

Course Description and Objectives: [Meets Literature and Foreign Cultures 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 most popular writers in contemporary Russia--from Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov to Petrushevskaya, Glinka, Tokareva—and emigration—Nabokov, Teffi, and Shtern.

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 themselves as 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 major political and social concern.

As we read and discuss these stories 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 our cultural similarities as well as our 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 will be used to clarify ideas/questions raised in the stories and to further stimulate class discussion. Missed quizzes will not be made up.

Grading Policy and Requirements:

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

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

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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.

Write up journal commentaries on **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, etc. Refer to “Aspects of Narrative” (see last pages) for terms, and suggestions.

Spring Semester, 2010

SYLLABUS

General Information:

Time: T/Th 9:30-10:45

Room: ????

Instructor: Jane G. Harris

E-mail: jpharris2003@yahoo.com

Office: Slavic Dept. 1417 C/L

Voice-mail: 412-624-5906

Office Hours: Wed 3:15-5:15, & by apptmt

Required readings: Books -- available at the Book Center; Xeroxes—obtain in class/office.

(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]

Week Date Author Required readings

1. Th Jan 7 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 5, 8, and 14. See below for **Journal Assignments** (others may be made in class.) **Quizzes** will 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 In-class Hour exams** [in lieu of a midterm or final].

First half of 19th Century:

2. Tu Jan 12 Karamzin "Poor Liza" [K-B], and "Island of Bornholm" [X]

First person narration and Sentimentalism; Pre-Romantic Gothic tales

Th Jan 14 Pushkin "Stationmaster," and "Queen of Spades" [K-B].

How does Pushkin react to, subvert, transform Karamzin's plots and moods?
Plot considerations: Romanticism: otherworldly fantasies & beliefs re death

3. Tu Jan 19 Gogol "The Nose" (1835-36) [X], "Diary of a Madman" (1835) [K-B]

What is comic? Serio-comic? Fantasy and comic. language. Narrator.
Romanticism and "Realism"

Th Jan 21 Gogol "The Overcoat" [1842] [K-B]

How does this story differ from the earlier ones? What similarities?
What is the role of the narrator?

Second Half 19th Century:

4. Tu Jan 26 Leskov "Lady McBeth of the Mtsensk District" (1865) [K-B], and
"The Make-up Artist" [X] [Allow time for slightly longer readings!!]
Creating an image. Plot vs Character. Which is more horrific?

Th Jan 28 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.
Any comparisons with Gogol's "Diary of a Madman?"

- ** 5. Tu Feb 2 Video D-0552 "PRISONER of the MOUNTAINS", dir Sergei Bodrov [1996]
This is based on an updated reading of Tolstoy's story, "Prisoner of the
Caucasus" Read the story and Use the Handout [X], when you view this in G-20. Ask for the
video, and watch it closely. You may want to do this with a friend. Compare the two works.
Use as one entry for your Journal. We will discuss this story w Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan
Ilych" on Feb 9.

Th Feb 4 No class. Use this extra time to work on your first journal! and readings!

6. Tu Feb 9 Tolstoy "Death of Ivan Ilych" (1886) [K-B] pp 229-284 and "Prisoner...." [X]
Compare Tolstoy's early and late stories: what differences, similarities?
Themes, narration, subject matter for younger and older writer?
Theme: Death and Dying. Presenting processes. Imagining the "real."

FIRST JOURNAL is DUE

Th Feb 11 **FIRST HOUR EXAM** [Karamzin thru Tolstoy: 13 stories]

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

7. Tu Feb 16 Chekhov: early stories. "The Malefactor"(1885), "The Siren" (1887) [X]
"The Bet" [X], and "Heartache" (1885) [K-B], "Vanka" [X]
Depicting emotions and "character" and character

Th Feb 18 Chekhov (1890s) "Anna on the Neck," "The Darling," "Gooseberries" [K-B]
How do these later stories compare to the earlier ones?
Where does the complexity lie? Point of view; sources of judgment

8. Tu Feb 23 Gorky "Chelkash" [1894] [K-B] Bunin "Light Breathing" (1916) [PTCRR]
Khlebnikov "Nikolay" [1913] & Tolstoy "Alyosha, the Pot" (1905) [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

Th Feb 25 Babel "Story of My Dovecot" [X]
"My First Fee" [early story] [PTCRR]

History and Personal history; and fantasy as a survival skill

9. Tu Mar 2 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

SECOND JOURNAL IS DUE

Th Mar 4 **SECOND HOUR EXAM [Chekhov thru Babel 18 stories]**

10. Tu /Th Mar 9/11 NO CLASS **Spring Break**

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

11. Tu Mar 16 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
Theory and practice; ideals and reality; goals met or failed?

Russian Emigre Life after the 1917 Revolution

- Th Mar 18 Nabokov "Return of Chorb" (1925) [PTCRR] ,
Nabokov "Visit to the Museum" (1939) [PTCRR]
Nadezhda Teffi "Time" (1947) [PTCRR]
Themes of Émigré literature 1920s-1939: memory & death; memory & loss

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

12. Tu Mar 23 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? The comic and/vs. the absurd?

- Th Mar 25 Shalamov Three "Kolyma Tales" (1980) [PTCRR]
Elena Glinka "Kolyma Streetcar" (1990s) [X]
How to portray what is impossible to portray. Eye-witness accounts & fiction

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

13. Tu Mar 30 Nagibin "The Winter Oak" (1953) [X]
Solzhenitsyn "Matryona's House" (1963) [PTCRR]
The Thaw: Emotions and character.
Rural Russia after the camps. The image of the ideal woman.

Th Apr 1 No class. Work on journals and readings.

Late 1980s-1990s: New reflections on life in the "new" Russia and in emigration. Variety of new Russian and emigre writing: criticism, humor, despair, hope?

14. Tu Apr 6 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 Apr 8 Liudmila Shtern "The Russian Blues" [X]

Edward Limonov "The Night Souper" [X]

Images of émigré life. How do they differ from Nabokov and Teffi's concerns?
How does émigré writing reflect life in Russia? Abroad? What major emotions,
desires, dreams are expressed and represented?

15. Tu Apr 13 Sergei Dovlatov "Fifth Compromise" [X], Viktor Astafiev "Lyudochka" [X],
Ludmila Petrushevskaya "The Fountain House" [X]

Themes of change, compromise, accidents and survival. Images of Fathers.
Rural Russia, the Soviet Republics and Russia: outsiders and insiders.

Th Apr 15 Nina Katerli "The Profitted Land" [X]

Victor Pelevin "Nika" [X]

Tatiana Tolstaya "Poet and Muse" [X]

Themes of Friendship and coping skills. Criticism, humor, and hope?

16. Tu Apr 20 Liudmila Petrushevskaya "The Violin" [X] (Compare w "Fountainhouse")

Victoria Tokareva "Center of Gravity," [X]

Gorenshtein "Bag-in-Hand" [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 Apr 22 **THIRD HOUR EXAM** [remainder of stories]

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

ASPECTS OF NARRATIVE in the Short Story

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