

REES 145: Masterpieces of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature

Course Syllabus

SUMMER SESSION I, May 26 – July 1, 2020

**Mondays & Wednesdays, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm via
Zoom:** <https://sasupenn.zoom.us/j/7073057904>

INSTRUCTOR: Olga Nechaeva nechaeva@sas.upenn.edu

Fulfills Requirements:

- Foundational Approaches: Cross-Cultural Analysis
- Sector Requirement: Arts & Letters

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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.

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, Turgenev, 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 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. You can find the books in the correct editions on this [Amazon Wish List](#). Please be sure to use the translations specified.

- Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*. Trans. by Vladimir Nabokov, New York: Knopf, 1958.
- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*. Trans. by Oliver Ready, New York: Penguin Classics, 2015.
- Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Trans. by Rosamund Bartlett, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Additional readings will be made available on Canvas. If you experience troubles in getting these three books, you can find their pdfs under Modules.

COMPONENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Participation – 30% Your thoughtful and attentive participation in discussions and engagement with lectures will allow us to make the most of our time together in class. Such participation will necessitate having completed the week's reading. The Russian classics are hefty books and this class entails a substantial weekly reading load. Please make every effort to read all materials before the class day 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. I will occasionally assign short in-class writing assignments, which will be incorporated into your participation grade.

Presentations – 15% You will make one presentation, of approximately ten minutes, at some point during the summer session. We will schedule these presentations 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 – 30% You will write three one- to two-page responses to the readings (350-500 words). 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 be a close reading, the second will respond to a prompt, given out during class on the prior Wednesday, 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 each assignment and attached expectations in class on Wednesdays. These essays will be given a rating of check minus/check/check plus along with comments to indicate your progress and assigned an overall letter grade at the end of the course. These essays should facilitate your active and ongoing engagement with the reading and prepare you to write the final essay.

Discussion question and Keyword – 5% These are small (150 word) assignments aimed at collaboratively structuring class discussion and synthesizing material that we've covered over the course of the class. You will post the written version under

“Discussions” on Canvas and share in class. We will discuss the details of the assignments in class.

Short analytical essay – 20% This paper (1250-1500 words, or four to five pages) will respond to one of several open questions that will be distributed in class and via Canvas. If you have a strong desire to write on a topic outside of these questions, please discuss it with me by Monday, June 22.

GRADING

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

98.6% 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 Wednesday, July. 1 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 and 1-1 meetings will take place over email and Canvas. Accordingly, please be sure to check these platforms regularly. I will respond to your emails within 24 hours in most circumstances. I will return your written work with comments within one week of submission.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to abide by the Code of Academic Integrity of the University of Pennsylvania, which you can find at [this linkLinks to an external site.](#). Contact me in case of any ambiguities.

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 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Monday and Friday, 9:00 am – 7:00 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10:00 am – 3 pm Saturday. 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 additions and modifications to this syllabus will be communicated over Canvas.

(W) MAY 27 Course Introduction: Russian History and Russian Literature

Pushkin, "The Bronze Horseman" (C)

Pushkin, "The Prophet" (C)

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

(M) JUNE 1 The Golden Age: Pushkin and Lermontov

Pushkin, "The Demon", "Elegy", (C)

Lermontov, "I go out on the road alone...", *The Demon* (C)

Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time* (all)

(W) JUNE 3 The Petersburg Tale: Gogol and Dostoevsky

Gogol, "Nevsky Prospect", "The Overcoat" (C)

Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part I, Ch. I– IV, pp. 3-133

(M) JUNE 8 The Serialized Novel: Crime and Punishment (2)

First response essay due (close reading)

Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part I, Ch. V – Part V, pp. 133-409

(W) JUNE 10 Dostoevsky, Nihilism, and the "New People"

Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part VI – Epilogue, pp. 413-518

Kovalevskaia, *Nihilist Girl* (C)

(M) JUNE 15 Tolstoy

Second response essay due (prompt)

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part One – Part Three, Ch. 5, pp. 3-259

(W) JUNE 17 Leskov, Tolstoy, the "Woman Question"

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Two – Part Three, pp. 259-356.

Leskov, "The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" (C)

(M) JUNE 22 Turgenev, Chekhov, Tolstoy: Serfdom and Social Class in Literature

Third response essay due (open)

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Four – Part Five, pp. 357-552.

Turgenev, "Khor and Kalinych" (C)

Chekhov, "Peasant Women" (C)

(W) JUNE 24 Anna Karenina (4)

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Six, pp. 552-671

(M) JUNE 29 Anna Karenina (5)

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Part Seven – End, pp. 672-822

(W) JULY 1 Decadence, reflecting on the "Masterpieces"

Final paper due

Sologub, "The Worm", "Beauty" (C)

Gippius, "It's All for the Worse" (C)

Briusov, "In the Mirror" (C)