

25/
Russian 350
**Masterpieces of 20th and 21st Century Russian
Literature**

Prof. Angela Brintlinger
422 Hagerty Hall
1775 College Road
292-6326
brintlinger.3@osu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 2-4
and by appointment

Course Description:

The course is taught entirely in English and fulfills the GEC category 5B1 (Arts and Humanities, Analysis of Texts, Literature).

This course will introduce you to some of the masterpieces of modern Russian literature. We will look at these works in their historical and cultural context and examine them as individual representations of the talent and concerns of a given writer as well as considering their place in the "evolutionary process" that is Russian letters. The development of Soviet literature and the dissident and post-Soviet reaction to that codified literary system will offer a framework for discussing what *Agreat* literature is, in both Russian and general contexts. Although this course is a continuation of Russian 250, *Masterpieces of 19th Century Russian Literature*, it requires no previous knowledge of Russian literature or history.

Objectives:

While Oprah chose *Anna Karenina* for her book club in 2004, and *Crime and Punishment* is popular among high school teachers of English, 20th and 21st century Russian works are generally less well-known in the United States. In part this is because the 20th century saw immense changes and complicated historical events which cut Russia off from literary and cultural processes in the West. At the same time, especially now, when the Iron Curtain has fallen, Russian literature and culture has much to offer the American student.

In this course, we will tackle some of the most interesting and challenging Russian writers, male and female, conservative and radical, formal innovators and philosophical frontrunners. We will also consider relevant works of art, film, and scholarship to better understand these writers and their cultural milieu. Thus in this course students will learn how to read, analyze and discuss great Russian works of literature while perceiving them in their cultural and artistic context.

Requirements:

The course will consist of a combination of lecture and class discussion. Please notice the reading requirements of the course B this is Russian literature, after all, so you will be doing a LOT of reading. Make sure you read the assignment before coming to class and bring your books with you; you will be called upon to offer insights and do close readings in class. Note that regular attendance is strongly encouraged; in order to succeed in this course you **must** attend class and do your reading.

Texts:

- Ivan Bunin, *Sunstroke: Selected Stories* (“The Gentleman from San Francisco,” 1915)
- Isaac Babel, *Red Cavalry* (1926)
- Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense* (1930)
- Valentin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (1931)
- Anna Akhmatova, *Requiem* (1935-40, publ. 1963)
- Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962)
- Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s Home” (1963)
- Vladimir Sorokin, *The Queue* (1985)
- Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (1997)
- Liudmila Petrushevskaja, *The Time: Night* (1992)
- Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (1998)

All texts are available at SBX Bookstore on High Street or in a coursepack from Tuttle COP-EZ.

Grading:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Reading Reports (4) | B 20% |
| Attendance and Class Participation | B 20% |
| Take-Home Midterm Examinations(2) | B 30% |
| Final Examination | B 30% |

Writing Assignments: Grading Criteria

Reading Reports

There are SIX reading report assignments on the syllabus. You may elect to skip two of them.

You will be expected to do a Reading report on four of the works we are reading this quarter. You should type and email your report to the professor by 9 a.m. on Wednesday morning (Thursday for T-Th classes). In the report, you should identify the aspect of the work which interests you most (plot, characterization, language [metaphors, style, form], philosophical underpinnings, etc.). Your Report should be 400-500 words long, in paragraph form, pointing out the ways in which your chosen aspect are developed uniquely in the work.

Reading reports will be evaluated based on 1) interesting and complete content; 2) creative reading approach; and 3) literacy of the paper itself (i.e. spelling, punctuation, style). Each reading report counts for 5% of your final grade. In addition to the writing and analytical practice you will gain from these reports, an added bonus is that you will be preparing for your midterm and final examinations each time you write one!

