

Portraits of Russian Society: Art, Fiction, Drama

INSTRUCTOR	Prof. D. Brian Kim dbkim@sas.upenn.edu
MEETINGS	Williams Hall 218 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:45p – 3:05p
OFFICE HOURS	Williams Hall 752 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30p – 1:30p

Course Description and Overview

This course covers nineteenth-century Russian cultural and social history. Each week-long unit is organized around a single medium-length text (novella, play, memoir), which opens up a single scene of social history: birth, death, duel, courtship, tsar, and so on. Each of these main texts is accompanied by a set of supplementary materials: paintings, historical readings, cultural-analytical readings, excerpts from other literary works, &c. The object of the course is to understand the social codes and rituals that informed nineteenth-century Russian life, and to apply this knowledge in interpreting literary texts, other cultural objects, and even historical and social documents (letters, memoranda, &c.). We will attempt to understand social history and literary interpretation as separate disciplines, yet also as disciplines that can inform one another. In short: we will read the social history through the text, and read the text against the social history.

This course fulfills the Sector Requirement in Humanities and Social Science. By the end of this semester, you will have a sense of the overarching narrative of nineteenth-century Russian literary, cultural, and intellectual history, as well as an understanding of the major themes and problems that preoccupied Russian writers and their readers both at home and abroad. Class discussions and writing assignments will ask you to provide your own interpretations in dialogue with those of others and are designed to help you develop skills in perspective-taking, close reading, and literary analysis.

All readings, lectures, discussions, and written work are in English. Students who wish to work with texts in Russian are encouraged to do so and invited to consult with the professor in advance of major writing assignments.

Note on Format for Spring 2023

Our meetings on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons will be held fully in person in Williams Hall 218. Generally, Tuesdays will be devoted to lectures, while Thursdays will be reserved for discussions. Lectures will not be recorded. In accordance with current campus protocols regarding COVID-19, students are invited, but not required, to wear masks in class.

Course Materials

There are no required book purchases for this course. All required readings will be made available on [Canvas](#).

Components and Assessment

PARTICIPATION

15% (13% + 2%)

13%: Your attentive engagement with lectures and thoughtful participation in both small- and large-group discussions will drive much of what we do together in class time. Regular attendance is expected. Come to class prepared to share your experiences of reading, to listen to those of others, and to collaborate on advancing our shared understanding of the texts and their contexts.

2%: I will ask you to complete a short self-introduction on Canvas at the beginning of the semester. This, of course, will not be graded *per se* — you need only complete it by Friday, January 27 for full credit.

QUIZZES

20% (2% x 10)

Each Tuesday will begin with a short quiz consisting of multiple-choice, true/false, and/or short-answer questions (from a word to a paragraph). These quizzes will cover the readings assigned for that day. There will be no opportunities to make up or reschedule missed quizzes, but your three lowest quiz grades of the semester will be dropped.

RESPONSE PAPERS

25% (5% x 5)

Every two weeks, you will write a short, informal response of approximately 500 words to a synthesizing prompt that will direct you to consider the cultural and social history of nineteenth-century Russia to navigate a hypothetical situation in nineteenth-century Russian life. Prompts will be made available one week in advance of each deadline. Each of these responses are weighted equally.

These assignments are due at 11:59pm on the following dates:

<i>Response 1</i>	Friday, January 27
<i>Response 2</i>	Friday, February 10
<i>Response 3</i>	Friday, February 24
<i>Response 4</i>	Friday, March 24
<i>Response 5</i>	Monday, April 10 (note the date!)

ESSAYS

40% (20% x 2)

You will write two formal papers in this course, each of approximately 1500 words and weighted equally, responding to prompts that will invite you to synthesize your understanding of core concepts across readings by examining a literary work in dialogue with historical, social, and/or intellectual context. The first of these papers is due Friday, March 3; the second, Wednesday, April 26.

GRADING

A+	98+	B+	87-90	C+	77-80	D+	65-70
A	94-98	B	83-87	C	73-77	D	60-65
A-	90-94	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	F	0-60

Policies

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

I will take formal attendance on days marked for discussion only. Not being present on these days will inevitably impact your participation grade. After three unexcused absences, each further unexcused absence will additionally lower your overall grade in this course by one step (e.g., A- to B+). If you need to miss class on a discussion day, please let me know in advance by email.

