 years. Yet, in that short time, it has produced great authors and great works that have captured the minds and hearts of people living far away in both space and time. The Russian authors raise - and claim to answer - the large existential questions of human existence: how does one, beset by society's demands, find meaning in everyday life? What value does the individual have? What is the nature of evil, and of human responsibility in the face of evil? Can we build a new, better, world, and what kind of an individual would this new world produce? What role do distinctions of gender have in how the individual is understood to function in society? They do so in maddening, creative texts that, like life itself, push them to sometimes confusing, conflicting, unexpected conclusions. We will study these works as primarily literary texts, but ones that intersect with the world at large.

This course will introduce you to the great works and authors of the Russian tradition of the 19th and 20th centuries as they wrestle with these, and other, questions: Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy; Anton Chekhov, Mikhail Bulgakov, and others. Through developing the skills of close textual analysis, we will look at how these works function as literary works, form part of Russian and wider European cultural and literary movements, but also touch us as works of philosophy, psychology, social commentary.

Russian 230 counts towards the International Studies requirement, the Russian minor, and the Foreign Languages major (when Russian is either the first or second language).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of this course, students who have participated actively in the course and completed all the assignments in a satisfactory manner will:

- ✓ Gain an understanding of the evolution of Russian literature and literary history through studying its pre-eminent authors and works.
- ✓ Learn or improve their ability to process literary texts critically: including understanding and proper use of literary terms, understanding of audience and voice, and techniques of close reading and interpretation.
- ✓ Learn or improve their ability to utilize the conventions of the literary research paper or the

literary analysis paper, including (if applicable) use and citation of secondary sources.

- ✓ Improve their ability to participate, in a collaborative and collegial manner, in a group engaged in a particular intellectual task, verbal or written.

In addition to fulfilling the above learning objectives, which are potentially measurable, but also potentially limiting, I would like this course to help you achieve the following things, which are less amenable to measurement (and whose importance also exceeds it).

- ✓ Read our works deeply and with enjoyment.
- ✓ Become aware of the many ways in which these works are not only great stories, but also carefully crafted to create fictional worlds capable of making us reflect, philosophically and emotionally, on various aspects of our own existence.

READINGS: We will read the following works:

***The Portable Nineteenth-Century Russian Reader* (Ed. George Gibian) (“P19R” below)

Aleksandr Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman” (1833) and “The Queen of Spades” (1833)

Mikhail Lermontov, “Princess Mary” (1840) [P19R]

Nikolai Gogol, “The Overcoat”(1842) [P19R]

Ivan Turgenev, “First Love” (1860) [P19R]

**Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (1876)

Anton Chekhov, “Lady with a Lapdog” (1899) [P19R]

Isaac Babel, “My First Goose” (1920s)

**Yuri Olesha, *Envy* (1927)

**Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita* (1929-40; published 1955)

Anna Akhmatova, “Requiem” (1937-1962)

**Liudmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night* (1987)

Viktor Pelevin, “Mid-Game” (1991)

The works that are starred are available for purchase at the LC Bookstore. The rest will be distributed through library reserve or, if appropriate, electronically. Full bibliographical information is available on Moodle.

REQUIREMENTS: Requirements for the class consist of regular attendance and participation, reading the assigned texts carefully and deeply, completing a reading response before each class, a midterm paper (4-5 pages) and a final paper (9-10 pages).

Because the class will be run more like a seminar than a lecture, it is imperative that you attend class, and that you come prepared. That means completing the day’s reading assignment, reading any supplementary material on Moodle, and submitting, no later than noon on the day of class, the reading response to the day’s assignment. 2 absences and 2 missed reading responses are allowed for any reason; additional modifications may be made in cases of illness, religious observance, or personal emergency, but need to be discussed with me on a case-by-case basis. Detailed directions about the two short papers (4-5 pages) and the final paper (10-12 pages) will be available later. You can rewrite all the papers.

