

Russian 1307: CHEKHOV

[CAS Literature & Foreign Cultures Requirement]

[Lectures and Readings in English]

Requirements:

Class participation -- 30%

+ 3 Oral reports

3 Short papers [5-7pp] -- 30%

3 Hour Exams -- 40%

Time: Tues/Thurs 1-2:15

Place: 149 C/L

Instructor: Jane G. Harris

Office hours: Tues 2:30-5 1417 C/L -Slavic Dept

E-mail: jpgarris2003@yahoo.com

Required Texts: (1) *Anton Chekhov: Stories* trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky [PV],
(2) *Viking Portable Chekhov*, trans Garnett/Yarmolinsky [GY], (3) Norton ed. *Anton Chekhov's Plays* [Plays], (4) *Xeroxes/Scans* [X]: stories and letters
(5) **Recommended:** David Remnick, New Yorker article on translations, Nov.7, 2005 [X]
Books available in the Pitt Bookstore. Also, check Hillman Library

NOTE: Some readings are longer than others! Make sure you allow enough time!

For **Russian majors:** If you are interested in reading some or all of the readings in Russian, please discuss this with me!

I: REQUIRED READINGS:

Week Date

Readings

1. Tu Jan 8 **Introduction, Syllabus, Requirements: Readings, translations** [New Yorker article]
Preparation of questions for each session, Oral reports, Papers, Exams
Introductory discussion of Chekhov

Th Jan 10 **Earliest fiction 1883-1885: "Death of a Clerk," "Small Fry," "Huntsman;"**
and "Malefactor" [PV] compare w "The Culprit" [GY];
"Chameleon," "Sergeant Prishibeyev" [GY]
How to characterize "early Chekhov"? What to expect? Humor, Early themes
Some biographical background
Compare themes of law and justice with later perceptions of justice
Compare themes of inferiority complexes; various human relationships

2. Tu Jan 15 **1886: "Panikhida," "Easter Night" [PV], "Requiem" [X]**
Early religious themes: background and foreground motifs, Christian values,
tonality and coloration; use of language; writing. Narrator's position.

Th Jan 17 **1886: "Anyuta" [PV], "Requiem," "Agafya," "Chorus Girl,"**
and "A Gentleman Friend," "The Little Joke" [X]
Attitudes toward/treatment of women. Narrator's stance?
[Compare w later views of wo: "Ariadne," "Fidget," "Peasant women," etc]

*3. Tu Jan 22 **Video: V-7232 Muratova, Dir. "Chekhov's Motifs", Part I. Based on**
1886 story re family relations: "Difficult People" [read & discuss, for next time]

- Th Jan 24 1886: "Heartache," "Privy councilor," "Vanka" [+PV] "Calamity," "At the Mill"
"Daydreams" [GY], "Difficult people" [X], "Sleepy" [PV, 1888]
Representation of children; peasants; human and family behavior.
Narrator's perspective; double-voice narrative?
4. Tu Jan 29 1887: "An Encounter," "The Letter," "The Siren" [GY]
Contemplating "encounters," chance, and communication & fantasy
- Th Jan 31 1888 "Name-Day Party," "Attack of Nerves" [GY], letters 1888 [GY/PV]
Character development. Depiction of young professionals;
sense of self and responses to pain, to "the other"
Tension between social codes of behavior & individual human needs:
social and biological forces. Chekhov's medical apperception.
5. Tu Feb 5 1889 "A Boring Story" [PV, 50 pp]; "The Bet" [X]
Confrontations: suicide vs. death in life; natural vs spiritual death
Character development: Youth and age. Confession; the dramatic situation
I: FIRST PAPERS DUE
- *Th Feb 7 **FIRST HOUR EXAM: 1880s: early and middle period**
6. Tu Feb 12 1890: Letters re Sakhalin [X]; "Gusev" [GY], "In Exile" 1892, [PV] Transition
Autobiographical reminiscences; journey across Siberia. Exile and life.
What is happiness? What is living? Differing viewpoints, counterpoint.
Recurring imagery and symbols.
- Th Feb 14 1891 "Peasant women," 1892 "The Fidget" [PV], 1895 "Ariadne" [X],
1895 "Anna on the Neck" [PV] 1897 "In the Cart" [GY]
Women's lives. Sympathy, empathy, criticism? Compare w earlier stories.
7. Tu Feb 19 1892 "Ward #6" [PV] 1894 "Black Monk" [PV]
Malevolence of life; cultural suffocation; provincialism. Case histories. Madness?
- Th Feb 21 1894 "Rothchild's Fiddle," "Student" [PV]
Sources of inner change: death, music, religious feeling, love
What connects the coffin maker, student, and "artist"?
8. Tu Feb 26 1896 "My Life" [X] Novella [NB: 86 pages; allow time!]
The forces of provincial life, moral confrontation, love, endurance
Sources of joy/happiness?
- Th Feb 28 1898 Trilogy: "In the Shell," "Gooseberries," "About Love" [GY]
3 case studies of "shellness." Compare trans of first two stories w [PV]

9. Tu Mar 4: **Video** 1896-98 Drama: *The Seagull* Video [allow 2 days]
Chekhov's "Indirect Action" Dramas. How do they differ from the stories?
Chekhov's views of art, life, theatre; symbolism, impressionism, realism.

READ: at least: ACT ONE

II: PAPERS DUE

**Th Mar 6: No class. Read ahead.

10. Tu Mar 11 / Th Mar 13 **No Classes: spring break**

11. Tu Mar 18: 1896-98 Drama: *The Seagull* [Continued] Video [2nd day]
Chekhov's "Indirect Action" Dramas How do they differ from the stories?
What is added? What absent? How do they change the nature of drama?
Passions/Professions: actors, writers and family life. Different passions.
Contemplation of art and life; symbolism, impressionism, realism.
READ: the entire play! Review Act One

Th Mar 20 **SECOND HOUR EXAM 1890s**

12. Tu Mar 25: 1899 Drama *Uncle Vanya*
Video "Vanya on 42nd Street" Louis Malle version [2 days]. READ PLAY.

Th Mar 27: *Uncle Vanya* [cont]

How does this dramatic structure compare to "Seagull"?

Basic motifs; basic structure. Use of monologues, natural language?

How are characters individualized? How do they function as an ensemble?

13. Tu Apr 1: 1898-1899 "A Medical Case," "The Darling," "Lady with a Dog" [PV]

Th Apr 3: 1900 "In the Ravine" [PV] 1897 "The Peasants" [GY] "At Christmastime" [PV]
Compare peasants/merchant life. Power of evil vs goodness

14. Tu Apr 8: 1904 Drama *Cherry Orchard* [2 days] Video/DVD Cacoyanis version
Dramatic characterizations: Chekhov's heroines and heroes?
READ: at least ACT ONE

III: PAPERS DUE

Th Apr 10: **Video** *Cherry Orchard* [cont].

Social changes. Values of past vs. future. Rise of peasantry, new Russian values?

Symbols and impressions? Compare the plays.

15. Tu Apr 15: 1902-03 Last stories: "The Bishop," "The Fiancée" [PV]
Conclusions: hopes, possibilities? Death, memory, continuity?

Th Apr 17: **THIRD HOUR EXAM: Dramas and Later stories**