

RUSSN-GA 1092-001
Contemporary Russian Fiction
Spring 2013

Monday 6:20 PM

Prof. Eliot Borenstein
Russian & Slavic Studies
19 University Place, Room 210

Office Hours:
(in person and on Skype chat)
Wednesday 12:30-1:30
Thursday 2-3
Or by appointment

998-8676 (w)
eb7@nyu.edu
Skype: eliotb2002

Description: This seminar is both an in-depth survey of Russian fiction after the collapse of the USSR and a collective investigation into the intersections of violence, narrative, and aesthetics in a number of the assigned texts.

NYU Classes and the Internet. NYU Classes is an important part of the course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, NYU Classes uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

Course requirements: This course is designed primarily for readers of Russian. However, it has also been opened to qualified students without sufficient Russian knowledge. For almost all the texts, both Russian and English versions will be provided. In two cases, Russian readers and English readers will be reading entirely different books (due to a lack of translation. In one case, Russian readers will be assigned supplemental short stories not available in translation.

It is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments and come to class prepared either to make observations or ask questions. Attendance is, of course, mandatory.

Class presentations. Each student must select one of the secondary readings (in critical theory) for a brief (5-10 minute) presentation to the group.

Writing Assignments: There will be three short analysis papers and a final paper (15-20 pages).

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *two* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You

must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed. That is, if you want to write a short paper on *Death and the Penguin*, you must turn this paper by March 4. If you do turn in a short paper and don't show up for class, your grade for the assignment goes down by one letter. A letter is also dropped for each day the short paper is late.

You may not wait until December to turn in three short papers. The semester has been divided into three parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these three deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **March 11** your second short paper is due no later than **April 15**, and the third short paper is due no later than **May 6**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first or second segments of the course), you are free to do so.

The topic of your *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. Your final papers can be based on a short paper.

The final paper must be turned on **May 13**

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignments. Drafts of the short papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date; drafts of the long paper must be submitted no later than two weeks before the due date.

Electronic submission of written assignments. You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Words Assignment" or "Gogol Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Sorokin the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Sorokin).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Tolstaya then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Tolstaya).doc". A final paper on Bykov by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Bykov).doc".

Finally, please note that I have multiple email accounts. Please do not send email to all accounts at once ("cc"); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message. Any of the three accounts will do.

Office Hours. I have set aside office hours to meet with students either in person or on Skype (by chat, not as a voice call). In-person conversations take precedence over Skype chats. If you want to contact me by Skype, you'll need to add me as a contact.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Presentation:	10%
Short Papers:	30
Final paper:	50%

Texts

NYU Bookstore

Please note--you are not required to by the English translations of Russian works if you're going to be reading in the original

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. 1-143.
- Bataille, Georges. *Erotism: Death & Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986. Introduction (11-25) Chapters 1 (29-39), 2 (40-48), 3 (49-54), 4 (55-62), 5 (63-70), 6 (71-80), 7 (81-88).
- Bykov, Dmitri. *Living Souls*. Translated by Cathy Porter. London: Alma Books, 2012.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Part One: Chapters 1 (3-31) 2 (32-69); Part Three: Chapter 1 (135-169).
- Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo*. Translated by James Strachey. Part I (1-17), Part IV (100-161). New York: Norton, 1990.
- Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Chapters 1 (1-38), 2 (39-67), & 6 (143-168).
- Kurkov, Viktor. *Death and the Penguin*. Translated by George Bird. New York: Melville International Crime, 2011.
- Pelevin, Victor. *Homo Zapiens*. Translated by Andrew Bromfield. New York: Penguin, 2002.
- Petrushevskaya, Lyudmila. *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales*. Trans. Keith Gessen. New York: Penguin, 2009. [Contains all the assigned Petrushevskaya stories except "Our Crowd."]

- Sorokin, Vladimir. *Day of the Oprichnik*. Translated by Jamey Gambrell. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
- Starobinets, Anna. *An Awkward Age*. Translated by Hugh Aplin. New York: Hesperus Press, 2011.
- Terekhov, Alexander. *The Rat Killer*. Translated by N. Roy and B.T. Gall. London: Alma Books, 2009. Russian readers, see Елизаров.
- Ulitskaya, Lyudmila. *Sonechka: A Novella and Stories*. New York: Schocken, 2005.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (excerpts). Chapters 1-2, 6. New York: Picador, 2008.

NYU Classes

- Akunin, Boris. *The Coronation*. Translated by Andrew Bromfield. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2009. Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." *Selected Writings, Volume I: 1913-1926*. Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. 236-252.
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995. Chapters 1 (1-23) and 2 (24-55).
- Dworkin, Andrea. *Intercourse*. The Twentieth Anniversary Edition. New York: Basic Books, 2006. Preface (xxix-xxxiv), Chapter 1 (3-24), 7 (153-182), 9 (213-247).
- Erofeev, Viktor. "Anna's Body, or the Death of the Russian Avant-Garde", "The Parkeet", "Life with an Idiot".
- Lukyanenko, Sergei. *Night Watch*. Translated by Andrew Bromfield. New York: Miramax, 2006. (English only). Russian readers, see Маринина.
- Miller, D. A. *The Novel and the Police*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1988. Foreword (vii-xv); Chapters 1 (1-32) & 6 (192-220).
- Petrushevskaya, Lyudmila. "Our Crowd" (Translated by Helena Goscilo).
- Tolstaya, Tatiana. "Fire and Dust", "Peters", "The Poet and the Muse", "The Fakir", "Hunting the Woolly Mammoth", "Date with a Bird." Translated by Jamey Gambrell.

