

Tolstoy's Art and the Art of Reading Tolstoy
RUSS 551

Instructor: Andrew Kaufman

Through close readings of Tolstoy's short stories, novellas, parables, and sketches, and concentrating on a careful reading of *War and Peace*, this course is intended to deepen students' appreciation of the unique poetics and epic vision of one of Russia's greatest prose writers. While giving consideration to the specific historical and personal context in which Tolstoy wrote, the course will concentrate on the ways in which Tolstoy transforms the ordinary world into extraordinary artistic visions of human life as something mysterious, inexhaustible, and organically unified. Our analysis of Tolstoy's art will be for the purpose of reconstructing, rather than deconstructing, the author's artistic worldview. We will attempt to understand each of Tolstoy's works as complete artistic wholes, in which meaning and method are inextricably linked. Some of the specific themes to be discussed are Tolstoy's exploration of the human quest for existential meaning and social justice; Tolstoy's fascination with both the limitations and possibilities of human consciousness; the connection between form and feeling in Tolstoy's prose; Tolstoy's technique for recreating the moment-to-moment flow of ordinary experience; Tolstoy's movement between the micro and the macro perspective, Tolstoy's interest in what constitutes a "truthful" narrative; and Tolstoy's tragic-comedic conception of life.

In this course we will also sample the rich tradition of Tolstoy scholarship, focusing especially on those scholars and critics whose readings of Tolstoy may be considered works of art in their own right. In the spirit of these highly imaginative readers, students will be encouraged to explore their own creative imagination in their thinking and writing about Tolstoy. Upper level undergraduate students welcome. Readings will be in English with Russian reading requirements for graduate students in Slavic.

Course Requirements

Writing Requirements

- Final Research paper (15-20 pages). Please present me a written topic proposal **on November 15** with bibliography.
- Two written book/monograph reviews (3 pp. each)
- 15 reader responses throughout the semester (posted in discussion groups by 10 pm the day before class). One of reason for having you do this is to ensure that class discussions are lively and center on your interests.
- 1-2 page written self-evaluation of class session

Class Participation Requirements

- Carefully read and think about all assignments, and be prepared to participate proactively in class discussions. I'd like the class discussions to address your particular interests, in addition to my contributions.

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- Two oral book/monograph reviews (5-10 minutes, not more) on assigned days (based on written report described above)
- Lead one full class session—however you choose to structure it: lecture and/or discussion. [Please consult with instructor before-hand. And after you've done your class, please write up a one-two page summary of what you think went well, and what you could have improved. (See "1-2 page written self-evaluation of class session" under "Writing Requirements" above)]

Description of course elements

In addition to the usual elements of a graduate literature seminar (reading, writing, and scholarly analysis) this course will also focus on two other areas of learning which should deepen your understanding in a variety of ways:

*Reflection on and practical experience in teaching Tolstoy

In American universities Tolstoy is one of the most commonly taught of all the Russian writers. This is, in part, because of Tolstoy's mimetic power and also his populist tendencies. He wanted his books to read not only by the educated elite but by the masses, as well. Perhaps this explains why it was not such a stretch that Oprah chose *Anna Karenina* for her summer book club in 2004.

Because of both the transparency and the universal relevance of Tolstoy's writing, teachers of Russian literature enjoy unique opportunities and confront certain challenges when teaching Tolstoy. In this course we will devote some time to thinking about these issues. In addition, each student will have a chance to put his/her ideas to the test by teaching 2 full class sessions, one session on a short work and one session on a reading from *War and Peace*. Doing this will help you to develop your own classroom skills and teaching "voice," as well as deepen and broaden your analytical approach to Tolstoy's prose.

*Reflection on great writing about Tolstoy

Because of Tolstoy's canonical status in Russian literature, the volume of scholarship on his work is staggering. For this course I have selected a small handful of these classical works of scholarship, ranging in size from monographs to full-fledged books. Each of these works has achieved canonical status in Tolstoy scholarship for a number of reasons, including the originality of the research, the creativity of the approach, the depth of insight, and the power of the writing. In their profound, nuanced, and sometimes visionary responses to Tolstoy's writing, these scholarly books may themselves be considered works of art.

Each student will be required to read and report on two of these works (orally and in writing) in the form of an informal book review. In addition to including the usual elements of a scholarly book review (basic information on the book's main elements, a

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summary of its main arguments, a review of its strengths and weaknesses, and comment on its usefulness to scholars and/or students of Tolstoy) students will be asked to reflect on what makes these books great works of literary criticism. What can we learn from these scholars not only about Tolstoy's art but also about the art of reading Tolstoy?

