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RUSS 412.01: 20th Century Major Russian Authors

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Spring 2001

RUS 412

20th Century Major Russian Authors

(Prerequisite Russ 202 or instructor's consent)

Professor Marina Kanevskaya

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Phone: (406) 243-4801

Office Hours: LA 328 MWF 12-1 p.m.; TTh 12-2 p.m.

1. *Twentieth Century Russian Reader*, by Clarence Brown
2. Isaak Babel, *Collected Stories*
3. Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation of a Beheading*
4. Nikolai Erdman, *The Suicide*
5. FacPack

Goals and outcomes: This course is focused on the problem of "Russian Intelligentsia and Revolution." The instructor intends to apply an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to cover a wide range of literary and artistic movements in their cultural context. This course is designed to give you an understanding of the contemporary Russian literature, how it has evolved into its present forms, and how to assess fiction critically. We will do so through study and discussion of selected texts from the 20th century Russian literature and through reading of background research articles in theory and history of Russian literature. At the successful completion of this course you can expect to know the main periods, trends, texts, and personalities in Russian literature of the 20th century. You will be able to read closely a literary text and interpret its meaning(s); have a considerable notion about Russian cultural history of the 20th century; be able to present (orally and in writing) academic argument on a literary topic.

Methods: We will meet three times a week for lectures, films and other visual materials demonstrations, and discussions. The course will consist of several distinct topics (see below). The instructor will introduce each new topic in a lecture supplemented with the background reading. A short quiz will always follow such an introduction. Then the instructor will present major text(s) or film(s) pertinent to the current topic and outline the methods and approaches to its interpretation. Students' individual in-class presentations (always focused on the literary text or film) will conclude the analysis of each subject.

Assessment: I will assess your understanding of the lectures, articles, literary texts, and films through a combination of quizzes, your presentations, two papers (midterm and final), and final examination. Please note that the active participation requires prior preparation: you must come to class having read the texts and able to discuss what they might mean in accordance with your specific home assignment. Attendance is required for all class meetings. You are allowed to miss three classes without medical certificate. However, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor through e-mail or on the phone prior to the class. Every additional absence from class without medical certificate will result in your loss of half a point out of your final grade (for example, A- instead of A for each unauthorized absence). If you miss a quiz, an individual presentation, or fail to submit your paper on time without a prior notice you will get an "F" grade without the

right of making up for this assignment. While grading of the quizzes will be focused on the correctness of the facts, the papers must demonstrate a student's ability to express the thoughts and arguments in a cultural and logical way (see attached Grading Standards Guidelines).

Grades' percentage distribution:

Quizzes -- 10%

Presentations -- 30%

Final Test -- 10%

Papers (midterm and final) -- 30%

Class participation -- 20%

My responsibilities are: to guide class discussion in such a way as to keep it focused on the text or film in a spirit of open and friendly debate; to show you methods of close reading; to apply established standards (see attached) in an impartial evaluation of your writing and give you clear explanations of your successes and flaws; to give immediate response and commentary to your class presentations; to meet with you individually during my office hours or by appointment in cases of emergency; to return promptly your written assignments.

SYLLABUS

Jan. 28, Monday

Introduction: The Beginning of Modernism in Russia (the turn of the century).

Home: E. Bristol (read carefully and get prepared for Quiz 1).

January 30, Wed.

Chekhov, *The Bishop*

Home: *The Bishop* (read English and Russian texts), be prepared to discuss:

1. Parallels between the Easter service and the Bishop's death.
2. The theme of love and grace.
3. Religion and life.
4. The nature of narrative unity in the story.

Feb. 1, Friday

Presentations on *The Bishop*

Home: I. Bunin, *Light Breathing* (read English and Russian texts).

Feb. 4, Monday

I. Bunin, *Light Breathing*

Home: I. Bunin, *Light Breathing*, be prepared to discuss:

1. Simplicity of style.
2. Intuitiveness vs. consciousness.
3. The image of Olia.
4. The image of the schoolmaster.

Feb. 6, Wed.

Presentations on *Light Breathing*

Film *Lady with a Dog*

Feb. 8, Friday

Film *Lady with a Dog*

Home: Alexander Blok, "The Scythians" (read English and Russian texts)

Be prepared to discuss: Russian Neo-Romantic national self-identity

Feb. 11, Monday

Film *Lady with a Dog*

Home: Alexander Blok, "The Scythians" (read English and Russian texts)

Be prepared to discuss: Russian Neo-Romantic national self-identity.

Feb. 13, Wed

Symbolism (lecture and slides)

Home: Alexander Blok, "The Scythians" (read English and Russian texts)

Feb. 15, Friday

"The Scythians," discussion

Home: Vladimir Maiakovsky, "Cloud in Pants" (read English and Russian texts)

Feb. 18, Monday

Futurism (lecture and slides)

"Cloud in Pants," discussion

Home: Osip Mandelshtam, *Noise of Time* and Anna Akhmatova *Poem without a Hero* (read English and Russian texts)

Feb. 20, Wed.