- Акунин, Борис. "Коронация."
- Быков, Дмитрий. "Ж/Д"
- Елизаров, Михаил. "Библиотекарь"
- Ерофеев, Виктор. "Тело Анны, или конец русского авангарда", "Попугайчик", "Жизнь с идиото".
- Курков, Виктор. "Пикник на льду (Смерть постороннего)" /
- Маринина, Александра. "Иллюзия греха."
- Пелевин, Виктор. "Generation 'П'"
- Петрушевская Людмила/ "Тигена", "Новые Робинзоны", "Фонтанны Дом", "Свой круг", "Случай в Сокольниках", "Рука", "Месть", "Новая душа", "Чудо", "Материнский привет", "Дикие животные сказки."
- Сорокин, Владимир. "День опричника"
- Старобинец, Анна. "Агентство", "Живые", "Переходный возраст", "Правила", "Семь", "Щель", "Я жду", "Яшина вечность".

Толстая, Татьяна. "Петерс", "Поэт и муза", "Факир", "Охота на мамонта",
"Свидание с птицей"
Улицкая, Людмила. "Соченка", "Голубчик", "Орловы -Соколовы", "Цю-у-
рих", "Пиковая дама".

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 28 (M) Introduction

February 4 (M) Петрушевская /

Petrushevskaya

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Свой круг" / "Our Crowd"
- ★ Read "Гигиена" / "Hygiene"
- ★ Read "Новые Робинзоны" /
"The New Robinsons"
- ★ Read "Случай в Сокольниках" /
"Incident at Sokolniki"
- ★ Read "Рука" / "Hygiene"
- ★ Read "Материнский привет" /
"A Mother's Farewell"
- ★ Read "Месть" / "Revenge"
- ★ Read "Чудо" / "Miracle"
- ★ Read "Новая душа" /
"A New Soul"
- ★ Read "Фонтанный дом" /
"The Fountain House"
- ★ Read "Дикие животные сказки"
(For Russian Readers
--read the first 5 of them)
- ★ Read Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
(Parts I & IV)

February 11 (M) Ерофеев / Erofeev

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Жизнь с идиотом" /
"Life with an Idiot"
- ★ Read "Тело Анны, или
Конец русского авангарда" /
"Anna's Body, or
The End of the Russian Avant-Garde"
- ★ Read "Попугайчик" /
"The Parakeet"
- ★ Read Girard, *Violence and the
Sacred* (Chapters 1, 2, & 6)

February 18 (M) No Class

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Presidents' Day

February 25 (M) Пелевин / Pelevin

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Generation 'П'" /
Homo Zapiens
- ★ Read Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
(Part 1: Chapters 1-2; Part 3: Chapter 1)

March 4(M) Курков / Kurkov

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Пикник на льду
(Смерть постороннего) /
Death and the Penguin
- ★ Read Benjamin, "Critique of
Violence."

March 11(M) Сорokin / Sorokin

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "День опричника" /
Day of the Oprichnik
- ★ Read Agamben, *Homo Sacer*
(1-143)

Final Deadline for First Short Paper

March 18 (M) SPRING BREAK

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ NO CLASS

March 25 (M) First Seder

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ NO CLASS

April 1 (M) Быков / Bykov

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Ж/Д" / *Living Souls*

April 8 (M) Толстая / Tolstaya

- ▼ For Today:
- ★ Read "Петерс" / "Peters"
- ★ Read "Поэт и Муза" /
"The Poet and the Muse"
- ★ Read "Факир" / "The Fakir"
- ★ Read "Охота на мамонта" /
"Hunting the Woolly Mammoth"
- ★ Read "Свидание с птицей" /
"Date with a Bird"
- ★ Read Zizek, *Violence*
(excerpts TBA)

April 15 (M) Улицкая / Ulitskaya

▼ For Today:

- ★ Read "Сонечка" / "Sonechka"
- ★ Read "Пиковая дама"/
"The Queen of Spades"
- ★ Read "Цурих" / "Zurich"
- ★ Read "Голубчик" / "Angel"
- ★ Read "Орловы-Соколовы"/
"The Orlov-Sokolovs"
- ★ Read Bataille, *Erotism*
(Introduction, Chapters 1-7)

**Final Deadline for Short
Paper #2**

April 22 (M) Елизаров / Terekhov

▼ For Today:

- ★ For Russian Readers: Read
"Библиотекарь"
- ★ For English Readers: Read *Rat
Killer*
- ★ Read Dworkin, *Intercourse*
(Preface, Chapters 1, 7, 9)

April 29 (M) Маринина / Lukuяnenko

▼ For Today:

- ★ For Russian Readers: Read
"Иллюзия греха"
- ★ For English Readers: Read *Night*

Watch

- ★ Read Brooks, *The Melodramatic
Imagination* (Chapters 1 & 2)

May 6 (M) Акунин / Akunin

▼ For Today:

- ★ Read "Коронация" / *Coronation*
- ★ Read Miller (Foreword,
Chapters 1 & 6)

**Final Deadline for Short
Paper#3**

May 13 (M) Старобинец / Starobinets

▼ For Today:

- ★ Read "Правило"
- ★ Read "Я жду"
- ★ Read "Агентство"
- ★ Read "Семья"
- ★ Read "Яшина вечность"
- ★ Read "Переходный возраст"
- ★ Read *An Awkward Age*
(contains English translations
of all the above stories)

FINAL PAPER DUE