RUSS 0811: Madness and Madmen in Russian Culture  
Spring 2010  
Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00-4:15 in Victoria 122

Our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness, provided the madness is given to us 
by divine gift (Plato, Phaedrus).

Instructor: Hans Mattingly  
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Email: hamst20@pitt.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 4:30 – 5:30, and by appointment

Credits, Prerequisites, and Format  
This course carries three credits and satisfies the CAS requirement in international/foreign culture. It is intended for a general undergraduate audience and has no prerequisites. Previous knowledge of Russian culture is advantageous, but by no means necessary. The course meets twice a week and combines lecture and discussion format. Despite the relatively large size of the class, I am committed to giving each one of you ample opportunity to participate in class discussions. Since participation has a significant share in the final grade, those of you who, for one reason or another, feel inhibited to share your thoughts and opinions with the class are advised to consider not staying enrolled in the course.

Course Rationale and Goals  
This course explores interpretations and representations of madness in Russian culture from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Our primary texts will be verbal and visual: fairy tales, folk narratives, literature, film. Since madness is not an exclusively Russian phenomenon, we will need to place its Russian history within the broader context of European ideas and treatments. This is not a medical course, and it will not treat madness as synonymous with “mental illness” or “mental disorder.” We will study different medical approaches to madness, understanding that “mental illness” is only one, limited and problematic, answer to the question “What is madness?” As we will witness, many other interpretations are possible. Our goal is not to decide which one of them is “correct,” but rather to see how representations of madness—including the medical/scientific—express cultural politics, values, and tensions.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to  
• Discuss the general historical development in concepts of madness from Antiquity to the present day.  
• Identify and describe main categories and types of mental disorder.  
• Characterize major cultural personages in the Russian tradition of madness: Ivan the Fool, the iurodivye (“fools in Christ”), the klikushi (“shriekers”), the “little man,” etc.
• Identify and discuss major literary texts in the Russian tradition of madness.
• Problematize medical definitions of madness and the corresponding clinical, psychiatric, and psychoanalytic practices.

Required Readings
• Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. Notes from the Underground. (“Dostoevsky” in the syllabus)
• Massie, Suzanne. Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia. (“Massie”)
• Pelevin, Viktor. Buddha’s Little Finger. (“Pelevin”)
• Porter, Roy. Madness: A Brief History. (“Porter”)
• Tolstoy, Leo. The Kreutzer Sonata. (“Tolstoy”)
• Texts in course packet (see schedule of classes)

Recommended Readings
• Billington, James. The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture. (any edition)
• MacKenzie, David and Michael W. Curran. A History of Russia, the Soviet Union and Beyond. (any edition)

Course Requirements and Grading
You will be required to
• Complete the assignments scheduled for each class meeting (normally that means reading 30-60 pages and being ready to discuss them in class on the pertinent day)
• Participate actively and intelligently in class discussions
• Take the three scheduled exams
• Take at least four of the unannounced quizzes administered throughout the semester

Your grade will be determined by the following components:
• 3 exams (120 points maximum)
• 4 highest quiz scores (20 points maximum)
• Class participation (20 points maximum)

TOTAL: 160 points maximum
Grading scale

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**EXAMS** will feature 40 multiple choice questions. The exams are non-cumulative. Please **note the three exam dates and plan ahead**, so as to be present in class on the particular day. Requests for make-up exams will be accommodated only in extreme circumstances: death in the immediate family, serious illness on the day of the exam, or travel related to university activities. The proper documentation of these should be submitted to me **no later than a week after the exam date**. All exams will be administered during regular class time, in the room where we usually meet. You will have 60 minutes to complete the exam.

**NOTE:**

Should unforeseeable circumstances, such as a fire alarm, interfere with Examination 1 and/or Examination 2, they will be given **on the next day of lecture**.

Should unforeseeable circumstances, such as a fire alarm, interfere with Examination 3, it will be given **during the Final Examination Period at the time designated by the university**.