Acmeism (lecture and film *Anna Akhmatova's File*)

Home: Prepare for Quiz on Symbolism

Feb. 22, Friday

Quiz on Symbolism

Home: Isaak Babel, *Red Cavalry* (read English and Russian texts)

Feb. 25, Mon.

Revolutionary Romanticism and Avant-Garde (lecture and slides)

Home: Isaak Babel, *Red Cavalry* (read English and Russian texts)

Feb. 27, Wed.

Isaak Babel, *Red Cavalry* (lecture and excerpts from the film *Chapaev*)

Home: Milton Ehre, "Babel's *Red Cavalry*..." -- [read for Quiz 3](#)

March 1, Friday

Quiz on Ehre's article

Excerpt from *Chapaev*

Home: Presentations

1. The image of Liutov and the voice of the Narrator.

2. Geographic and biblical space of the novel.

3. What makes it a novel?

4. An Intellectual among the Revolutionary Cossacks

5. Analysis of one story.
6. Analysis of a recurrent theme.

March 4, Mon.
Discussion of *Red Cavalry*

March 6, Wed.
Discussion of *Red Cavalry*
Home: Nabokov, *Mary* (read English and Russian texts)

March 8, Friday
Nabokov, *Mary* (lecture and excerpts from the film *Days of the Turbin*)
Home: Nabokov, *Mary*
Presentations:
1. Fabula vs. plot
2. Ganin's authorship: memory as metatext
3. The ending of the novel

March 11, Mon.
Nabokov, *Mary* -- presentations
Home: Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, Osip Mandel'shtam, Khodasevich, Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva (read Russian and English texts)

March 13, Wed.
Nabokov, *Mary* -- presentations
Home: Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, Osip Mandel'shtam, Khodasevich, Akhmatova, and Tsvetaeva

March 15, Friday
Emigration and Inner Emigration
Discussion: Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, Osip Mandel'shtam, Vladislav Khodasevich, Akhmatova, and Tsvetaeva

March 25, Mon.
Film *Moscow Parade*
Home: Nikolai Erdman, *The Suicide* (read English and Russian Texts)

March 27, Wed.
Film *Moscow Parade*
Home: Nikolai Erdman, *The Suicide* (read English and Russian Texts)

March 29, Friday
Erdman, *The Suicide* (lecture)
Home: Presentations:
1. Composition of the play
2. Main images
3. *Qui-pro-quo*: misunderstandings
4. Absurd dialog

April 1, Mon.

The Suicide, discussion.

Home: **Get prepared for the Midterm** (Symbolism, Avant-Garde, Nabokov).

April 3, Wed.

First paper due

Midterm test

April 5, Friday

Social Realism (lecture and slides)

Home: Clark's article for Quiz.

Home: Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (read English and Russian texts)

April 8, Mon.

Quiz on Social Realism

Film *The Cranes Are Flying*

Home: Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (read English and Russian texts)

April 10, Wed.

Film *The Cranes Are Flying*

Home: Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (read English and Russian texts)

April 12, Friday

Film *The Cranes Are Flying*

Home: Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (read English and Russian texts)

April 15, Monday

Late Socialist Realism: Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (lecture)

Home: Presentations:

1. New and Old in the post-War Socialist Realism
2. The main hero
3. The Soviet national self-identity
4. The concept of the war

April 17, Wed.

Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Life of a Man* (Presentations).

Home: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Matrena's House* (read Russian and English texts)

April 19, Friday

The Thaw (lecture): Poetry of the 1950s-60s (Evtushenko, Voznesenskii)

Home: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Matrena's House*

Presentations:

1. Village vs. City (peasantry vs. working class)
2. Didactic style
3. Matrena as a Symbol of Russia

April 22, Monday

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Matrena's House* (Discussion)

Home: Varlam Shalamov, short stories (read Russian and English texts)

April 24, Wed.

Film Kolyma

Home: Varlam Shalamov, short stories "Prosthetic Appliances," "A Child's Drawings," "Lend-Lease" (Russian and English)

April 26, Friday

Varlam Shalamov, short stories (Discussion)

Home: Fazil Iskander, "Balthazar's Feasts" (Russian and English texts)

April 29, Monday

Russian literature of the 1960s and 70s

Home: Fazil Iskander, "Belshazzar's Feasts" (Russian and English texts)

May 1, Wed

Fazil Iskander and his place in the contemporary literature (lecture)

Home: Iskander, Presentations:

1. Concept of history (private man and public figure)
2. "A loud gesture" and other comic devices in Iskander

May 3, Friday

Fazil Iskander, "Belshazzar's Feasts" (discussion)

Home: short stories by Evgenii Popov, Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin (English and Russian texts)

May 6, Monday

Postmodernism (contemporary period): lecture and slides

Home: short stories by Evgenii Popov, Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin (English and Russian texts)

May 8, Wed.

Postmodernism (Discussion): Popov, Sorokin, Pelevin

May 10, Friday

Conclusions of the course

Final Paper due

Home: Prepare for the Final Test (Socialist Realism, The Thaw, Postmodernism)

May 15, Wed., 3.20-5.20 p.m. Final test