

RUS155: Russian Literature from the 1870s—Fiction, History, Utopia & Apocalypse

Spring 2010

Instructor: Matthew Walker (mwalke@sas.upenn.edu)

Lecture: TR 1:30-3:00

Office Hours: Mondays 11:15-12:15, 754 Williams Hall



Kazimir Malevich, «Сложное предчувствие» (Complicated premonition), 1928-1932

Course Description: Perhaps nowhere in the world of letters do fiction, history, utopia, and apocalypse collide to more fantastic effect than they do in twentieth-century Russian literature. In this course we will familiarize ourselves with some of the major writers published in Russian from the turn of the last century to the 1990s (a time-frame in which Russia experiences two revolutions, two world wars, a workers' paradise and more than one total collapse of society), and above all we will examine how their works contend with the hell and promise of what we call modernity. All lectures and readings will be in English.

Course Grade: Class participation, attendance: 30%
Close Reading Paper (5-7 pages): 30%
Term Paper, topic approved by instructor (10-12 pages): 40%

The instructor also reserves the right to assign brief response papers (1-2 pages) on questions that come up in lecture, as well as quizzes on the reading. These will be factored into your participation grade.

Required Texts: Some of these works can differ rather extensively from edition to edition (this is due as often to the historical instability of the original texts as it is to the contingencies of their translation), therefore, so that we are all “on the same page,” I ask that you obtain the following in *these editions*. They will all be available at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street.

Isaac Babel, *The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel*, translated by Peter Constantine (Norton, 2002)

Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*, translated by Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Indiana University Press, 1979)

Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master & Margarita*, translated by Diana Burgin & Katherine Tiernan O’Conner (Vintage, 1996)

Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line*, translated by H. William Tjalsma (Northwestern University Press, 1994)

Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, translated by Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with the author (Vintage, 1989)

Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, translated by Robert & Elizabeth Chandler & Olga Meerson (NYRB, 2009)

Tatyana Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, translated by Jamey Gambrell (NYRB, 2007)

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, translated by Clarence Brown (Penguin, 1993)

Course Reader: In addition to the texts above, you will also be required to purchase a course reader at Wharton Retrographics (3620 Locust Walk, Steinberg Hall- Dietrich Hall, Suite 400). The assigned texts you will find in the reader include short stories or poems by Anton Chekhov, Ivan Bunin, Aleksandr Blok, Yury Tynyanov, Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, Varlam Shalamov and Joseph Brodsky. These are marked with an asterisk in the class schedule.

Class Schedule

January 14: Introduction

January 19: Anton Chekhov, “The Man in a Case”*; “Lady with the Lapdog”*

January 21: Ivan Bunin, “Man from San Francisco”*

January 26: Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*

January 28: *Petersburg*

February 2: *Petersburg*

February 4: *Petersburg*; Aleksandr Blok, “The Twelve”*

February 9: Isaac Babel, *Odessa Tales*, *Red Cavalry* (selections from *Selected Stories*)

February 11: *Red Cavalry*

February 16: Evgeny Zamyatin, *We*

February 18: *We*

February 23: *We*

February 25: Yury Tynyanov, "Lieutenant Kizhe"*

March 2: Andrei Platonov, *Foundation Pit*

March 4: *Foundation Pit* **CLOSE READING PAPER DUE**

SPRING BREAK March 5-13

March 16: Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*

March 18: *Invitation to a Beheading*

March 23: *Invitation to a Beheading*

March 25: Anna Akhmatova, "Requiem"*; Osip Mandelstam, "Verses on the Unknown Soldier"*;

Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales* (selections)*

March 30: Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master & Margarita*

April 1: *Master & Margarita*

April 6: *Master & Margarita*

April 8: *Master & Margarita*

April 13: Joseph Brodsky, "Elaborating Plato"*; Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line*

April 15: *Moscow to the End of the Line*

April 20: Tatyana Tolstaya, *The Slynx*

April 22: *The Slynx*

April 27: *The Slynx*

Final Papers due May 7