

Course Description and Objectives: [Literature, Foreign Cultures, W-course Requirements]

This course will be devoted to reading short stories from 19th and 20th century Russian literature. The course is limited in size so that we can spend a good portion of our class sessions discussing the readings. The authors we will read range from 19th century masters--Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov--to 20th century favorites--Babel, Zamyatin, and Zoshchenko--right up to the popular writers in contemporary Russia--from Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov to Petrushevskaya, Tokareva, Pelevin, Ulitskaia. We may also see one or more video representations of Russian short stories for comparative purposes.

Russians have always valued the short story as a source of wisdom and knowledge as well as entertainment and esthetic pleasure, as a resource for understanding individuals in a complex society, as a means for analyzing social behavior and psychological relationships, and as a place for airing cultural issues and matters of political and social concern.

We will be asking why these authors selected the short story rather another genre for their inventions and fantasies, philosophies and teachings, and why and how they expressed their views as they did using particular forms of language, literary techniques, imagery, and narrative structures. We will compare Russian and American ideas and values, considering cultural similarities as well as differences. We will examine common and uncommon emotions and passions, customs and mores, beliefs, fantasies and dreams. And we will discuss the themes and values expressed in these stories, both those which we share and those which we may identify with particular national stereotypes or peculiar "Russian" or "American" characteristics. Finally, we will endeavor to draw conclusions about our own values, feelings, assumptions, reactions and prejudices and try to identify their sources as we respond to the expression of a great variety of short stories from a fascinating and different culture.

Requirements:

Students will be required to keep a journal, recording responses to the stories we read. These responses will also be used to stimulate class discussion. Journal assignments [See below] will help students to prepare for class discussion, and to review for hour exams.

Reading all assignments, Attendance and Participation in class discussion are mandatory. Two excused absences are permitted during the term. Further absences will affect your grade.

Quizzes and the writing of in-class paragraphs may be used to clarify certain aspects of the stories and to further stimulate class discussion. Missed quizzes will not be made up.

Specific W- Course requirements: see below.

Grading Policy and Requirements:

Reading, Attendance and Participation in class Discussion	20%
Analytical Journals, turned in and graded 3 times, see below	25%
Occasional in-class Quizzes and/or Paragraphs	10%
Hour Exams [3], each 15%	45%

Analytical Journal Assignments

Journal entries should be **focused and analytical**. Typed journal entries will be handed in 3 times during the semester. Some additional assignments may be made to help students organize their thinking about the short story as a literary form, as a means of entertainment, and as a source of particular insights into the range and depths of the human imagination, but students should feel free to think about the stories in their own way and to develop their own ideas. However, journal entries must be logical, thoughtful, and analytical.

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Write up journal commentaries covering **at least 6 stories/4 authors** in each section. Each of the three Journals should be a minimum of 10 pages (approximately 1-2 pages/per story), but no more than 15 pages. Each commentary should have its own theme, although you may compare two or more stories in one entry for a richer discussion, e.g., Discuss characterization of Russian women or Russian men in 2-3 stories, or by 2 different authors; or compare the Use of Irony in two different stories by two different authors; or the Construction of Plot in two stories or by two different authors; or Point of View or a recurrent Theme and its representation in 2 or more stories; or Use of Symbolism or Use of Setting by different authors; or Comic elements in Gogol; or contrast differences and similarities in a story and its film version, etc.

Some students in the past have chosen to hand in submissions, which are closer to “papers” than “journals.” This is also acceptable as long as the 6 stories/4 authors guidelines are met. This is your choice.

Refer to “Aspects of Narrative” (see last page of this syllabus) for terms, further suggestions.

SYLLABUS

General Information:

Instructor: Jane G. Harris
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Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5

Time: 4-5:15 Place: 236 C/L

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Required readings:

All texts are available at the Book Center; Xeroxes/Scans—will be provided/sent to you.

(1) C. Proffer, ed. From Karamzin to Bunin: Anthology of Russian Short Stories [K-B]

(2) C. Brown, ed. Portable 20th Century Russian Reader [PTCRR]

(3) Xeroxes/Scans [X]

Recommended reading: (4) MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

Week Date Author Required readings

1. Tu Sept 1 Introduction. Requirements. In-class readings: Malcolm X [X];
& Kharms "The Red-Haired Man" [X]

Everyone is expected to participate in **Class discussion**.

Journals are due in weeks 6, 11, and 15. See above for **Journal Assignments** (others may be made in class.) **Quizzes** may be given at random intervals; they may consist of several short factual questions or require a paragraph to a page in response to a general question.

