

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Russian 1210. Man and Superman
(Representations of the Superior Individual in Philosophy and Culture)

Fall 2014
CL 216, MW 4.30-5.45

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Hours: M 2.30-3.30, W 1.00-2.00 or by appointment

Credits, Prerequisites, and Format

This course carries three credits and satisfies the general education requirements for second-level literature and comparative foreign culture. It is intended for upper-level undergraduates with prior university-level literature experience and basic writing abilities. The course meets twice a week and combines lecture and discussion.

Course Description and Goals

In 1866, in an apartment building in St. Petersburg, Russia, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov decides to rid the world of evil by murdering an old pawnbroker with an axe. The complex actions of this young student—the protagonist of Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866)—have since inspired a number of texts that address, develop, and re-cast the questions that Dostoevsky raises about the scope of individual power in modern society. These include:

- 1) *Social questions*: Is there such a thing as a superior individual? What traits must one have to become such an individual and who endows him/her with this title? What kind of social environment inspires (or deludes) people with the ideal of the Superman?
- 2) *Philosophical questions*: What marks the threshold between man and god? What power founds human law? Can superhuman will overcome mere human desire? Is action only pure if it is free of rational thought?
- 3) *Moral questions*: What (if anything) are the obligations of the Superman to others? Does the Superman relate to others differently from ordinary men? What is the meaning of the Superman's confession?
- 4) *Political questions*: How well do different political systems succeed in realizing human (or superhuman) potential? What forms of modern power promote the myth of the Superman? Is the Superman necessarily a revolutionary? Can he alternatively be a model worker or, even, a keeper of the peace?

This course traces the evolution of these questions through a rich tradition of prose, drama, film, and philosophy. Taking *Crime and Punishment* as our starting point, the course goes on to examine philosophical works by Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche alongside several important precursor texts, such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*. The remainder of the course looks at representations of the superior individual in monumental European texts from the nineteenth century to the present day. These include important works of literature (Camus' *Stranger*), cinema (Hitchcock's *Rope*), and a comparative look at the idea of human superiority in liberal democratic and utopian socialist societies.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- analyze several philosophical representations of the Superman and read literary, dramatic, and cinematic texts through the filter of these theories;
- trace the development of the literary idea of the Superman from Stendhal and Dostoevsky through Platonov and Camus, identifying differences in the work of each;
- ask thoughtful questions about the place of the individual in modern society, as illuminated by the modern myth of superhumanity

Required Readings

Novels (available in the University bookstore)

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Trans. Matthew Ward. New York: Vintage, 1989.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Ed. George Gibian. Trans. Jessie Coulson. 3rd ed. NY: Norton, 1989.

Platonov, Andrey. *Happy Moscow*. Trans. Robert Chandler. New York: NYRB, 2012.

Stendhal. *The Red and the Black*. Trans. Robert M. Adams. New York: W. W. Norton, 1969.

On Electronic Reserve

***E-reserve password: sup28jp**

Buck-Morss, Susan. "Dream and Awakening," *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.

Camus, Albert. "Absurd Freedom." *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage, 1955.

---. "The Myth of Sisyphus."

<<http://pith.net/pith/observations/essays/featured-writer-albert-camus-the-myth-of-sisyphus>>

Eco, Umberto. "The Myth of Superman." Trans. Natalie Chilton. *Diacritics* 2.1 (1972): 14-22.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/464920>>

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*.

<<http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2068&C=1871>>

---. *The Sickness unto Death*.

<<http://www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=2067>>

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Genealogy of Morals*.

<<http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm>>

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

<http://nietzsche.holtof.com/Nietzsche_thus_spake_zarathustra/Zarathustra_idx.htm>

Pushkin, Aleksandr. "Mozart and Salieri." *Mozart and Salieri: The Little Tragedies*. London: Angel Books, 1987.

---. "The Queen of Spades." *Russian Stories from Pushkin to Buida*. Ed. and trans. Robert Chandler. Penguin, 2005.

Rand, Ayn, "The Little Street." *Journals of Ayn Rand*. Ed. David Harriman. New York: Dutton, 1997.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Camus's *The Outsider*." *Jean-Paul Sartre. Literary and Philosophical Essays*. NYL Collier Books, 1955: 26-44.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Idea*. Vols. 1 and 3.

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=US0bhPS4h2UC>>

<http://books.google.com/books/about/The_world_as_will_and_idea.html?id=92sOAAAAIAAJ>

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*.

<<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>>

Tolstoy, Leo. "The Kreutzer Sonata." *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories*. Trans. Isai Kamen. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

<<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/pitt/docDetail.action?docID=10042768>>

Available in the Media Library or Online (if not using the library, secure a copy well in advance of class!)

