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Fall Session 2013
Seminar time: Thursdays, 8:30 am-11:30 am
Location: Dunton Tower 1816
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:00 am-10:00 am, or by appointment

ENGL 5608F:
Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Nabokov's *Lolita*

In spite of showcasing radically different aesthetic sensibilities, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Nabokov excite similar fervor in (often the very same) readers. The dramatic divergence in these two writers' artistic philosophies is underscored by Nabokov's legendary disdain for the writer whom Kafka identified as a "blood brother" and for whom Joyce expressed deep admiration. In his lectures on Dostoevsky delivered at Wellesley and Cornell in the 40s and 50s, Nabokov seems to have derived pleasure from debunking the revered nineteenth-century writer. Dostoevsky's fiction, Nabokov claimed, is a "wasteland" of "literary platitudes" populated by a gallery of "neurotics and lunatics." Dostoevsky himself lacked taste, suffered from a "completely pathological idealization" of Russia's peasantry, passed off "glorified clichés" as meaningful ethical dilemmas, and cultivated a "vulgar soapbox eloquence." And yet, in spite of such statements on Nabokov's part, scholars have compellingly argued that Nabokov's own work is indebted to Dostoevsky in subtle and meaningful ways. By focusing on Nabokov's and Dostoevsky's most acclaimed novels—*Lolita* and *The Brothers Karamazov* respectively—the seminar will seek to determine what, if anything, these two incontestably great writers could say to each other. We will be using the translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky.

Required Texts:

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky); ISBN 9780374528379; \$21.95
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* - 9780679723165 - \$19.95
Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*

Course texts will be available from Octopus Books (116 Third Avenue, the Glebe; phone #: 613-233-2589). These texts can be purchased in person or ordered on the bookstore's website (www.octopusbooks.ca). Web orders are sent directly to the student's home (at extra cost). If purchasing in person, please bring your course number and the course instructor's name with you.

Reading Schedule:

- September 12 Introduction to the Seminar
- September 19 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part I (Books I-III)
- Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, “Literary and Historical Contexts” and “Of Prefaces, Preludes, and Parodies; Part I: Books I, II, and III,” 1-47.
- September 26 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part II (Books IV-VI)
- Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, “The Deep Heart’s Core; Part II: Books IV, V, and VI,” 48-79.
- October 3 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part III (Books VII-IX)
- Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, “The Plot Quickens; Part III, Books VII, VIII, IX,” 80-98.
- October 10 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part IV (Books X-XI)
- October 17 *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part IV (Book XII and Epilogue)
- Robin Feuer Miller, *The Brothers Karamazov: Worlds of the Novel*, “Varieties of Guilty Experience; Part IV: Books X, XI, XII, XII and Epilogue,” 99-133.
- October 24 *Lolita*, Part I
- Vladimir Nabokov, “Fyodor Dostoevski” in *Lectures on Russian Literature*, 97-135 (on two-hour reserve)
- November 7 *Lolita*, Part II
- Georges Nivat, “Nabokov and Dostoevsky” in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 398-402 (on two-hour reserve)
- November 14 Mikhail Bakhtin, Chapter I: “Dostoevsky’s Polyphonic Novel and Its Treatment in Critical Literature,” in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984, 5-46.
- November 21 Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* (on 2-hour reserve)
- Elena Namli, “Struggling with Reason: Dostoyevsky as Moral Theologian,” *Studia Theologica* 63 (2009): 197-216.

- November 28 Richard Rorty, “The Barber of Kasbeam: Nabokov on Cruelty” in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 141-168 (on two-hour reserve)
- Gerard de Vries, “‘Perplex’d in the Extreme’: Moral Facets of Vladimir Nabokov’s Work.” *Nabokov Studies* 2 (1995): 135-152.
- December 5 Evgenia Cherkasova, Chapter 1: “The Deontology of the Heart,” in *Dostoevsky and Kant: Dialogues on Ethics*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 7-27.
- Katherine Tiernan O’Connor, “Rereading *Lolita*, Reconsidering Nabokov’s Relationship with Dostoevskii.” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 33.1 (1989): 64-77. (available through JSTOR)

Method of Evaluation:

Members of the seminar will be expected to participate actively in all class discussions. To promote such participation, members of the class will write **5** unannounced multiple-choice quizzes testing their detailed knowledge of the material scheduled for that day’s seminar session. In lieu of a formal seminar presentation, each student will lead **4** discussions by coming prepared to class with one question pertaining to that day’s readings. These questions must not exceed 200 words and must be circulated among class members 24 hours before the beginning of the session.

During the first week of the seminar, students will be asked to choose one of the following additional methods of evaluation:

Option 1. Eight two-page (double-spaced) insight reports submitted *before* the beginning of class on days chosen by the student.

Option 2. A formal research essay to be submitted at the end of the term. Students who choose this option must present two ten-minute reports to the class outlining the state of progress of their research papers.