Exams: there will be **3 Hour exams** during weeks 6, 11, and 16. Your journals should help you prepare for the exams.

First half of 19th Century:

Th Sept 3 Karamzin "Poor Liza" [K-B], "Island of Bornholm" [X]

First person narration. The Sentimental tale and the Gothic tale

2. Tu Sept 8 Pushkin "Queen of Spades," "The Stationmaster" [K-B]

Plot considerations; Romanticism: otherworldly fantasies

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Complex narration: combination of first and third person narrators
Withholding information fr the reader, or hiding it.

- Th Sept 10 Gogol "The Nose" (1835-36) [X], "The Overcoat" (1842) [K-B]
What is comic? Serio-comic? Fantasy and comic.language. Narrator.
Romanticism and "Realism"
NB: Video of "The Overcoat" [V-1250; a 1960 black and white Russian film
w englsh subtitles and superb acting] is available in Hillman Library, G-20,
for viewing. Suggestion for a journal topic: compare story and film version.

3. Tu Sept 15 Gogol "Diary of a Madman" [1835] [X]

Second Half 19th Century:

- Th Sept 17 Leskov "Lady McBeth of the Mtsensk District" (1865) [K-B]
Creating an image. Plot vs Character.

4. Tu Sept 22 Dostoevsky "A Gentle Creature" [1876] [X]
Other elements of narration: Use of a "Preface" and flashbacks

- Th Sept 24 VIDEO D-0552 Sergei Bodrov, dir. *Prisoner of the Mountains*, 1996
[96 mins] NB: This will run over our assigned class time. If you have to leave, please
view the conclusion in the Hillman library, Ground floor, G-20. Ask for this copy.
Read Tolstoy's story, "Prisoner of the Caucasus" [X] pp 205-228 And see Handout.
We will discuss this film and story in our next class..

5. Tu Sept 29: No Class. Read ahead. Work on First Journal.

- Th Oct 1: Tolstoy "Prisoner of the Caucasus" [X] [early story] compare to film version
What attitudes to the "Other" do you find in these stories?
AND: "Death of Ivan Ilych" later Tolstoy story (1886) [K-B] pp 229-284
Theme: Death and Dying. Presenting processes. Imagining the "real."

6. Tu Oct 6: Dostoevsky "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" (1877) [K-B]
Garshin "The Red Flower" (1883) [K-B]
Theme: What is madness? Why the ambiguity? Symbols and dreams.

First Journal is due

- Th Oct 8 **FIRST HOUR EXAM** [13 stories: Karamzin through Garshin]

7. Tu Oct 13: No Class. University Fall Break.

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Late 19th-Early 20th Century, before the 1917 Revolution:

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Th Oct 15 Chekhov: early stories. "The Malefactor"(1885), "The Siren" (1887) [X]
"The Bet" [X], and "Heartache" (1885) [K-B]
Depicting emotions and "character" and character

8. Tu Oct 20 Chekhov (1890s) "Anna on the Neck" "The Darling" "Gooseberries" [K-B]
How do these later stories compare to the earlier ones? Use of satire.
Where does the complexity lie? Point of view; sources of judgment

Th Oct 22 Gorky "Chelkash" [1894] [K-B], Tolstoy "Alyosha, the Pot" (1905) [PTCRR],
Bunin "Light Breathing" (1916) [PTCRR], Khlebnikov "Nikolay" [1913] [PTCRR]
Individuals and society. Sources of individual strength and character.
Portrayal of character vs plot.

Russian Jewish life: various options before and after the 1917 Russian revolution

9. Tu Oct 27 Babel "Story of My Dovecot" [X]
"My First Fee" [early story] [PTCRR]
History and Personal history; and fantasy/storytelling as a survival skill

1920s-early 1930s : Views of Soviet Russian life

Th Oct 29 Babel "My First Goose" (1926), "How It's Done in Odessa"(1923) [PTCRR],
"Gedali" [X], "The Letter" [X], "Salt" [X]
Options for survival. Anti-semitism, racism, etc Civil War and Revolution

10. Tu Nov 3 Zamyatin "The Cave" (1921), Platonov "The Potudan River" [PTCRR]
Zoshchenko (1920s) (3 Stories from Nervous People) [X]
Choice-making, survival; and humor/the comic feuilleton

Th Nov 5 Nabokov "The Return of Chorb" and "Visit to the Museum"
Teffi "Time" [PTCRR]
Émigré literature 1920s-40s