DEADLINES AND LATE WORK

Written work (i.e., response papers and essays) is due on Canvas by 11:59pm the night of the date specified. This is a hard cutoff, with the timestamp on Canvas serving as sole arbiter, after which point your submission will be considered late.

Over the course of the semester, you may claim a total of up to three days' worth of extensions across these assignments, no questions asked. In order to activate an extension, you must contact me by email before the original deadline of the assignment in question. Otherwise, your grade on the late assignment will be reduced by one step (e.g., A- to B+) for each day over the deadline. Extensions beyond these will not be granted except under extraordinary circumstances.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

My office hours, beginning January 17, are Tuesday and Thursday afternoons between 12:30 and 1:30. I am available during these times to answer questions, go through more challenging passages, workshop paper topics, address concerns, or simply discuss any aspect of the course. Please feel free to drop in; no appointment necessary.

If you are unable to meet with me during these hours, or if you would like to meet before January 17, send me an email and I will be happy to figure out another time with you.

Please be sure to check both Canvas and your email regularly. If you need to get in touch with me, email is the best way to do so; I will respond to your message within 24 hours in most circumstances, and usually much sooner.

TECHNOLOGY

You are welcome to use laptops and tablets in class for purposes that pertain directly to the course: accessing readings, consulting relevant online sources, and taking notes. Please refrain from using cell phones. Inappropriate use will negatively impact your participation grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to abide by the Code of Academic Integrity of the University of Pennsylvania, which you can find at [this link](#). Contact me in case of any ambiguities.

Schedule

The information below — weekly themes and the focal literary work associated with each — will give you a basic idea of the overarching structure of the semester. More detailed reading assignments will be found on Canvas. When there are discrepancies between the information on Canvas and this version of the syllabus, the Canvas site takes precedence.

WEEK 1 COURSE INTRODUCTION

(R) JANUARY 12 LECTURE

WEEK 2 POWER

(T) JANUARY 17 LECTURE

(R) JANUARY 19 Gogol, *The Government Inspector* (1836)

WEEK 3 RELIGION

(T) JANUARY 24 LECTURE

(R) JANUARY 26 Leskov, *The Sealed Angel* (1873)

(F) JANUARY 27 **RESPONSE 1 DUE**

WEEK 4 NOBILITY

(T) JANUARY 31 LECTURE

(R) FEBRUARY 2 Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter* (1836)

WEEK 5

FAMILY

- (T) FEBRUARY 7 LECTURE
- (R) FEBRUARY 9 Tolstoy, *Family Happiness* (1859)
- (F) FEBRUARY 10 **RESPONSE 2 DUE**

WEEK 6

LOVE

- (T) FEBRUARY 14 LECTURE
- (R) FEBRUARY 16 Turgenev, *First Love* (1860)

WEEK 7

GENDER

- (T) FEBRUARY 21 LECTURE
- (R) FEBRUARY 23 Leskov, *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1865)
- (F) FEBRUARY 24 **RESPONSE 3 DUE**

WEEK 8

LIBERTY

- (T) FEBRUARY 28 LECTURE
- (R) MARCH 2 Turgenev, *Mumu* (1854)
- (F) MARCH 3 **ESSAY 1 DUE**

WEEK 9

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10

EMPIRE

- (T) MARCH 14 LECTURE
- (R) MARCH 16 Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time* (1840)

WEEK 11

IDENTITY

- (T) MARCH 21 LECTURE
- (R) MARCH 23 Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863)
- (F) MARCH 24 **RESPONSE 4 DUE**

WEEK 12

MODERNITY

- (T) MARCH 28 LECTURE

(R) MARCH 30 Chekhov, *Three Sisters* (1900)

WEEK 13 LABOR

(T) APRIL 4 LECTURE

(R) APRIL 6 Gorky, *Enemies* (1906)

WEEK 14 REVOLUTION

(M) APRIL 10 **RESPONSE 5 DUE**

(T) APRIL 11 LECTURE

(R) APRIL 13 Kovalevskaya, *Nihilist Girl* (1892)

WEEK 15 DEATH

(T) APRIL 18 LECTURE

(R) APRIL 20 Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886)

WEEK 16 FINALS

(T) APRIL 25 WORKSHOP

(W) APRIL 26 **ESSAY 2 DUE**