FINAL LETTER GRADES will be assigned according to the following breakdown:

A	93.5-100	B	86.4-83.5	C	77.4-73.5	D	66.4-63.5
A-	89.5-93.4	B-	83.4-79.5	C-	73.4-69.5	D-	63.4-59.5
B+	89.4-86.5	C+	79.4-77.5	D+	69.4-66.5	F	59.5 and below

ASSIGNMENTS will consist of the following, and be weighted according to the following scale:

- ✓ Attendance + Participation 20%
- ✓ Reading responses (1/2 to 1 page) to be completed before each class 20%
- ✓ Peer editing work 10% (5% on each paper)
- ✓ Paper 1 (about 4-5 pages) 20%
 - First draft of Paper 1 10%
 - Final draft of Paper 1 10%
- ✓ Final Paper (about 9-10 pages) 25%
 - First draft of final paper 10%
 - Final draft of final paper 15%
- ✓ Presentation on Final Paper 5%

COURSE POLICIES: I have the following policies for the classroom:

Office hours: Please come to office hours with any questions, concerns, thoughts, ideas, notes, desires that you may have. I may not always be able to make allowances (though I'll try), but I will certainly listen and discuss. If you cannot make my office hours, simply send me an email to make an appointment. In addition, I am on campus lots - so simply dropping by will often (although not always) work.

Email: Important class notices will be distributed *via E-mail*. Please make sure to check your @lclark.edu address at least once a day. You are responsible for any information that is announced in this fashion. On my end, I will make every attempt to answer your emails promptly, usually within 24 hours. Periods when it may take longer will be announced in advance.

Electronic devices in the classroom: I prefer that you use pen and paper for taking notes, rather than more advanced devices (which may also distract you).

Disabilities: Please come talk to me privately if you have any kind of disability. I will try to make any reasonable accommodation that I can. You will also need to contact Student Support Services. Please read the full LC policy on disabilities here: <http://www.lclark.edu/live/files/6600-disability-policy>

Academic integrity and plagiarism: The academic classroom depends on the free and deep exchange of ideas, which in turn depends on trust. I give it to you, as I do to everyone I meet, freely and unconditionally, until I have reason to withdraw it. Plagiarism is one of the worst possible offenses in the academic sphere because it breaks that trust irrevocably, and I will treat any such cases, should we be unlucky enough to have any, with the seriousness they deserve. See the full university policy here: <http://college.lclark.edu/live/files/10193-college-policies-12811>

EVALUATION OF WRITTEN WORK

- **Reading responses** will be graded simply for completion, and I will comment on them before class. That said, they are there to help you process the texts and provide lead-ins to discussion. They'll be more helpful to you if they are not summaries but your responses – your thoughts on anything in the readings that seemed to you to be particularly important, strange, surprising, momentous, etc. If your responses are repeatedly too short or too cursory, it will affect your participation grade.
- **The 5-page and 10-page papers** are analytical writing assignments whose goals are to practice and develop your ability to engage in an extended interpretation of a single text within the context of (Russian) literary studies, while improving your ability to write cogently and effectively – a skill transferable far beyond Russian literature. Rather than a single assignment to be banged out in a few hours, writing is a process that benefits from feedback and input (indeed, this is most often the form it will take in the “real” world). For each of our two papers, therefore, I will require a rough draft, evaluations by a peer and myself, and a final draft. Evaluation of the paper will address both issues of form and content – indeed, the two are strongly intertwined. The goal here is not to give you more work but to workshop our papers – to make the writing of the papers a kind of intellectual exchange and to grow, as writers, in the process.
 - **An A-level paper** will pose an interesting problem and suggest a perceptive, original solution to it. It will support its readings by well-chosen examples from the text. It will be well organized, with a clear flow of ideas. It will have little or no mechanical problems (punctuation, spelling, paragraph division, citation, etc.)
 - **A B-level paper** will pose an interesting problem, but its interpretation may not be as effective as an A-level paper for one or two of the following reasons. Although the paper shows some significant engagement with the text, the resulting interpretation does not go far enough to be perceptive, and is too heavily dependent on insights achieved in class. It may at times lack proper support by textual examples. Although, on the whole, the paper shows a sense of organization, at times it veers off target and could be condensed. There are some mechanical problems (punctuation, spelling, paragraph division, citation, etc.).
 - **A C-level paper** differs in a number of ways from an effective A or B-level paper. It does not go deep enough with the question that it raises or the answers that it suggests. There are few supporting examples, or the examples given do not relate to the points they attempt to support. Although there is an attempt at structure, frequent digressions disrupt the flow of argument, significantly weakening it. Overall, it may suggest a lack of attention paid to the text or the writing assignment.
 - **A D or F-level paper** does not effectively pose or answer a question with any degree of seriousness or insight. It may be too short. It may fail to use any textual support. There is little or no discernible organizational structure. There are many mechanical problems that hinder comprehension. There is evidence that the author is unfamiliar with the text s/he is writing about. There is evidence of plagiarism.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Russian at LC: If this class strikes your fancy and you'd like to know more about Russian literature, culture, or language, come talk to me. The Russian section has a **very** successful track record at LC, a minor is relatively quick to acquire, and the language classes are fun and not **nearly** as scary as you think. In addition, the Russian Club and the Russian section run a very active set of extracurricular activities that include everything from movies to mushroom picking. Generally, these are open to anyone who's interested. I'll announce them in class, or you can find and friend us on Facebook.

