

Masterpieces of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature



Detail from “Illustration of Crime and Punishment” by Nikolai Karazin, 1893, “Tolstoy Resting in the Forrest” by Ilya Repin, 1891, and “Gogol burning the manuscript of the second part of Dead Souls” by Ilya Repin, 1909

SUMMER SESSION II Mondays & Wednesdays 5:30-9:20

Instructor:

Helen Stuhr-Rommereim

sthelen@sas.upenn.edu

Fulfills Requirements:

- Foundational Approaches: Cross-Cultural Analysis
- Sector Requirement: Arts & Letters
- REES: Literature before 1900

A bronze monument to an all-powerful emperor comes to life and pursues a poor everyman through the streets, driving him to his death. A studious young man kills an old woman as a philosophical experiment. A young woman at the height of aristocratic society abandons her husband and young son to devote herself to her lover. These and other tales from the classics of nineteenth-century Russian literature will touch and delight you, get under your skin, and even attempt to show you how to live. We will read these tales in order to understand how books can become events in their own right, how Russian literature gained such power and prestige, and what it can still teach us today.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

In this course, we will take a broadly chronological approach to several canonical exemplars of Russian literature, spanning the “long nineteenth century,” reading texts by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov and others as works of verbal art in historical and cultural context. By the end of the term, you will have a sense of the overarching narrative of nineteenth-century Russian literary history, an understanding of the major themes and problems that preoccupied Russian writers and their readers both at home and abroad, and three major Russian novels, as well as important works of poetry and short fiction, under your belt. Class discussions and writing assignments will ask you to provide your own interpretations in dialogue with those of others and are designed to help you develop skills in perspective-taking, close reading, and literary analysis. All readings, lectures, discussions, and written work are in English. Students who wish to work with texts in Russian are invited to consult with the instructor.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

The following texts will be required for the course. Copies will be available at the Penn book store, or may be purchased elsewhere. Please be sure to use the translation specified.

- Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time* (trans. Vladimir Nabokov)
- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment: A New Translation*, trans. by Michael R. Katz (London: Liveright, 2018)
- Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 2004)

Additional readings will be made available on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation – 30% This course collapses thirty class sessions into ten, so class time is precious and the reading load is substantial. Your thoughtful participation in discussions and attentive engagement with lectures will allow us to make the most of our time together. Please make every effort to read all materials before the class meeting for which the readings are assigned. Come to class prepared to share your experiences of reading, to listen to those of others, and to collaborate on advancing our shared understanding of the texts and their contexts. Keeping up with the reading will also be necessary in order to complete weekly writing assignments.

Presentation – 15% You will prepare one presentation, of approximately ten minutes, at some point during the summer session. Following the first class, one presentation will take place at every class. These presentations will be scheduled at the first class. Presentations will require you to summarize and describe the reading for that day, to pick out themes and relate works to prior readings, and to choose a passage to analyze in relation to those themes.

Three response essays (300-500 words, or one to two pages each) – 35% At the end of the each of the first three weeks, you will write a one- to two-page response to the readings. These responses will be due on Mondays by the time class starts, and will be focused on the reading completed over the course of the prior week. The first essay will respond to a prompt, given out

during class on Wednesday, the second will be a close reading, which we will select together, and the third will be open, but should show your engagement with the reading in relation to topics brought up in class discussion and lectures. We will discuss the weekly assignments in class on Wednesdays. These essays will be given a rating of check minus/check/check plus along with comments, rather than a letter grade. Only a 'check minus' will negatively affect your grade. These essays should facilitate your active and ongoing engagement with the reading, and prepare you to write the final essay for a formal grade.

Short analytical essay (1250-1500 words, or four to five pages) – 20% This paper will respond to one of several open questions that will be distributed in class and via Canvas, and will be completed in two parts, the first due the Monday of the final week of class, and the second due on the final day of the summer session (Friday, August 9th). If you have a strong desire to write on a topic outside of the prompt questions, please discuss with me by Wednesday, July 31.

GRADING AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Grading scale: 80% and higher as B- grades; 83.6% and higher as B grades; 87.6% and higher as B+ grades; 90% and higher as A- grades; 93.6% and higher as A grades; 98% and higher as A+ grades.

Attendance and Absences: All class sessions are mandatory. This is a compressed class, which will move through a semester's worth of material in five weeks. Absence from one session will affect your overall grade by one level (e.g. A- to B+), unless you have institutionally-approved documentation (e.g., a doctor's note).

Deadlines and Late Work: Response essays are due on Canvas by the time class starts on the date specified; the final paper is due by 11:59 on Friday, August 9. If you need an extension, contact me by email proposing a revised date for submission not more than one week after the original due date. More than one extension will affect your grade by one level. As this class moves very quickly, please make every effort to keep up with reading and writing assignments. Assignments are designed to facilitate your ongoing engagement with the material.

Communication and Feedback: The majority of my communication with you outside of class will take place over email and Canvas. If you need to get in touch with me, I will respond to your email within 24 hours. I will return your written work with comments within one week.

Technology: You are welcome to use laptops and tablets in class only for purposes that pertain directly to the course: accessing readings and taking notes. Please refrain from using cell phones. Inappropriate use will negatively impact your participation grade.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to abide by the Code of Academic Integrity of the University of Pennsylvania, which you can find here: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

SUPPORT STATEMENT

The University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and been approved by the office of Student Disabilities Services (SDS). Please make an appointment to meet with them as soon as possible in order to discuss your accommodations and needs. If you have not yet contacted SDS and would like to request accommodations or have questions, you can make an appointment by calling (215) 573-9235. The office is in the Weingarten Learning Resources Center (WLRC) at Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300. All WLRC services are confidential.

Please also be aware that counseling and therapy are available to students. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is the counseling center for the University of Pennsylvania. CAPS offers free and confidential services to all Penn undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. CAPS helps students adjust to university life, manage personal and situational challenges, develop coping strategies, and grow personally and professionally. CAPS' trained clinicians offer individual, group, and couples therapy. Students can access CAPS in a variety of ways, depending on their individual situation. CAPS hours are 9 to 5 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9 to 7 Wednesday and Thursday. Simply walk into 3624 Market St. or schedule a consultation by calling (215) 898-7021.

SCHEDULE

Reading assignments indicated here are to be completed in advance of that day's class (including the first day). Any modifications to this syllabus will be communicated over Canvas. (C) indicates readings available on Canvas.

(M) JULY 8 Course Introduction

Pushkin, *The Bronze Horseman* (C)

Pushkin, "The Prophet" (C)

Lermontov, "The Death of a Poet" (C)

Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, Books I and II

(W) JULY 10 Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, Books III, IV, and V

(M) JULY 15 **First response essay due**

Gogol, "The Overcoat" (C)

Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Parts I and II

(W) JULY 17 Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part III, Ch. I – Part IV, Ch. III

(M) JULY 22 **Second response essay due**

Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part IV, Ch. IV – Part VI, Ch. V

Chernyshevsky, "Vera Pavlovna's Fourth Dream," from *What Is to Be Done?* (C)

(W) JULY 24 Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part One

(M) JULY 29 ***Third response essay due***

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Parts Two and Three
Chekhov, "Peasant Women"

(W) JULY 31 Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Four

(M) AUG. 5 ***First two pages of final paper due***

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Parts Five and Six
Leskov, "Lady Macbeth at Mtsensk" (C)

(W) AUG. 7 Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Seven

(F) AUGUST 9 ***Last two to three pages of final paper due (No Class)***