SYLLABUS

DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS/ PRESENTATIONS
Thursday, August 25	<p><u>Introduction:</u> --Tolstoy's mimetic power and the critic's challenge -Tolstoy's ideal critic: finding the "labyrinth of cohesions" -"Minuteness and generalization" -Tolstoy's biography as material for his art</p>	
	<p>EARLY EXPERIMENTS: MINATURE NARRATIVES, BIG QUESTIONS</p>	
Tuesday, August 30	<p>-History and narrative -Nature and culture -Consciousness and its discontents -Modernity</p>	<p>*История вчерашнего дня (A History of Yesterday)... *Две различные версии истории улья с лубочной крышкой ("Two different versions of the history of a beehive with with a bast cover...") *Три Смерти ("Three Deaths") *Поликшка ("Polikushka")</p>
Thursday, September 1		<p>*Утро помещика ("A Landowner's Morning") *Люцерн ("Lucerne")</p>
Tuesday, September 6	<p>-Art, war and "truth"</p>	<p><u>Севастопольские рассказы:</u> *Севастополь в декабре месяца; *Севастополь в мае <i>Sevastopol Tales</i>: "Sevastopol in December"; "Sevastopol in May"</p> <p><u>Student Presentation:</u> Boris Eikhenbaum, <i>Молодой Толстой</i> In English: <i>The Young Tolstoy</i></p>
	<p>TOWARDS THE NOVEL...</p>	
Thursday, September 8	<p>-Back to the natives: Existential quest and Tolstoy's re-writing of the Russian Caucasian tale</p>	<p>Козаки [in Л.Н. Толстой, Повести</p>

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		и рассказы] (<i>The Cossacks</i>) Chapters I-XXII <u>Student Presentation:</u> Edward Wasiolek, <i>Tolstoy's Major Fiction</i>
Tuesday, September 13	Tolstoy's art as reflection of his divided soul, (Chernyshevsky's formulation: "dialectic of the soul" and the accompanying technique of "internal monologue")	Козаки [in Л.Н. Толстой, Повести и рассказы] (<i>The Cossacks</i>)
Thursday, September 15	<u>Student-Led Class</u>	Рубка леса ("The Wood-felling") Набер ("The Raid")
	ВОЙНА И МИР (WAR AND PEACE)	
Tuesday, September 20		Война и мир (том 1 часть первая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book One <u>Student Presentation:</u> Sergei Vocharov, <i>Роман Л. Толстого 'Война и Мир'</i>
Thursday, September 22		Война и мир (том 1 часть вторая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Two <u>Student Presentation</u> Boris Eikhenbaum: <i>Tolstoy in the Sixties</i>
Tuesday, September 27		Война и мир (том 1 часть третья) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Three
Thursday, September 29		Война и мир (том 2 часть первая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Four <u>Student Presentation</u> George Steiner, <i>Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism</i>

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Tuesday, October 4		Война и мир (том 2 часть вторая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Five
Thursday, October 6		Война и мир (том 2 часть третья) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Six <u>Student Presentation</u> Viktor Shklovsky, <i>Матерьял и стиль в романе Льва Толстого 'Война и мир'</i>
Tuesday, October 11	<u>Student-Led Class</u>	Война и мир (том 2 часть четвёртая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Seven
Thursday, October 13	<i>NO CLASS-YOM KIPPUR</i>	
Tuesday, October 18		Война и мир (том 2 часть пятая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Eight <u>Student Presentation</u> Gary Saul Morson, <i>Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in 'War and Peace'</i>
Thursday, October 20		Война и мир (том 3 часть первая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Nine
Tuesday, October 25		Война и мир (том 3 часть вторая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Ten <u>Student Presentation</u> George R. Clay, <i>Tolstoy's Phoenix: from Method to Meaning in War and Peace</i>
Thursday, October 27		Война и мир (том 3 часть третья) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Eleven
Tuesday, November 1	<u>Student-Led Class</u>	Война и мир (том 4 часть первая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book

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		Twelve
Thursday, November 3	<u>Student-Led Class</u>	Война и мир (том 4 часть вторая и третья) <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Thirteen + Fourteen
Tuesday, November 8		Война и мир (том 4 часть четвёртая) + Эпилог 1 <i>War and Peace</i> , Book Fifteen and Epilogue I <u>Student Presentation</u> Konstantin Leontiev, <i>Анализ, стиль и веяние: О романах гр. Л.Н. Толстого</i> In English: “The Novels of Count L. N. Tolstoy: Analysis, Style, and Atmosphere”, in Spencer E. Roberts, ed., <i>Essays in Russian Literature, The Conservative View: Leontiev, Rozanov, Shestov</i>
Thursday, November 10		Война и мир (эпилог: часть вторая) <i>War and Peace</i> , Second Epilogue *Also read Isaiah Berlin, <i>The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History</i> <u>Student Presentation</u> Isaiah Berlin, <i>The Hedgehog and the Fox</i> .
Tuesday, November 15	<i>PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH PAPER DUE</i>	<i>Семейное счастье</i> <u>Student-led Class</u>
	CRISIS, CONVERSION, AND NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTIONS	
Thursday, November 17		Смерть Иван Ильича “The Death of Ivan Ilych” <u>Student Presentation</u> Richard Gustafson, <i>Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger; A Study in Fiction and Theology</i>
Tuesday, November 22	<i>THANKSGIVING BREAK —NO CLASS</i>	

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Thursday, November 24	<i>THANKSGIVING BREAK —NO CLASS</i>	
	ХАДЖИ-МУРАТ (HADJI-MURAT) AS RETROSPECTIVE AND RECREATION	
Tuesday, November 29		Хаджи-Мурат <i>Hadji-Murat</i> Introduction and Parts I-XV
Thursday, December 1		Хаджи-Мурат <i>Hadji-Murat</i> Part XVI-end
Tuesday, December 6	Present Research in Progress	Final Discussion and Wrap- Up
Friday December 16	Final Research Paper Due	