The Short Story

3:00-4:15 CL 330

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00, Thursdays 11:00-12:00 in CL 1228

This course will be devoted to close-reading short stories from mostly 19th and 20th century Russian literature. Authors will range from 19th century "Golden Age" masters to 20th century favorites, including well-known Soviets and Russians abroad, to readings from post-Soviet Russia, including authors still writing today.

The course will also present the opportunity to learn about and discuss Russian history, in general and in terms of its literary movements. Students will be expected to read and analyze literature in terms of its content in relation to historical context and regarding the author's ideologies, and in terms of its style and formal execution. As this is a writing-intensive course, students will also be expected to write frequently about the readings, before and after class. There will be a final writing project due at the end of the term.

The writing will take place in Courseweb, where the assignments will also be provided as links and PDFs in "Course Documents." The class will progress through the list of stories as its own pacing dictates.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation. This course meets twice a week. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned story and done some preliminary writing about it. They are also expected to participate actively in class discussions of the assigned story. Every student is permitted three unexcused absences. Further absences can only be excused with documentation from a doctor, etc., which the student must share with the instructor. Participation will be graded during every class; to earn an A, the student must repeatedly volunteer their ideas in each session, demonstrating with their comments that they have read the story closely and thought about it carefully. Students must be willing to engage with each other in conversations about the assignments, not only in response to the instructor's prompts. Attendance and participation is worth 25% of a student's grade.

Writing. Students will be required to write at least two and up to four journal entries per week in Courseweb, depending on the class's pacing. The student should read the assigned the story, and then write a journal entry of at least ~250 words in which they consider the story's form and content, looking at theme, fable, plot, structure, characterization, setting, and/or symbolism to assess the author's intended goals. Then, after coming to class and participating in the discussion of the story, the student should return to write a second journal entry of at least ~250 words in which they attempt to imitate the style and form, and at times content, of the author with their own excerpt of short fictional writing. This second entry must be completed before the class takes up discussion of the next story on its list. This process of read - write - listen/discuss - write will occur for every story. The analytical entries should not "recap" the story, although of course students may cite and quote the story as evidence to support their analysis. The imitative entries should attempt to recreate the tone, style, voice, and form of the story, as a demonstration that students have thought carefully about these elements of the writing. Students must log in to Courseweb, select "Journals" and then select the journal titled with the story they are going to write about to make and submit their writing assignments; they will have to make two entries for each story's journal. The student must budget their time, therefore, such that they not only have time to read the story closely before coming to class, but also to write a thoughtful analysis of what they have read. I will evaluate these entries on their thoroughness and depth, looking for how well they demonstrate that a student read carefully in the first entry, and paid close attention in class in the second entry. These writing assignments will collectively make up 50% of a student's grade.

Students will also be required to submit a final project at the end of the term. For this project they must write their own short story in the style of and treating similar ideas as a story they select from the syllabus. This is its own form of analysis: the student must demonstrate a good understanding of the intentions, ideas, form, and style of the story they select in order to recreate these elements in their own work. A student's story may be transplanted in time and space, and may address contemporary topics in modern vernacular, but it must be written *as if* it were written by a particular author we have read in the manner of his/her writing as we encountered it. This will be due on the last day of class. Its length may be variable and at least partially dictated by the story the student chooses to emulate, but of course, the shorter the story, the more pressure is on it to be exceptional in its delivery of style and ideas. The student will be required to submit draft excerpts of their story to the instructor and to student partners online for comments and workshopping, and will be required to provide comments to other students on their work. This project overall will be worth 25% of a student's grade.

Academic Integrity. By remaining enrolled in the course, students not only agree to abide by the above stipulations, but also understand that the instructor will follow rigorously the rules regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc. spelled out in the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity – Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures (http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html). It is the students' responsibility to familiarize themselves with these regulations and to observe them. Any infraction will be penalized according to these rules.

Special Accommodations. Students who require special accommodations for testing or other classroom situations should notify the instructor and Disabilities Resources and Services by the second week of the term. The instructor will then work with Disability Resources and Services to meet those requirements for accommodation. Anyone who needs to register a disability should contact DRS at 412-648-7890, or visit their office in William Pitt Union, Room 216. Further information about DRS is available at http://www.drs.pitt.edu/.

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point in the semester, as circumstances demand. Any changes will be announced in class and through e-mail in advance of implementation.

Schedule of Readings:

Monday, January 8: Intro

Wednesday, January 10: "Bezhin Lea" by Ivan Turgenev

Monday, January 15: NO CLASS

Wednesday, January 17: "Poor Liza" by Nickolai Karamzin

Monday, January 22: "The Fatalist" by Mikhail Lermontov

Wednesday, January 24: "Queen of Spades" by Alexander Pushkin

Monday, January 29: "The Diary of a Superfluous Man" by Ivan Turgenev

Wednesday, January 31: cont'd

Monday, February 5: "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Wednesday, February 7: cont'd

Monday, February 12: "The Overcoat" by Nickolai Gogol'

Wednesday, February 14: cont'd

Monday, February 19: "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" by Leo Tolstoy

Wednesday, February 21: cont'd

Monday, February 26: "Gusev" by Anton Chekhov

Wednesday, February 28: "Gooseberries" by Anton Chekhov

Monday, March 5: NO CLASS

Wednesday, March 7: NO CLASS

Monday, March 12: "Gentleman from San Francisco" by Ivan Bunin

Wednesday, March 14: "An Affair of Honor" by Vladimir Nabokov

Monday, March 19: "My First Goose" and "Salt" by Isaac Babel

Wednesday, March 21: "Poverty" and "The Galosh" and "The Bathhouse" by Mikhail Zoshchenko

Monday, March 26: "The Return" by Andrei Platonov

Wednesday, March 28: "A Day Off" and "Lend Lease" by Varlam Shalamov

Monday, April 2: "Hermit and Sixfinger" by Victor Pelevin

Wednesday, April 4: "Date with a Bird" by Tatyana Tolstaya

Monday, April 9: "Revenge" by Lyudmila Petrushevskaya

Wednesday, April 11: "Queen of Spades" by Lyudmila Ulitskaya

Monday, April 16: Workshop Day

Wednesday, 18: Final Projects Due, wrap-up