Midterm Examinations

You will have two take-home midterm examinations in this course. Each midterm is worth 15% of your final grade. For each exam you will write two short essays (1-2 pp. typed) and one longer essay (3-4 pp. typed) on the materials of our course. Keep in mind that essays for take-home exams should be well-written and organized, contain evidence of textual support, and show individual thought.

Final Exam

Final Exam will be held at our official examination time. It will consist of short identifications and two essays. The instructor will hand out in advance suggested topics for the essays; you may choose from this list or create a topic of your own on the model of the suggestions. Your essays should be well-written and organized, contain evidence of textual support, and show individual thought. An example of essay topics might be “War in 20th century Russian Fiction and Film” or “Voices of External and Internal Russian Émigrés.”

NOTES:

Disabilities:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Absences:

This course meets twenty times, for a total of 40 academic hours in the classroom. This means that two class meetings equals more than 10% of the course. You are responsible for the reading material *and* for the lecture material. You are also expected to participate in class discussions, and a Agrade≅ will be recorded for each day of class on a scale of 1 to 5. (1= physical presence in the classroom, 5= active participation with evidence of knowledge of material and individual insight). These daily grades will translate into the 20% participation grade which is a component of your final grade.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Syllabus

Week 1

Monday

How to Read Russian Literature

Wednesday

The Legacy of the 19th Century

Readings: Ivan Bunin, "Gentleman from San Francisco" (1915) and "Rusya" (1940)

Week 2

Monday

What's War Got to Do With It?

Readings: Isaac Babel, *Red Cavalry* ("Crossing the Zbrucz," "A Letter," "Pan Apolek," "Gedali," "My First Goose," "The Life Story of Pavlichenko," "Matvey Rodionych")

Reading Report on *Red Cavalry* due Wednesday 9 a.m.

Wednesday

The Russian Abroad: Literature in Exile

Readings: Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense* (15–117)

Week 3

Monday

Dream Worlds and Reality

Readings: Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense* (118–256)

Reading Report on *The Defense* due Wednesday 9 a.m.

Wednesday

Soviet Culture and the Five Year Plan

Readings: Valentin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (3–103)

First take-home midterm handed out.

Week 4

Monday

Socialist Realism B the Official Method of Soviet Prose

Readings: Valentin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (105–249)

Wednesday

Early Soviet Cinema and its Effect on Prose

Readings: Valentin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (250–345)

First take-home midterm due.

Week 5

Monday

Stalin and the Terror

Readings: Anna Akhmatova, *Requiem*

Wednesday

FILM: *The Cranes are Flying* (1957; 94 minutes)

Week 6

Monday

The Thaw: A View into Life in the Gulag

Readings: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (2–89)

**Reading Report on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* due
Wednesday 9 a.m.**

Wednesday

Russian Values, Solzhenitsyn-style

Readings: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (90–142)

Second mid-term examination handed out.

Week 7

Monday

Life in the Russian Countryside

Readings: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s Home”

Wednesday

Soviet Life Seen from Abroad (Soviet Russia and Emigre Publishing)

Readings: Vladimir Sorokin, *The Queue* (2–90)

Second mid-term examination due.

Week 8

Monday

Oral Speech and Narrative Form

Readings: Vladimir Sorokin, *The Queue* (91–198)

Reading Report on *Russian Talk* due Wednesday 9 a.m.

Wednesday

Russian Talk: Language and Storytelling during Perestroika

Readings: Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk*, chapters 1 & 2 (15–82)

Week 9

Monday

Narrative Form: The Diary

Readings: Liudmila Petrushevskaja, *The Time: Night* (1–76)

Reading Report on *The Time: Night* due Wednesday 9 a.m.

Wednesday

Women, Madness and the Narrative of Illness

Readings: Liudmila Petrushevskaja, *The Time: Night* (76–155)

Week 10

Monday

Science Fiction and The Space Race

Readings: Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (3–153)

Reading Report on *Omon Ra* due Wednesday 9 a.m.

Wednesday

RUNET: Russian Culture in the Age of the Internet