

**RUSSIAN MASTERPIECES:
STRUGGLES WITH AUTHORITY IN THE RUSSIAN NOVEL, 1861-1913
(RUTR 392)**

MWF 9-9:50

Instructor: Andrew D. Kaufman

Office Hours: Wednesday 10 am-noon or by appointment

The second half of the nineteenth-century and the first decades of the twentieth-century in Russia was an era defined, above all else, by the spirit of social, political, and existential struggle. The Alexandrine Reforms of the 1860's, which created the possibility for social and political change in Russia, were greeted enthusiastically by some and skeptically by others. Writers and thinkers remained divided on the most important questions of the day. One group of intellectual-activists worked zealously to incite revolution, while another group turned their attention inward towards a romanticized past age of harmony and order. The conflicts within Russia, exacerbated by the external conflict of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, culminated in the failed Russian Revolution of 1905.

It was in this age of conflict and struggle that the Russian novel reached its full maturity, resulting in the creation of some of the greatest books ever written. The spirit of struggle is not only represented *in* these novels. It is also embodied *by* them. In the same way that the characters depicted in the works continually search for meaning in an upturned world, so the novelists themselves search for modes of artistic expression which best represent the troubled, and striving, spirit of their age. We will pursue both of these levels of interpretation through close and careful readings of the novels themselves. In addition to helping you understand more about Russian culture, the course is also intended to help you become a more sensitive reader of great works of fiction.

Making It Personal

You will discover that the issues raised in these novels are as relevant today as they were in Russia of the nineteenth-century, and you are encouraged to find your personal connection with these works. Is there a character whose experiences feel like something you have gone through? How does each writer make you feel when you immerse yourself in his or her world? Are there any recurring ideas that resonate with you? How do the issues presented in these works relate to issues of our own time? What kinds of authority (e.g. social, economic, political, familial, academic, psychological) do people struggle with in America today? Have you ever felt compelled to rebel against the prevailing wisdom around you? In what way? To what extent can you relate to the Russian men and women in these novels who search for social justice and personal meaning in the world? Do you believe, as many of the Russian novelists did, that literature can change the world?

Required Readings

Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons* (1862)

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Crime and Punishment (1866)

Leo Tolstoy

Anna Karenina (1873-76)

Anton Chekhov

The Duel (1891)

Ward No. 6 (1892)

Peasants (1897)

Fyodor Sologub, *The Petty Demon* (1905, 1907)

Maxim Gorky, *My Childhood* (1913)

- (1) **Course Requirements Attendance at all classes**, fully prepared to discuss the given work for the day.
- (2) **Active participation in discussions.** As you will see, this course is intended to challenge you to think deeply about issues that are as relevant to our lives in America today as they have been in Russia for over two centuries. I encourage everybody to speak up, to take intellectual risks, to challenge me and each other, and to engage the material in a highly proactive way.

There will not be an exorbitant amount of reading (approximately 150 pages a week), so that you will have time to read more closely and to spend time thinking and preparing your thoughts for class.

- (3) **Other short (writing) assignments.** From time to time, there will be short creative assignments, usually due the next day of class. These are simply exercises to stimulate your thinking and creativity. While important to complete, they are not will not be graded in the same way as the 4-5 page papers (see below).
- (4) **Weekly email discussions. Every week (by 11:30 pm!! on Sunday night)** you are asked to email me a short one-paragraph commentary on the reading selection due on Monday. This may be a brief analysis of a passage you think important, an attempt to make connections between that day's reading and the larger issues of the course, or even a personal reflection on that day's reading (so long as you connect it with the larger issues of the course.) The important thing is to be clear and to make your remarks relevant to Monday's reading. I will be sharing some of these emails during Monday's class as a springboard

for class discussion. Make sure not to save your reading for the last minute, so that you will have time to think about your email. These emails won't be graded, but they are a course requirement, and they will count towards your "class participation" grade. On the weeks when papers are due you are not expected to do the email assignments, but you are still welcome to do them for extra credit.