**IN-CLASS QUizzes** will be **unannounced** and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Their purpose is to check whether and how attentively you have done the reading for the particular day. I will not be announcing the quizzes partly in order to prevent you from hurting yourself by unthinkingly falling behind in the reading. Only the strongest four quizzes will count toward your final grade. Since you will be able to drop your weakest quiz grades, **no make-up quizzes will be given**.

**Attendance**

You are expected to attend all classes. Missing classes jeopardizes your participation record and puts you in danger of missing quizzes and important information. 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. If you are experiencing special problems in the course, do not hesitate to make an appointment with me. I will be glad to assist you.
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 office is located in the William Pitt Union, Room 216.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Wednesday, 01/06:** Introduction, Syllabus

- **Monday, 01/11:** General introduction to Russian culture and history
  Reading:
  Massie 21-60, 184-201

- **Wednesday 01/13:** Supernatural Concepts of Madness
  Reading:
  Porter 1-33 + Ivanits, “Russian Sorcery,” “Spoiling and Healing” (course packet)

- **Monday, 01/18:** **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY: NO CLASS MEETING**

- **Wednesday, 01/20:** Redemptive debility: foolishness and fools in Russian fairy tales, fools in Christ
  Reading:
  Porter 62-88 + Fairy tales from the Afanas’ev collection (course packet) + Thompson (course packet)

- **Monday, 01/25:** Rationalization of Madness; Madness, Revolution, Enlightenment
  Reading:
  Porter 34-61
  In-class screening: *Lunacy* (Svankmajer, 2007) (excerpt)

- **Wednesday, 01/27:** “Insanity” as a tool of oppression
  Reading: Michel Foucault: “The Great Confinement” (course packet)
  In-class screening: Forman, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975)
- Monday, 02/01: **EXAM 1**

- Wednesday, 02/03: “Insanity” as a tool of oppression II  
  In-class screening: Forman, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975) (ending)

- Monday, 02/08: The West goes East: Russia’s Westernization  
  Reading: Massie 89-151  
  In-class screening: Forman, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975) (ending)

- Wednesday, 02/10: The Little Man and the Big City I  
  Reading:  
  Massie 202-18 + Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman” (course packet)  
  + Pushkin, “The Queen of Spades” (course packet)

- Monday, 02/15: The little man and the big city I  
  Reading:  
  Gogol’, “Diary of a Madman” (course packet) + Gogol’, “Nevsky Avenue”  
  (course packet)

- Wednesday, 02/17: The little man and the big city II  
  Reading:  
  Dostoevsky: “Notes from Underground” (Part I)  
  Massie: 307-324

- Monday, 02/22: The little man and the big city II (continued)  
  Reading:  
  Dostoyevsky: “Notes from Underground” (Part II)

- Wednesday, 02/24: The little man and the big city III  
  In-class screening: Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* (1975)

- Monday, 03/01: The little man and the big city III  
  Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* (1975) (ending and discussion)

- Wednesday, 03/03: Pathological jealousy  
  Reading:  
  Tolstoy: “The Kreutzer Sonata”

**SPRING BREAK**

- Monday, 03/15: **EXAM 2**

- Wednesday, 03/17: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls I  
  Post-tsarist vs. post-Soviet Russia  
  Reading:
Pelevin: *Buddha's Little Finger* (1-61)

- Monday, 03/22: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls II
  Reading:
  Pelevin: *Buddha’s Little Finger* (61-110)

- Wednesday, 03/24: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls III
  Reading:
  Pelevin: *Buddha’s Little Finger* (110-169)

- Monday, 03/29: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls IV
  Reading:
  Pelevin: *Buddha’s Little Finger* (169-239)

- Wednesday, 03/31: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls V
  Reading:
  Pelevin: *Buddha’s Little Finger* (239-310)

- Monday, 04/05: Uncertain times, imbalanced souls VI
  Reading:
  Pelevin: *Buddha’s Little Finger* (310- until the end)

- Wednesday, 04/07: It’s a mad world I

- Monday, 04/12: It’s a mad world II

- Wednesday, 04/14: Who is insane here?
  Reading:
  Chekhov, “Ward No. Six” (course packet)

- Monday, 04/19: Class summary, review and evaluations

- Wednesday, 04/21: **EXAM 3**

*No Final Exam!*