Bresson, Robert. *Pickpocket*. (76 min., 1959). DVD 3526

Hitchcock, Alfred. *Rope* (80 min., 1948). DVD 1324

Kalin, Tom. *Swoon* (95 min., 1992). DVD 3759

Scorcese, Martin. *Taxi Driver* (114 min., 1976). DVD 415

Requirements

- **15% Participation** – Attendance (more than 7 absences after the first week is grounds for automatic failure); preparedness and participation in discussions both in class and on the CourseWeb discussion forum (minimum of 6 posts over the course of the semester; weekly threads close after the first class of each subsequent week).
- **15% Quizzes** – Four or five unannounced quizzes, of which the top three grades will count (no make-up quizzes).
- **40% Examinations** – The midterm and final will include a short answer (identification) section and an essay. The final examination will be held on the official exam date. Students are advised to plan ahead and avoid scheduling conflicts. No individual examinations will be given except in the case of a family or medical emergency.
- **30% Essay** – 7-10 pages on a topic of your choice. Suggested topics will be provided. Students are required to submit a paper proposal (either an abstract or an outline) before beginning writing. Papers may be submitted at any time before the last day of class on **Dec 3**. Paper proposals will not be accepted after **Nov 19**, and points may be deducted for failure to complete this requirement.

Capstone Requirements for Russian Majors

- **15% Participation** – Attendance (more than 7 absences after the first week is grounds for automatic failure); preparedness and participation in discussions both in class and on the CourseWeb discussion forum (minimum of 6 posts over the course of the semester; weekly threads close after the first class of each subsequent week).
- **10% Quizzes** – Four or five unannounced quizzes, of which the top three grades will count (no make-up quizzes).
- **40% Examinations** – The midterm and final will include a short answer (identification) section and an essay. The final examination will be held on the official exam date. Students are advised to plan ahead and avoid scheduling conflicts. No individual examinations will be given except in the case of a family or medical emergency.
- **10% Essay Abstract** – 2-3 pages **in Russian** outlining the thesis and supporting evidence of your final paper. A bibliography of secondary sources must be included. Abstracts may be submitted at any time before **Nov 19**. Abstracts will be graded for clarity of writing (including fluency, organization, style, and grammatical accuracy).
- **25% Research Essay** – 7-10 pages on a topic of your choice, using one or more of the Russian texts from the syllabus as your primary focus. Suggested topics will be provided. Some evidence of work with secondary sources is required. Students are required to consult and quote from the original Russian texts. Papers may be submitted at any time before the last day of class on **Dec 3**.

Schedule of Assignments

Week 1

Aug 25 (M): Discussion of early supermen: Prometheus, Hercules, Jesus, Satan, Faust, Napoleon, Byron

Aug 27 (W): Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Part One

Week 2

Sep 1 (M): **NO CLASS**

Sep 3 (W): *Crime and Punishment*, Part Two

Week 3

Sep 8 (M): *Crime and Punishment*, Part Three

Sep 10 (W): *Crime and Punishment*, Part Four

Week 4

Sep 15 (M): *Crime and Punishment*, Part Five

Sep 17 (W): *Crime and Punishment*, Part Six and Epilogue *class conducted via CourseWeb*

Week 5

Sep 22 (M): William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* *class conducted via CourseWeb*

Sep 24 (W): Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (First Essay, ch. 10-12; Second Essay, ch. 1-6, 16-25); Alexander Pushkin, *Mozart and Salieri*

Week 6

Sep 29 (M): Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Prologue, Backworldsmen, The Pale Criminal, The Friend, The Thousand and One Goals, Neighbour-Love, The Way of the Creating One, Voluntary Death, In the Happy Isles, The Rabble, Self-Surpassing, Redemption, The Return Home, The Three Evil Things, The Convalescent, The Ugliest Man, Noontide, The Higher Man)

Oct 1 (W): Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (vol. 3, pp. 107-18; vol. 1, pp. 398-406, 421-30); Pushkin, "The Queen of Spades"

Week 7

Oct 6 (M): Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (vol. 3, pp. 138-54; vol. 1, pp. 468-74, 482-94); Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* ("Problemata: Preliminary Expectoration")

Oct 8 (W): Review session

Week 8

Oct 14 (Tu, M sched.): MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 15 (W): Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, Book One, ch. 1-19, 30

Week 9

Oct 20 (M): *The Red and the Black*, Book Two (ch. 1-19)

Oct 22 (W): *The Red and the Black*, Book Two (ch. 29-45); "The Trial of Antoine Berthet"

Week 10

Oct 27 (M): Lev Tolstoy, "The Kreutzer Sonata"

Oct 29 (Th): Alfred Hitchcock, *Rope*; Clarence Darrow, "The Crime of Compulsion" (excerpts will be posted on CourseWeb)

Week 11

Nov 3 (M): Tom Kalin, *Swoon*

Nov 5 (W): Ayn Rand, "The Little Street"; Umberto Eco, "The Myth of Superman"

Week 12

Nov 10 (M): Susan Buck-Morss, "Dream and Awakening"

Nov 12 (W): Andrey Platonov, *Happy Moscow* (ch. 1-7)

Week 13

Nov 17 (M): *Happy Moscow* (ch. 8-13); Platonov, "On the First Socialist Tragedy"

Nov 19 (W): Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Week 14

Nov 24 (M): Albert Camus, "Absurd Freedom" and "The Myth of Sisyphus"; Jean-Paul Sartre, "Camus' *The Outsider*"; Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (ch. 1, part C, "Despair is 'The Sickness unto Death'" and ch. 2, part B.2, "The despair of willing despairingly to be oneself—defiance")

Nov 26 (W): **NO CLASS**

Week 15

Dec 1 (M): Robert Bresson, *The Pickpocket*; Martin Scorsese, *Taxi Driver*

Dec 3 (W): Review session

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.