- (5) **Three 4-5 page papers** throughout the course of the semester. (**Due by class on February 18, March 30, and May 6**) If you can get them done earlier you are encouraged to do so. **One** of the three papers may be a rewrite of one of the previous papers. The first paper should be a close reading of a passage in the context of the work as a whole. (**) The next paper(s) may be on any topic related to the issues we have been discussing in class, or any other topic that interests you related to the course. The important thing is to stay close to the text to support your arguments, and to be coherent and clear in your analysis. The topic should be narrow enough to treat within a short paper. You may focus on individual works, or you may make connections among multiple works, as long as these connections are clear and related to a specific topic (eg., the representation of death in Tolstoy and Dostoevsky; the representation of peasants in Tolstoy and Chekhov; the meaning of social justice in Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Gorky, the idea of "family" in Tolstoy and Gorky; duels and dueling in Turgenev and Chekhov, etc.)

Please remember that a good 4-5 page paper usually starts off as a mediocre 8-10-page paper that gets honed and rewritten several times over. Don't save anything until the last minute! Try to give yourself a good week of planning, writing, rewriting, and polishing for each paper. This way you will be much happier with your results. (And so will I.)

**Close reading of a passage

When analyzing this passage, some issues to consider are: How are the characters artistically presented in the passage? From whose point of view is the passage written? What is the setting in the passage, and how does that affect our experience of the selection? What physical or other clues does the author give the reader about a character's social position, emotional state, and/or relationship with others in this passage? How does this particular passage shed light on the work as a whole? What can we learn about the worldview of the novel and its author by studying this passage?

Please see also the handouts "Analyzing Literature" and "A Method for Interpreting Literature."

- (6) **A Final Exam**, consisting of a few short essays and basic identifications based on the readings and discussions from the semester.

Grading

Three 4-5 page papers and other short writing assignments—55%

Final Exam—25%

Class participation—20%

SYLLABUS

| DATE | DISCUSSION TOPICS/ACTIVITIES | ASSIGNMENTS |
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| | Social Dialogue and Debate in an Era of Discontent: Turgenev's <i>Fathers and Sons</i> | |
| Wednesday, Jan. 19 | Introduction: Struggles with Authority in the Russian Novel and in Russian Society, 1861-1922 Why we still read the Russian classics: the relevance of their ideas to our lives today | Discuss Quote: "A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason no regime has ever loved great writers, only minor ones." (from <i>The First Circle</i> , 1968) |
| Thursday, Jan. 20 | | |
| Friday, Jan. 21 | | Turgenev, <i>Fathers and Sons</i> (pp.3-50) |
| Monday, Jan. 24 | | Turgenev, <i>Fathers and Sons</i> (pp. 50-110) |
| Wednesday, Jan. 26 | | Turgenev, <i>Fathers and Sons</i> (pp. 110-157) |
| Friday, Jan. 28 | -- <i>Fathers and Sons</i> : The Critical Context, Has Pisarev understood Turgenev's intentions? What is the difference between an ideological and a critical reading of literature? What makes a work of literary art different from an essay, an editorial in a journal, or a scholarly article? | Pisarev, "Bazarov" (pp. 185-206 in <i>Fathers and Sons</i>) Discuss <i>Fathers and Sons</i> |
| | The Metaphysics of Rebellion and Redemption: Dostoevsky's <i>Crime and Punishment</i> | |
| Monday, Jan. 31 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part I) |
| Wednesday, Feb. 2 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part II) |
| Friday, Feb. 4 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part III) |
| Monday, Feb. 7 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part IV) |
| Wednesday, Feb. 9 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part V) |
| Friday, Feb. 11 | | Dostoevsky, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part VI and Epilogue I, II) |
| Monday, Feb. 14 | | Final Discussion, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> |

