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RUSS 494.01: Seminar - Dostoevsky and World Culture

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The University Of Montana

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Seminar: Dostoevsky and World Culture

MCLG/RUSS 494, spring 2017

Mon 3-5:50pm in LA 234

Prof. Clint Walker
LA 330, x2401
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Office Hours: Mon 10-10:50am 12-12:50pm, Wed 10-10:50am or by appointment

Dostoevsky and World Culture

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: RUSS 494 Seminar in Russian Studies Variable cr. (R-12) Offered intermittently. Same as MCLG 494. Advanced studies in major topics in Russian literature and culture. Topics include: The Russian Novel, Women and Gender in Russian Culture, Dostoevsky and World Culture. All readings and discussion will be conducted in English, but Russian majors will be expected to do selected readings in the original and to cite from Russian texts in the final seminar paper. Honors College Students will be expected to read supplementary texts (as specified in the syllabus below) and to incorporate these texts into the final seminar paper. All students taking the course will be expected to complete an outline, draft, and final version of the seminar paper (15-20 pp.) as part of the course requirements. Honors Students will be expected to write a longer final version of the seminar paper (minimum length: 18 pages).

This course serves as a seminar and a capstone for Russian majors as well as an opportunity for serious literature and history students from other disciplines to immerse themselves more deeply in the Russian cultural tradition than they could in the regular literature-in-translation courses offered by the Russian Section at UM. The seminar offerings will synthesize many of the topics and themes spread throughout our other course offerings. While the seminar will be taught in English in order to cover a substantially greater amount of material and to analyze it in more detail, it will provide a perfect opportunity for UM Russian majors to work with select seminal texts in the Russian original. Another major purpose of the seminar is to allow students to fine-tune their writing skills in English on a topic relevant to their major. Therefore, the Seminar in Russian Studies will serve as an excellent foundational course for majors intending to pursue graduate study in Russian language, literature and history.

GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE:

This seminar focuses on the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky and the indelible mark he has left on world literature and cinema. We will spend roughly the first two-thirds of the semester reading key Dostoevsky texts (including *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*) and the final third on one novel (Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*) and two films (Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* and Bresson's *Pickpocket*) that were strongly influenced by Dostoevsky. The course serves as a capstone for Russian majors as well as an opportunity for students from other disciplines to immerse themselves in Dostoevsky and his cultural legacy. All readings and discussion will be conducted in English, but Russian majors will be expected to do short readings in the original and to cite from at least one Dostoevsky work in Russian in their seminar papers. This seminar satisfies the upper division writing requirement at the University of Montana.

GOALS and OUTCOMES:

Students in this seminar will work on improving, expanding and polishing their writing skills throughout the semester by completing a range of tasks and assignments. Not every task will receive a formal grade, nor will each task necessarily lead directly towards the course's culminating assignment, a seminar paper on one of the major novels included in the course curriculum, but every task has been designed with the aim of making you more successful, more confident and better equipped writers—in the field of Russian Studies in particular as well as in your daily lives. Of all the skills you acquire at the University of Montana, none will be so intimately connected with who you are and who you have the opportunity to become as your ability to write and to think critically through your writing.

The capstone of this course will be your individual seminar papers. Each of you will conduct research for this project that you will eventually integrate into a final paper. An outline, bibliography and rough draft of the paper will be due as specified on the syllabus.

The final version of your paper should: incorporate at least six academic sources; use appropriate citations and style; be well-argued and supported with evidence from the text and its various contexts; and be clearly organized and elegantly written. The final paper will provide Russian majors in particular with a perfect opportunity to synthesize the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their coursework at UM. A number of you will undoubtedly choose to use this seminar paper as a writing sample for graduate school applications.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion
Timely reading of assigned works and adequate preparation for discussion
Possible in-class writing assignments based on the assigned reading for the day
Seminar paper (15-page minimum; for Honors credit the minimum is 18 pages)

Students in this class will complete an analytical academic research paper (15-20 pp.) that integrates evidence from at least six academic resources. Early in the semester each of you will need to research at least one of the major works covered in the syllabus using academic research databases for literature (e.g. MLA). Later in the semester you will need to integrate similar information into the seminar paper.

NB -- Russian majors are expected to work with Dostoevsky in the original. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to purchase a Russian-language copy of *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and/or other Dostoevsky works that you intend to make the focus of your seminar paper. I would be happy to direct you to sites that sell Russian books. I also have a healthy supply of relatively inexpensive Russian versions of *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* that you may purchase from me at cost (I did a lot of shopping around to find the cheapest good versions).

By conducting preliminary research on Dostoevsky and the works he has influenced, you will be forced to address the idea of conflicting interpretations of the same text before you are actually required to integrate such contradictory sources into your own arguments in a formal paper. You will also be introduced to MLA-style academic discourse. Subsequently, each of you will be required to incorporate evidence from at least six academic sources into your final seminar paper. At this stage you will necessarily grapple with a wide range of approaches to the same text, using them to augment and enhance your own arguments. It is hoped that you will draw from your research experience early in the semester to help you develop your own academic voice during your work on the seminar paper. My feedback on your draft will help you refine and polish your ideas and writing in the final version of the seminar paper.

Some 70% of your final course grade will be based on the seminar paper. A two-page outline, bibliography and draft will account for 20% of your final course grade, while the final draft of the seminar paper will constitute 50% of your final course grade. You will receive feedback and an "orientation" grade of 1-10 on any in-class writing assignments, and I reserve the right to give an in-class writing assignment on any day of our seminar, so you should be ready to discuss the assigned reading for each day. Any in-class writing will be open-books, open-notes (but no use of electronic devices).