A bit about me, this class, Russian literature: I was born in the (now former) Soviet Union, but emigrated to Boston, MA with my family when I was 11. I've always, in a very visceral way, loved reading, but the reason why I ended up studying Russian literature as opposed to, say, German or British (I have studied French literature a bit, both in college and in grad school), is that the accident of my bi-cultural upbringing not only gave me the Russian language, but allowed me to see Russian literature and culture both from the inside and from the outside. It's an incredibly rich, varied, and at times maddening tradition, and one in which the link between literature and society, the word and the deed, is especially strong. As much as my own liberal arts education, my Russian background convinces me of the usefulness of such an education to a life well-lived. Moreover, it's an incredibly effective way to learn skills necessary to any career. There are few things in life I enjoy more than the privilege of sharing this great tradition and those skills with my students.

ACCESSING MOODLE:

Browse to our Moodle page from the main Moodle web page at <http://moodle.lclark.edu>:

1. Login using your L&C login and password
2. Scroll down in the list until you find the desired department, click the link
3. Locate RUSSIAN 230: Introduction to Russian Literature and click on the course name.
4. You will be asked to use an enrollment key, use the key: hedgehog

After this one-time enrollment, you'll be able to see the course in your list of courses right underneath your login.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS (minus short supplementary Moodle materials; subject to change, with due notice)

Wk 1

Sep. 4 Introduction

Section I: The Superfluous Man

Sep. 6 Alexander Pushkin, “Bronze Horseman”; “Queen of Spades”

Wk 2

Sep. 11 Mikhail Lermontov, “Princess Mary”

Sep. 13 Nikolai Gogol, “The Overcoat”

Wk 3

Sep. 18 Ivan Turgenev, “First Love”

Sep. 20 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part 1 (80 p)

Wk 4

Sep. 25** C+P, 2 + 3 (~180 pages)

Sep. 27 C+P, Part 4 (70)

Wk 5

Oct. 2 C+P, Part 5+ 6 (~100 pages)

Oct. 4 C+P, Part 6 + Epilogue (~ 70 pages)

Wk 6

Oct. 9 Lev Tolstoy, “Death of Ivan Ilyich” (54). Paper # 1 assigned.

Oct 13 FALL BREAK

Wk 7

Oct. 16 Anton Chekhov, "The Lady with the Lapdog"

Oct. 18 Paper 1 draft due; catch-up/general discussion

Section 2: Man and Revolution(s)

Wk 8

Oct. 23 Paper 1 final; Isaac Babel, "My First Goose"

Oct. 25 Yury Olesha, *Envy*

Wk 9

Oct. 30 Yury Olesha, *Envy*

Nov. 1 Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, chapters 1-9

Wk 10

Nov. 6 M+M, chapters 10-18

Nov. 8 M+M, chapters 19-26

Wk 11

Nov. 13 M + M, chapters 27-end

Nov. 15 Master and Margarita - movie excerpts (in class)

Wk 12

Nov. 20 Anna Akhmatova, "Requiem"

Nov. 22 Thanksgiving break!

Wk 13

Nov. 27 Liudmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night*. Second paper assigned.

Nov 29 Liudmila Petrushevskaya, *The Time: Night*

Wk 14

Dec. 4 Victor Pelevin, "Mid-Game"

Dec. 6 First draft of paper due; Presentations

Wk 15

Dec. 11 Presentations

Final Paper due on or before December 15, 11:59 pm.