Grade Distribution:

5 unannounced multiple-choice quizzes (20%); 4 “lead-today’s-discussion” questions (20%); for option-1 students: 8 insight reports (60%); for option-2 students: research essay (60%)

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. A passing grade cannot be assigned to anyone who has missed three or more seminar sessions. Members of the seminar are asked to

make every effort to come to class on time. Being consistently late is disrespectful to all members of the seminar.

Unannounced multiple-choice quizzes: Nabokov began teaching his own classes on European fiction at Wellesley and Cornell with the following imperative: “In reading, one should notice and fondle the details.” In order to cultivate such reading, students will write five unannounced multiple-choice quizzes designed to test their detailed knowledge of the *primary* works studied in class. Each quiz will contain ten questions and will be worth 4% of the final grade. Those who have missed a quiz will have the opportunity to rewrite only one of these quizzes at the end of the semester. The make-up quiz will include questions taken from the primary and secondary readings read during in the whole course. Multiple-choice quizzes will be written at the beginning of class; those arriving late will not be able to write it and will therefore forfeit the quiz grade.

“Insight” Reports: Insight reports are intended to stimulate sustained and thoughtful reflection on the assigned primary and/or secondary readings before the beginning of class. These reports should be approximately 2 pages long (double spaced, 12-point font) and should be submitted before the beginning of class. Each report is worth 7.5% of the final grade. In writing these reports, students are encouraged to engage with the readings in an unconstrained, freewheeling manner. They will be graded for thoughtfulness, originality, and quality of analysis and written expression.

“Lead-Today’s-Discussion” Questions: In lieu of conventional seminar presentations, each student will choose to lead 4 seminar discussions by means of 2 questions per seminar. In choosing these questions, students should engage with the primary and secondary readings assigned for that particular session, but they should also feel free to extend the range of the assigned readings to questions pertaining to their research outside of class.

Classroom Etiquette

All cell phones must be turned off when the seminar is in session. If awaiting an emergency phone call, please notify the instructor at the beginning of class. Though laptops are allowed in class, students must avoid the temptation to text-message and browse the Internet while the seminar is in session. Doing so is not only distracting but also disrespectful towards all members of the class.

Grading System

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62
D+ = 57-59	D = 53-56	D - = 50-52

F Failure. No academic credit.

Student Resources and Persons with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requiring any kind of academic accommodation are encouraged to contact the instructor prior to the beginning of classes to discuss any needs and special arrangements. Students are also encouraged to contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (500 Unicentre; 613-520-6608). Every effort will be made to ensure the successful completion of the course by students with disabilities.

Religious and Pregnancy Accommodations

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligations should make a formal written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor. The instructor will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Students who want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services' website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity-Services Advisor for assistance (613-520-2600, ext. 5622, www.carleton.ca/equity).

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *Letter of Accommodation* (613-520-2600, ext. 5622, www.carleton.ca/equity). Students must then make an appointment to discuss their needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

All Students

Students are strongly encouraged to make optimal use of the instructor's office hours. Office hours are set aside for students to discuss with the instructor all aspects of the course and to seek assistance with any problems they might encounter in fulfilling the assigned tasks.

All students are also strongly encouraged to take advantage of the services offered at Carleton University, such as the following:

Learning Support Services (LSS): LSS offers students a variety of free services, including academic-skills workshops and information sessions, bookable study rooms, a Tutor Referral Service, and a supportive staff of Peer Helpers. To learn more about these services, visit LSS on the fourth floor of the MacOdrum Library, contact them by phone at 613-520-2600, ext. 1125, or visit them online at www.carleton.ca/lss.

Career Development and Co-operative Education (CDCE): CDCE is an on-campus centre for career development, employment preparation, and experiential learning opportunities for Carleton students. Students are encouraged to use the various services provided by CDCE throughout their time at Carleton by visiting its two service locations. The Career and Resource Centre is located at 401 Tory (613-520-6611); the Co-op and Employer Centre is located at 1400 CTTC (613-520-4331).

International Student Services Office (ISSO): ISSO is at the heart of Carleton's international student community. It supports international students, including incoming and outgoing exchange students, and promotes cross-cultural understanding within the Carleton community. For more information, visit ISSO at 128 University Centre or contact by phone 613-520-6600. For general email inquiries, write to isso@carleton.ca; for exchange-program inquiries, write to exchange@carleton.ca. Website: www.carleton.ca/isso.

Plagiarism and Other Instructional Offences

The University's policy concerning plagiarism and other instructional offences is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar (see particularly regulation 14 – Instructional Offences). The Undergraduate Calendar defines an act of plagiarism as an attempt “to use and pass off as one's own idea or product the work of another without expressly giving credit” to the original author. Any act of plagiarism will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the guidelines set out in the Undergraduate Calendar.

The Undergraduate Calendar further specifies that the act of submitting “substantially the same piece of work to two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructors from all courses involved” constitutes an Instructional Offence. Please note: “Minor modifications and amendments, such as changes of phraseology in an essay or paper, do not constitute a significant and acceptable reworking of an assignment.” No piece of work written for another course will be accepted for credit in this course.