Second Journal is due

11. Tu Nov 10 **SECOND HOUR EXAM [23 stories: from Chekhov to Nabokov]**

1930s-1940s: Literary portrayal of Stalin & Stalinist Labor Camps; & the Absurd

Th Nov 12 Voinovich "A Circle of Friends" (1970s) [PTCRR]
Kharms (1930s) "Anecdotes about Pushkin," "The Connection" [PTCRR]
and "Red-haired Man" [X]

Ronshin "Dr. Gogol," "How I Became a Fly" [pub'd 1995] [X]
The role of the absurd in Russian culture?
Political satire, the comic and/vs. the absurd?

12. Tu Nov 17 Shalamov Three "Kolyma Tales" (1980) [PTCRR]
Elena Glinka "Kolyma Streetcar" (1990s) [X]
How to portray what is impossible to portray. Eye-witness accounts & fiction
Testimony as a coping skill

Views of Post-War, Post-Stalinist Soviet Life 1950s-60s

Th Nov 19 Nagibin "The Winter Oak" (1953) [X] The Thaw: Emotions and character.
Solzhenitsyn "Matryona's House" (1963) [PTCRR]
Rural Russia after the camps. The image of the ideal woman.

13. Tu Nov 24 Catch-up Day

Th Nov 26: No Class THANKSGIVING

Late 1980s-1990s: New reflections on life in the "new" Russia and in emigration.

14. Tu Dec 1: Liudmila Ulitskaia: "March 2 of that Year" [X]
Belov: "That Kind of War," and "The Burial Ground" [X]
Themes of memory and loss; family and continuity of life?

Th Dec 3: : Liudmila Shtern "The Russian Blues"[X]
Nina Katerli: "The Profitted land" [X]
Viktor Pelevin "Nika" [X]
Themes of Friendship and coping skills. Criticism, humor, and hope?

15. Tu Dec 8: Liudmila Petrushevskaya "The Violin" [X]
Victoria Tokareva "Center of Gravity," [X]
Gorenshtein "Bag-in-Hand" [X]
Tatiana Tolstaya "The Poet and the Muse" [X]
Nina Sadur "Worm-eaten Sonny" (1990) [X]
Images of women. Sources of values, coping mechanisms.
Where does the author stand in each of these stories?
What can be published since the end of Soviet Russia?
Contemporary issues affecting life in the new Russia [former Soviet Union]

Third Journal is due

Th Dec 10: **THIRD HOUR EXAM/FINAL EXAM** [remainder of stories]

Grades, Exams, Journals will be available by Dec 21 in the Slavic Dept, 1417 C/L
[Under the white mailboxes, to the right after you enter the department]
You may pick them up at any time around that date.

Some things to think about when reading short stories & writing your journal entries:

ASPECTS OF NARRATIVE in the Short Story: See Below →

1. PLOT-- Time-sequence of Events, plus Causality -- versus **STORY** [time-sequence]

A. E.M. Forster in his book Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), pp. 130-131 wrote: "We have defined a **story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.** 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again, 'The queen died, no one knew why, until it was discovered that it was through grief at the death of the king.' This is a plot with mystery in it, a form capable of high development. It suspends the time-sequence, it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say: 'And then?' If it is in a plot we ask: 'Why?' That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel. A plot cannot be told to a gaping audience of cavemen or to a tyrannical sultan or to their modern descendant the movie-public. They can only be kept awake by 'And then--and then--' they can only supply curiosity. But **a plot demands intelligence and memory also.**"

B. Aspects of PLOT:

Exposition: introduction of the elements of plot

Conflict--around which the plot turns. Is the conflict external, internal, or both?

Episodes of the plot-- What are the chief episodes that make up the plot? Is its development chronological only, or is the chronology rearranged somehow?

Climax--highest point of tension

Resolution: What is different between the plot's beginning & end? What changes have occurred?

2. CHARACTER

What is a literary character? how does he/she differ from a historical figure?

a. Who is the main protagonist or hero/heroine of the work? Who or what is the antagonist? Who are the minor characters? What are their basic characteristics, qualities, functions?

b. Are the characters "flat" or "round"? Are they "dynamic" or "static"?

c. How does the author reveal character traits? Do the methods tell/describe or show/reveal?

3. SETTING

a. What is the work's setting in time and space? How does it look? What is the context?

b. How does the author establish setting? What details are revealed/described?

c. How does the setting function in the work? Is it used to motivate/influence or reinforce plot, character, or theme?

d. What aspects of environment influence the plot, character, moral values in the story?

