

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
RUSS 0810: Masterpieces of 20th Century Russian Literature

Spring 2008
Time: MW 3-4:15
Room: CL312
CRN: 10251

Instructor: Michelle Kuhn, teaching fellow
Instructor's email: mlk18@pitt.edu
Office hours: M 2-3; TF 2-2:30
Office: CL 1417

Two other class contacts:

Name _____ **Tel.** _____ **Email** _____

Name _____ **Tel.** _____ **Email** _____

Credits, Prerequisites, and Format

Upon successful completion of 20th Century Russian Masterpieces students will be awarded 3 credits and will have completed a University-designated writing course. This course is intended for undergraduate students and has no formal prerequisites. Students are required 1) to complete all assignments scheduled for each class meeting, and to be prepared to summarize and intelligently discuss them in class on the pertinent day; 2) to participate actively on a regular basis in classroom discussions; and 3) to submit all papers and revisions on the dates listed on the syllabus. The final paper is due on **April 16, 2008**. The topic will be formulated in consultation with me.

This class will employ a mixture of lecture and discussion format. Discussion may take the form of group work, open discussion, or question-and-answer exchanges between instructor and students. In order to participate actively in the class it is essential that all students come to class prepared; that is to say, completing all reading assignments is necessary. Please bear in mind that because the class will present a survey of major works of 20th century Russian literature and will require that you write a minimum of 25 pages, the assignments are large and will be difficult to finish satisfactorily if they are put off until the day before they are due.

Course Description

20th Century Russia was a trying time and place. Revolutions brought complete regime change, policies of nationalization and collectivization compounded with famine, war, and terror caused the premature death of millions upon millions of Russian people, and Soviet leaders from Lenin through Gorbachev ran the nation more like abusive tyrants than savvy politicians. Literature and the arts as a whole constantly respond to the society from which they come, and twentieth-century Russian literature is no exception. In fact, the overlap between life and art is manifest in numerous ways. During the earliest years of the century, writers belonging to the Symbolist movement strove to blur the boundaries between life and the creative act. For them, life is art and art is life—no distinction can effectively be made. Other writers during the pre-Revolutionary period, Maksim Gorkii for example, already sensed the propagandistic possibilities of literature and began to employ it as a mode of social aggravation. Socialist Realism, the mandated literary mode of production of Soviet writers, demanded that literature portray life in utopian shades and in the process of achieving the ultimate goal, Communism.

Other Russian writers of the century chose to reflect the world around them in terms opposite of those demanded by the Soviet Writer's Union. As is well known, the fate of such authors corresponds in no way to the supposed rosy life portrayed in the propagandistic pages of Socialist Realist novels.

This course will attempt to acquaint students with a more or less chronological presentation of masterpieces of twentieth-century Russian literature. Lectures will provide the social and historical background relevant to the text, and class discussions will focus on textual analysis of primary literature. Acknowledgement of literary movements (Symbolism, Futurism) and aesthetic trends (Modernism, Socialist Realism, and Post-Modernism) will also guide our readings.

In addition to offering the student a rich array of literature, the class will also attempt to accomplish the following:

- comment on each author's distinctive style and relationship to Russo-Soviet literature;
- train the student to read primary texts closely and analytically;
- make connections among texts, authors, and cultural events;
- assist students in improving their researching and writing skills.

Required Texts

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *Master and Margarita*. Trans. Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Conner. NYC: Vintage Books, 1996.

Pelevin, Viktor. *Omon Ra*. Trans. Andrew Bromfield. NYC: New Directions Books, 1994.

Platonov, Andrei. *The Foundation Pit*. Trans. Mirra Ginsburg. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1994.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Trans. Ralph Parker. NYC: Signet Books, 1974.

Tertz, Abram (Andrei Siniavskii). *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*. Trans. Max Hayward and George Dennis. Berkeley and LA: U of CA P, 1982.

Trifonov, Iurii. *Another Life and House on the Embankment*. Trans. Michael Glenny. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1999.

Zamiatin, Evgenii. *We*. Trans. Mirra Ginsburg. NYC: EOS Publishers, 1999.

We will be using the assigned texts in class discussion and you should therefore try to procure the additions listed above, available in the Book Center and online. All other readings will be linked or available for download at the course's Courseweb site.

We will be using the following reference manual as a guide for all writing assignments:
Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. NY: MLA, 2003.
You are encouraged to buy or borrow a copy for your personal use.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grading:

25% Participation

25% Short writing assignments (topic proposals, outlines, bibliographies)

25% Five-page paper and revision

25% Final Paper

* Please be aware that late assignments will not be accepted.

Grading scale:

99-100—A+	87-89—B+	77-79—C+	67-69—D+	
93-98—A	83-86—B	73-76—C	63-66—D	≥ 59 = F
90-92—A-	80-82—B-	70-72—C-	60-62—D-	

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. Missing classes jeopardizes your participation record and puts you in danger of missing important information. More than three unexcused absences will affect the final grade. More than six absences total will result in automatic failure of the course, regardless of the student's prior standing. Excused absences, such as illness or death in the immediate family, must be documented no later than a week after the student's return to class.

In case of absence, it is your responsibility to obtain from your classmates any information passed out during the class you missed. You are, therefore, encouraged to exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses with your classmates (use the space provided on the first page of this syllabus to note down relevant contact information).

If you are experiencing special problems in the course, do not hesitate to make an appointment with me.

Academic Integrity

By remaining enrolled in the course, you not only agree to abide by the above stipulations, but also understand that I will follow rigorously the rules spelled out in the *Handbook on Integrity* regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these rules and observe them. Any infraction will be penalized accordingly.

Disability Policy

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, please notify both me and Disability Resources and Services by the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The Internet address is

<http://www.pitt.edu/~osaweb/drs/drs.html>

The office is located in the William Pitt Union, Room 216.

Schedule of Assignments

Your day-to-day reading assignments will be posted to Courseweb with a question or set of questions to focus your reading and preparation. You will not need to submit written answers to the questions, but you should think about them and make personal notes that will assist you in contributing to class discussion. You should check Courseweb often, starting today, so as not to miss reading assignments.

Below is a list of deadlines for writing assignments and days we will not have class meetings. Please refer to the writing assignment overview handout for detailed instructions for each kind of assignment.

January 21: No class, MLK Day

January 28: one page topic proposal

February 4: half page bibliography
half page outline

February 11: five page paper

February 25: revised five page paper

March 3: one page topic proposal

March 10: No Class, Spring Break

March 12: No Class, Spring Break

March 17: 1 page bibliography

March 24: 1 page outline

April 16: ten page paper