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| | Love, Passion, and the Quest for Meaning in a Changing World: Tolstoy's <i>Anna Karenina</i> | |
| Wednesday, Feb. 16 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Introduction and Part One, pp. 1-56) |
| Friday, Feb. 18 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part I, pp. 57-115) --First of three course papers due |
| Monday, Feb. 21 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part II, pp. 117-173) |
| Wednesday, Feb. 23 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part II, pp. 173-236) |
| Friday, Feb. 25 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part III, pp. 237-278) |
| Monday, Feb. 28 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part III, pp. 278-352) |
| Wednesday, March 2 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part IV, pp. 353-398) |
| Friday, March 4 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part IV, pp. 398-435) |
| Monday, March 7 | SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS | Keep reading <i>Anna Karenina</i> ! |
| Wednesday, March 9 | SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS | |
| Friday, March 11 | SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS | |
| Monday, March 14 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part V, pp. 437- 489) |
| Wednesday, March 16 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part V, pp. 489-549) |
| Friday, March 18 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part VI, pp. 551-605) |
| Monday, March 21 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part VI, pp.605-669) |
| Wednesday, March 23 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Part VII, pp. 671-719) |

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| Friday, March 25 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> (Finish Part VII, pp. 719-768) |
| Monday, March 28 | | Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> Part VIII, pp. 769-817) |
| Wednesday, March 30 | What are the similarities and differences between how Tolstoy and Dostoevsky write about similar themes? | Final Discussion of <i>Anna Karenina</i> comparing it with <i>Crime and Punishment</i> <i>--Second of three course papers due</i> |
| | Struggle in a Minor Key: The “Little Novels” of Anton Chekhov | |
| Friday, April 1 | | Anton Chekhov, “The Duel” (pp. 53-105) |
| Monday, April 4 | | Anton Chekhov, “Peasants” (pp.364-395) |
| Wednesday, April 6 | | Anton Chekhov, “Ward No. 6” (pp. 106-157) |
| | Portrait of a Future Revolutionary as a Young Man: Gorky’s <i>My Childhood</i> | |
| Friday, April 8 | | Gorky, <i>My Childhood</i> (pp. 13-74) |
| Monday, April 11 | | Gorky, <i>My Childhood</i> (pp. 75-131) |
| | | Gorky, <i>My Childhood</i> (pp. 132-193) |
| Wednesday, April 13 | | Gorky, <i>My Childhood</i> (pp. 194-234) |
| Monday, April 18 | | Discuss <i>My Childhood</i> |
| | Demonism, Decadence, and Artistic Renewal at the Turn of the Century: Sologub’s <i>The Petty Demon</i> | |
| Wednesday, April 20 | | Fyodor Sologub, |

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| | | <i>The Petty Demon</i> , (pp. 31-84) (In course reader) |
| Friday, April 22 | | Fyodor Sologub, <i>The Petty Demon</i> , (pp. 85-145) (In course reader) |
| Monday, April 25 | | Fyodor Sologub, <i>The Petty Demon</i> , (pp. 145-213) (In course reader) |
| Wednesday, April 27 | Announce student-initiated Roundtable Discussion on Friday May 2. | Fyodor Sologub, <i>The Petty Demon</i> , (pp. 214-274) (In course reader) |
| Friday, April 29 | Sologub: "The Symbolists' individualism was not a rebellion against social-mindedness, but a revolt against mechanical necessity, against an excessively materialistic worldview." | Final Discussion of <i>The Petty Demon</i> . Please hand in two questions for Roundtable Discussion on Monday, May 2 |
| Monday, May 2 | Roundtable Discussion: Struggles with Authority in the Russian Novel | Be prepared to contribute to Roundtable Discussion. |
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| Wednesday, May 4 | Review Session for Final Exam | |
| Friday, May 6 | | <i>--Third of three course papers due</i> |
| | <i>FINAL EXAM</i> | |