4. THEME

a. Does the work have an obvious theme? Is it explicit or implicit?

b. What statements or generalizations about human experience or human nature are expressed?

c. Who expresses them? The narrator? The main character?

d. Which elements of the work contribute most to formulating the theme?

5. POINT of VIEW and NARRATION:

What determines the point of view? Language, tone? Is it didactic? ironic? absurd?

a. What is the point of view in the work? Is it consistent or does it shift in some way?

b. Where does the narrator stand in relation to the work? Where does the reader stand?

c. What sources of information are available to the reader? What sources are concealed?

d. If the work is narrated by a character, is that narrator reliable? Does his/her personality, gender, character or intellect affect the ability to interpret events or other characters correctly?

6. STYLE, TONE, and SYMBOLISM

Is the author's diction concrete/abstract? Does he use irony? Why is language choice significant?

What is the dominant tone? Is it consistent? Does it vary? What do the variations suggest?

What symbols are used, if any? How do they function in the story? Are they successful?

Other aspects of Literary Style -- determined by historical or cultural factors/*Zeitgeist*:

Eg, Sentimentalism, Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Modernism, Post-Modernism

SELF-EDITING. Before you hand in your papers,

take note of the following and revise as necessary:

- A. Read the title and first paragraph of the paper and then stop to answer the following:
1. Does the first sentence get right into the subject of this paper?
Make suggestions....
 2. Does the first paragraph capture your interest?
Comment... how, why?
- B. Read the rest of the paper and then think about the following:
1. What is the piece about? Sum up in one sentence.
 2. What are you trying to communicate?
 3. Do you seem interested in your subject?
 4. What do you like about this paper?
 5. Are there sections/segments that do not fit, that stray from the topic? Where? How?
 6. Are there areas that need more elaboration? Where? Comment/suggest.
 7. Do you include enough specific evidence from the work you are writing about to be convincing? Do you need to be more specific?
 8. Is the essay convincing?
 9. Does the essay cause you to think? What about?
 10. Is the paper organized? Comment.
 11. Does each sentence carry the ideas forward?
 12. Does each paragraph carry a fully-developed burden of meaning?
 13. Do the transitions between sentences and between paragraphs make smooth connections between one idea and the next?
 14. Is the conclusion prepared for? Is it convincing?
 15. What questions do you have? regarding style, subject matter, organization?
 16. Is the title suitable to the topic and its treatment?
 17. Suggestions for your consideration may be found in the Pointers on Writing, below...

POINTERS on WRITING and REVISING

Editing and Revising Sentences:

Vary sentence length

Vary sentence movement

- Check positions of modifiers--adjectives and adverbs
- Use parallelism
- Use occasional inversions

Economize in sentences

- Use series of things on one sentence instead of several sentences to say the same thing
- Use compound predicates to convey more information
- Use more appropriate modifiers
- Remove deadwood
- Avoid redundancy, eg, green (color); architecture (of the houses)
- Avoid circumlocution, eg, destroyed by fire = burned; in this day and age = today
- Avoid trouble words and phrases: eg, in *** cases; of the fact that; along this line; of this nature; of the *** variety; it happen that; etc. These are all empty and convey nothing.

Make your sentences emphatic, dynamic

- Use intensives, but do not overuse the common words "very, such, too, highly, certainly, extremely"
- Use active verbs; avoid "to be" and "to have" whenever possible
- Avoid passive constructions, which weaken emphasis
- Use repetition to emphasize, but sparingly

Revising words and phrases:

Check pronouns

- Avoid ambiguity with pronouns and their antecedents
- Check for agreement in number

Revise modifiers

- Use correct forms, especially of comparative and superlative adjectives, ie good, better, best

Expression

Check use of idiomatic prepositions, ie. Agree on a plan; agree with a person; agree in principle
Check for incorrect words, ie "comprehensibility" when you mean "comprehension," etc.
Avoid trite, vague, euphemistic, "big" words and consider synonyms for exact shades of meaning

Paragraphs

A **paragraph** is a group of related statements that a writer presents as a unit in the development of his subject. It is a **physical unit** because it is set off from other units in the paper. However, more fundamentally, it is a **conceptual unit** because it contains and presents related statements.