***HONORS COLLEGE STUDENTS:** If you are taking this course for Honors, you are required to read a minimum of one additional work by Dostoevsky. In addition, you must incorporate this work into the body of your seminar paper. The minimum length of the seminar paper for Honors College Students is 18 pages.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Geir Kjetsaa, *Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A Writer's Life* (biography)
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground (and Other Works)*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

As a rule you are welcome to use any translation of the Dostoevsky works that you wish, but I would definitely **prefer** that everyone have a copy of the editions that I have ordered for our class in order to facilitate discussion in class (e.g., in order to refer people to specific page numbers during discussion, etc.) For this reason, I have ordered the cheapest additions that I could find.

Recommended supplementary texts:

Fyodor Dostoevsky (Bloom's Modern Critical Views). Chelsea House Pub, 2003.

The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Ellison. Cambridge University Press, 2005. If you are thinking you may want to write your seminar paper on Ellison, I have several copies of this text that you can purchase from me for \$3.50. Let me know if you are interested.

Supplementary Texts for Honors College Students (pick ONE only):

Honors College students taking this course need to read at least one additional work by Dostoevsky and incorporate it into their seminar paper (18 page minimum for the seminar paper for Honors credit; see above).

GRADING:

20%	Attendance and General Class Participation	
10%	Presentation and any in-class writing assignments (NB – these cannot be made up) or, if we do not do any in-class writing for this class, this 10% will be based solely on your presentation.	
20%	Library Research Assignment, Outline, Bibliography and Draft (min. 10 pages, 3 outside sources) of the Seminar Paper	
50%	Seminar Paper* (15-20 pages, minimum of <u>six academic</u> outside sources)	

GRADING SCALE

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D+ = 68-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 78-79	D = 64-67
B+ = 88-89	C = 77-73	F = 63 and below
B = 83-87	C- = 70-72	

PAPER GUIDELINES:

The seminar paper should be done on a computer and conform to MLA standards for citation of secondary sources. Use a standard 12 point font and double-space. Proofread each assignment for typos, poor wording, mechanics, etc. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per class day (except for in-class writing, which cannot be made up). Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Please ask if you have a question about what constitutes plagiarism, but on the whole, if you consult another work for ideas, copy or paraphrase from another source, etc., then you need to acknowledge the source (including the work you consulted, the publication information, and the page number/s) in your paper with a footnote.

IN-CLASS RESPONSE ESSAY:

During the course of the semester you **MAY** be asked to write a short in-class response essay based on the reading for the day. You will have about twenty minutes to write on one of them. You may use your books and notes for reference, but no extra time will be given. If you have done the reading, twenty minutes will be plenty of time to respond to one of the topics. The response essays will be graded on a scale of 1-10, with ten being the highest possible grade. NB – If you miss class the day of an in-class response, you will get no credit for that day's response. Class attendance counts for part of your class grade, and the in-class response essays are intended to emphasize this fact and to reward those who come to class prepared for discussion for the day.

Syllabus

January

Mon 23 Course Overview and Dostoevsky's Biography
In-class reading and discussion of "The Peasant Marey"

Mon 30 "White Nights," "Notes from Underground,"
"Dream of a Ridiculous Man"

February

Mon 6 *Crime and Punishment*, Parts 1-4

Mon 13 *Crime and Punishment*, Parts 5 to the end of the novel

Library Assignment (due at the start of class on Feb 27):

Choose one of the major works (or a combination of shorter works and/or films) covered in class and conduct a preliminary search using the university library holdings, the MLA and other appropriate databases, etc. See handout for more detailed information on this assignment, including what I want you to turn in on Mon, Feb 27. Note that you also have a reading assignment for Feb 27, so you should start the library assignment this week.

Mon 20 **NO CLASS – President's Day**

Mon 27 *Dostoevsky: A Writer's Life* by Geir Kjetsaa

Library Assignment Due at the start of Class Today!

March

Mon 6 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Parts I and II

Mon 13 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part III

Mon 20 **SPRING BREAK**

Mon 27 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part IV to the end of the novel

Dostoevsky and the American Novel: Ralph Ellison

April

Mon 3 *Invisible Man*, Chapters 1-13 (pp. 1-295)

Outline (2 pages) of Seminar Paper Due Today!

Mon 10 *Invisible Man*, Chapters 14-21 (pp. 296-461)

Mon 17 *Invisible Man*, read to the end of the novel (pp. 462 to the end)

Dostoevsky and World Cinema

Mon 24 *Pickpocket* (we will watch and discuss this film in class)

**Draft (min. 10 pages, 2 copies) of Seminar Paper
due at the start of class today!**

**NB – You need to bring TWO copies of your drafts to class,
one for me to read and one for peer editing. If you forget to
your grade will be negatively impacted!**

bring two copies,

Peer Editing of Seminar Paper Drafts in Class

May

Mon 1 *Taxi Driver* (we will watch and discuss this film in class)

The Final Version of the Seminar Paper (15-20 pp.)
is due on Wednesday of Finals Week by 5pm

Due to the length of these seminar papers as well as the need to submit my grades earlier in the spring than in the fall, NO EXTENSIONS will be granted for these seminar papers. Plan accordingly!