

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (EURUS)

EURR 3002/ENGL 3805

Winter 2013

Literature and Culture in Russia and Eurasia-DRAFT

Time: TBA

Location: TBA

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A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The past two decades have brought enormous changes to Russia and the other countries of Eurasia. Designed with those changes in mind, the Literature and Culture in Russia and Eurasia course puts emphasis on the study of Russia and the non-Russian regions of the former USSR (with emphasis on Slavic literature and cinema).

This course is designed to present a general introduction to the study Russian and Eurasian culture and literature through a range of interdisciplinary contexts, perspectives and approaches. It will provide a survey to the issues that shape cultures of Russia and Eurasia “before” and “after” through an exploration of the ideas reflected in their artistic traditions. Through our readings, screening of movies and classroom discussions, the seminar will focus on situating individual works in a cultural and social context in order to gain insights into the significance of cultural traditions. We will also be addressing the role of the artist / intellectual vis à vis social context, and the literary stylization of the Russian and Eurasian experience.

While this course has no stated prerequisite, it is assumed that the student has a basic understanding of modern European history. If you like literature and cinema, the names of Dostoyevsky, Bulgakov, Palevin, Skvorecky, Solzhenitsyn, Sokurov, Balabanov, Bodrov, Tarkovski, Lungin will become more than objects of our study.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES: One of the main aims of this year seminar is to give you the possibility of investigating complex topics from an interdisciplinary perspective. In order to acquaint the students with the historical and socio-anthropological background of the differences regarding cultural issues in the region, we would read and discuss different theoretical texts as well. They will help in clarifying the origins/causes of certain mentality (for example, discriminative mentality), mythologies of ethnogenesis, origins of religious beliefs, focusing on the dualistic character of the popular religions, their imprints in the art, gender roles within community (ex. popular explanations of the ‘natural inequality’ between man and woman), constructed images and stereotypes concerning different regions and the process of ‘virtualization’ of certain areas, the impact of the globalization - reflecting the diversity of themes and styles in literature,

and also touching on the question of how literature is reacting to the rising neo-conservatism and political pressure in society and culture.

C. COURSE OUTCOME

Students will develop a greater understanding of Russia and Eurasia, the cross-fertilization of cultures and literatures, appreciation for the diversity of the cultures and the ability to synthesize diverse disciplinary perspectives. It will help the students foster their analytical and interpretative skills and apply theoretical knowledge to culture-specific material.

NOTE: The course assumes no prior knowledge of literatures, languages and cinema of the region. While this course has no stated prerequisite, it is assumed that the student has a basic understanding of modern European history.

All books are in English translation and movies with English subtitle. You are welcome to read books in the original language.

D. READINGS

In order to provide a sense of the larger political-social-historical context of the cultures in question, we will explore heterogeneous materials: works of literature (fiction), film, poetry, performance art, journalist and scholarly writing, as well as Internet texts. The course also integrates a scholarly conference on post-socialist cultures and screening of recent films.

The readings are a combination of book-store and course reserve materials and on-line resources. While this course has no stated prerequisite, it is assumed that the students like literature and cinema, as well as sharing ideas and views with others. Everyone is responsible for the required and supplementary readings for each week.

REQUIRED READINGS

1. ***Heart of a Dog/ Собачье сердце*** by Mikhaíl Afanasyevich Bulgakov/Михаил Афанасьевич Булгаков
2. ***Notes from Underground/Записки из подполья*** by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky/Фёдор Михайлович Достоевский
3. ***Generation "P" / Homo Zapiens/ Generation "П"*** by Victor Olegovich Pelevin/Виктор Олегович Пелевин
4. ***One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich/Одн день Ивана Денисовича***
Odin den by Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn/Александр Исаевич Солженицын

5. *The Engineer of Human Souls/ Příběh inženýra lidských duší* by Josef Škvorecký;

NOTE: The detailed syllabus (with the Course Calendar, Supplementary Readings, Course Format & Requirements & Evaluation, and Academic Regulations and Accommodations) will be provided during our first session.