1. Opening paragraphs get the paper under way and interest the reader enough to keep him reading
2. Concluding paragraphs round out the subject and give final emphasis to the topic
 - a. Avoid minor details or references to materials that could be but are not discussed
3. Transitions to establish continuity
 - a. Traditional connectives: "and, but, although, moreover, however, finally, because, for example, on the other hand," etc.
 - b. Avoid mechanical or flabby transitions: "Then too, it is interesting to note...."
 - c. Use pointer sentences: "Let us look at another aspect of this problem" or "There is a third reason for the popularity of this opinion."
4. The transitional paragraph. Usually short, this paragraph serves as a bridge from one part of the paper to another rather than from one paragraph to another.

Paragraph development

- A. To develop a paragraph is to expand and clarify its core of meaning.
- B. Details and generalizations as components of the paragraph:
 1. Generalizations reflect ideas about the subject, usually summing up the point the details refer to
 2. Details give particulars about the basic concept included in the generalization
 3. Details must be relevant to the generalization
 4. Should be an interplay of generalizations and details. Generalizations bring out the significance of the details, and details provide the concrete particulars without which the generalizations might be unclear or unconvincing.
- C. Topic sentences summarize what the paragraph says and so come close to representing its central thought
 1. A type of topic sentence is the **pointer sentence**, announcing how the paragraph is to develop.
 2. Compare with a regular topic sentence which **summarizes**.
 3. Examples: The reason is very simple. There are several ways to accomplish this. I can best explain the difference by a comparison.
- D. Methods of paragraph development.
 1. The following types of methods are most successful when they expand a topic sentence which either states in a way what the paragraph says or forecasts what it is to do.
 - a. Comparison
 - b. Restatement
 - c. Anecdote or quotation
 - d. Qualification
 - e. Allusion
 - f. Definition
 - g. Reasons and causes
 - h. Analysis or enumeration of parts
 - i. Analogy
 2. Adequate development depends on supporting your generalizations with enough particulars to make them clear and convincing.
 3. Strive for unity and keep your style consistent eg. do not jump from very colloquial English to "purple prose."
 4. The length of the paragraph is determined by the subject. If you have many very short paragraphs, you may not be developing your material sufficiently.
- E. Paragraph movement.

Movement of facts and ideas require:

 1. Support
 2. Climax --development of ideas to a climax, and then set up your conclusion
 3. Pro and con -- make sure you develop an argument
- F. Continuity in paragraphs.
 1. Connections which exist in your ideas must be clear in the writing
 2. Ways to indicate the natural and logical connections between statements:

- a. Continue the same subjects from one sentence to the next by using the same words, synonyms, pronouns, etc.
- b. Use a conjunction or adverb to show thought relations: however, but, because, therefore....
- c. Repeat key words from sentence to sentence
- d. Make sentences parallel in structure.

SAMPLE PARAGRAPHS

1. The first of Gogol's categories of repetition is that of personal detail. 2. The constant reappearance throughout the story of certain personal traits of both the major and minor characters serves as a leitmotif to define them. 3. Such a device limits the reader to thinking of these characters only in terms of limited details, which Gogol provides.

4. The result of this type of repetition is specific. 5. It serves to produce a caricature of the character to whom the details refer. 6. By constantly reiterating these carefully chosen details, Gogol does not permit the reader to expand his mental image of the character who then appears to be static.

7. Such is the device which Gogol uses to portray the judge in "Two Ivans." 8. This character never appears without a corresponding mention of his lips, which "were located directly under his nose, so that he could sniff his upper lip to his heart's content. This served him in lieu of a snuffbox." (p.59)

9. As a result, the judge is somewhat dehumanized; the reader's image of him is limited to the specific personal detail which Gogol stresses repeatedly throughout the tale. 10. Even if the nose and the snuff-covered upper lip should appear in the story alone, the reader would still realize immediately that the reference is to the judge.

VIDEOS to ORDER: NB some are DVDs Fall 2009

Russian Short Story, Russian 0325: Room 218 C/L, 11-12-30 ??

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Th Sept 24 VIDEO D-0552 Sergei Bodrov, dir. *Prisoner of the Mountains*, 1996 [96 mins?]
Tolstoy story "Prisoner of the Caucasus"

Thurs Oct 15 VIDEO V-3190 Heifetz, dir. *Lady with a Dog*, 1960 [86 min]

[X pp 205-228 Tolstoy stories]
USE PRISONER OF CAUC and film? HAdjii [cf info Trans note- Cauc]

??VIDEO **V-1250 *The Overcoat* Alexej Batalov 73 mins 1960 Eng titles
Journal topic: Compare the two presentations of Gogol's story