

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Russian 1310. Nabokov

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Hours: TuTh 12.30-1.30

Credits, Prerequisites, and Format

The course carries three credits and satisfies the Arts & Sciences General Education Requirement for a Second Course in Literature, the Arts, or Creative Expression. It is intended for upper-level undergraduates with basic writing abilities. The course meets twice a week and combines lecture and discussion.

Course Description and Goals

A survey of the major writings of Vladimir Nabokov, including novels and short stories from both the Russian and American periods. Discussion topics will include: the semiotics of life-creation, art as perversity, author-hero dynamics, exile and nostalgia, bilingualism and translation, the violence of linguistic play, the manipulation of narrative desire; modernism and postmodernism.

Required Readings

University Bookstore

Vladimir Nabokov. *Despair*. Vintage, 1989.

----- *The Gift*. Vintage, 1991.

----- *Invitation to a Beheading*. Vintage, 1989.

----- *The Annotated Lolita*. Vintage, 1991.

----- *Pale Fire*. Vintage, 1988.

----- *Pnin*. Vintage, 1989.

----- *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*. Vintage, 1996.

Course reader:

Vladimir Nabokov. *Speak, Memory*. Vintage, 1989. Excerpts.

----- *Poems and Problems*. McGraw Hill, 1971. Excerpts.

----- "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English," *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. University of Chicago, 1992.

----- "Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible." Trans. Dmitri Nabokov. *New York Review of Books*, March 31, 1988.

Requirements

- **20% Participation** – Attendance (more than 7 absences after the first week results in automatic failure); preparedness and participation in class discussions; and minimum biweekly participation on the CourseWeb discussion forum (discussion topics will be posted every Friday for the coming week's readings).
- **10% Quizzes** – 4-5 unannounced quizzes, the 3 top scores of which will count. No make-up quizzes.
- **20% Midterm Essay** – 7-10 pages on a topic of your choice. The midterm essay should present a close reading of a single work (a novel or short story) from the first half of the class.
- **50% Final Essay** – 15-20 pages on a topic of your choice. The final essay should examine an overarching theme or preoccupation in Nabokov's work, discussing at least three texts, spanning both halves of the class. Students should consult secondary critical literature on the author (a bibliography will be provided).

Schedule of Assignments

Course content will be grouped into two main sections: 1) Narratives of aestheticism, perversity, and murder (Weeks 1-8); and 2) Narratives of exile and memory, including the exilic condition of language (Weeks 8-14).

Week 1: Introduction, selected poems, interviews; *Lolita*

Week 2: *Lolita*

Week 3: *Lolita*

Week 4: “The Return of Chorb”, “Spring in Fialta”; “Sounds”, “A Guide to Berlin”, “Signs and Symbols”

Week 5: *Despair*

Week 6: *Invitation to a Beheading*

Week 7: *Pale Fire*

Week 8: *Pale Fire*; “Russian Spoken Here”, “A Letter that Never Reached Russia”, “The Admiralty Spire”
(Midterm Essay due)

Week 9: “Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English”, “Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible”, “An Evening of Russian Poetry”; *Speak, Memory* (excerpts)

Week 10: *The Gift*

Week 11: *The Gift*

Week 12: *The Gift*

Week 13: *Pnin*

Week 14: *Pnin*; “Terra Incognito”, “The Circle”, “First Love”; “That in Aleppo Once...”, “Time and Ebb”, “The Vane Sisters”
(Final Essay due)

Academic Integrity:

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

Disabilities:

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and the [Disability Resources and Services](#) no later than the 2nd week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 140 William Pitt Union.

G-Grade Policy:

A G grade will be given only when a student who has been attending the course and has been making regular progress is prevented by a (documented) medical or family emergency from completing the

requirements. Students must sign a written agreement to complete all missing requirements (or supplementary work) within one term after receiving the G grade.

Email Communication Policy:

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to (www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html))