

Tolstoy
RUS 424 FALL 2010
TR 1:30-2:45 ED202

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Course Description

In 1863, at age 35, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) began writing *War and Peace*. Over the next seven years it transmogrified from a novel about decadent Russian society in the 1850s, to an epic about Russian society during the Napoleonic wars of the 1810s. Over thirteen hundred pages long, *War and Peace* from the outset defied classification. Tolstoy himself first called it a novel, but later wrote, "It is not a novel." In promoting Tolstoy to his French editor, Ivan Turgenev said, "... this is real Russia." Henry James threw up his hands as a critic: "... but what do such large loose baggy monsters, with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary, artistically *mean*?" More recently, the scholar Lydia Ginzburg noted that during World War II, "whoever had energy enough to read, used to read *War and Peace* avidly in besieged Leningrad."

Students in this course will be among those few who have read *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. We will also be reading five novellas that he wrote before and after these novels, as we cover the big questions. These include: the individual in relation to history, free will, historical determinism, the psychological hero, knowledge, death, and war, as well as more specific subjects such as the cultural war between Russia and France, the Napoleonic Wars, the nobility, society, sex, and love, all in the context of Tolstoy's various artistic and moral universes. Students will have the opportunity to see the film (1966) and opera (1952) based on *War and Peace*, and the recent film, *The Last Station*, about Tolstoy's death.

Course Goals

In addition to learning about Tolstoy—his life, his works, and the many ways in which Tolstoy has been interpreted by readers, composers, and filmmakers—and reading two of the great (in size as well as importance) novels of Russian and world literature, students will also learn about the significance of Tolstoy in Russian and world culture. Through class discussion, papers, and creative assignments, students will learn to write and to articulate the complexities presented by this writer and his works.

Requirements

During the first week, students should choose a reading and writing partner for the course. Much of nineteenth-century literature was written to be read aloud and you should arrange with your partner to read to each other occasionally. I also strongly encourage you to read each other's work and to footnote each other's ideas. Ideally I am the third reader of your work. *While the first assignment must be revised, all work may be revised for a better grade.* Writing means extensive revising and rewriting; editing means minor changes of words and punctuation. I expect revised papers to be substantially, not cosmetically, rewritten. I will provide worksheets on editing.

Required Texts

Leo Tolstoy, *Great Short Works of Leo Tolstoy*, Harper
 Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky, Random House
 Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky, Penguin
 Other readings on Blackboard

On Reserve

Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 2 vol. (1930), PG3385.M297 1987 v. 1
 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, (1946), PG3385.S5 1946
 Alexandra Tolstoy, *A Life of My Father* (1953), PG3385.T53
 Henri Troyat, *Tolstoi*, (1967), PG3385.T8713
 Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky, PG3366.A6 2000b
 Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky, PG3366.V6 2007

Writing Assignments (% of your final grade)

1. Write a short (1-2 pages) response to these different views on art, reading, and writing, and articulate your own views on the subject and what you hope or think will be your experience in reading Tolstoy's novels and short stories. This paper must be revised and I will average the grades. (15%)

- Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* 1896, 50-3.
- Vladimir Nabokov, "L'envoi," *Lectures on Literature* (1950s), 181-2.

Due in class Thurs., August 26. Revisions (with original paper) are due Tues., Sept. 7, in class.

2. Write a character sketch (1-2 pages) of an important person in the style of *War & Peace*. Due in class Tues., Sept. 28. (15%)

3. Peruse one or more biographies about Tolstoy's life and works to write a college entrance essay for him (3-5 pages), along with a teacher's letter of recommendation. Please document your sources. I have put some important biographies on reserve. You may NOT use websites such as Wikipedia as your sources!! Due in class Tues., Oct. 12th. (25%)

4. Final project (7-10 pages), due in class Tues., Nov. 30. (35%)

- a. Write a paper on one of the novels.
- b. Write a proposal for a publisher for the continuation of the novel and submit a writing sample.

There are no exams in this course.

Attendance

Class participation includes sharing your ideas and listening carefully to your classmates. Attendance is central to participation and I take formal attendance. Let me know ahead of time if you cannot come to class. After 3 unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered by half a grade. (10%)

Readings

1R 8/19 Introduction: On Reading Tolstoy

2T 8/24 *Family Happiness* (1859)

- Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (1896), trans. by Aylmer Maude (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 50-53.

- Vladimir Nabokov, “L’envoi” (1950s), *Lectures on Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 181-2.

R 8/26 *War and Peace*, Volume 1, Part 1, 3-111

- The Publication History of *War and Peace*, in Maude translation (Norton), 1081-2

Due: Response paper

3T 8/31 *War and Peace*, Volume 1, Part 2, 112-200

- Kathryn Feuer, “The Book That Became *War and Peace*” (1959), in Maude translation (Norton), 1142-48

R 9/2 *War and Peace*, Volume 1, Part 3, 201-94

- Bring copies of Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* 1896, 50-3 and Vladimir Nabokov, “L’envoi,” *Lectures on Literature* (1950s), 181-2.

4T 9/7 *War and Peace*, Volume 2, Parts 1-2, 297-398

Due: Revised response paper

R 9/9 No class

5T 9/14 *War and Peace*, Volume 2, Parts 2-4, 398-499

R 9/16 *War and Peace*, Volume 2, Parts 4-5, 499-600

6T 9/21 *War and Peace*, Volume 3, Parts 1-2, 603-709

- Lydia Ginzburg, “Causal Conditionality,” (1971), in Maude translation (Norton), 1167-78

R 9/23 *War and Peace*, Volume 3, Part 2, 709-820

7T 9/28 *War and Peace*, Volume 3, Part 3, 821-932

Due: character sketch

R 9/30 *War and Peace*, Volume 4, Parts 1-2, 935-1030

8T 10/5 *War and Peace*, Volume 4, Parts 3-4, 1031-1125

R 10/7 *War and Peace*, Epilogue, Parts 1-2, 1129-1215

- Appendix: A Few Words Apropos of the Book *War and Peace*, 1217-24

9T 10/12 about *War and Peace*, the four-part eight-hour movie (1966, shortened to two parts and six hours) by and starring Sergei Bondarchuk (1920-94), and the opera (1952) by Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Due: Tolstoy’s college entrance essay and recommendation letter

R 10/14 *Anna Karenina*, Part 1, 1-115

- 10T 10/19 *Anna Karenina*, Part 2, 117-236
- R 10/21 *Anna Karenina*, Part 3, 237-352
- 11T 10/26 *Anna Karenina*, Part 4, 353-435
- R 10/28 *Anna Karenina*, Part 5, 437-549
- 12T 11/2 *Anna Karenina*, Part 6, 551-669
- R 11/4 *Anna Karenina*, Part 7, 671-768
- 13T 11/9 *Anna Karenina*, Part 8, 769-817
- R 11/11 Veteran's Day, no class
- 14T 11/16 *Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), 245-302
- R 11/18 *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), 355-449
- 15T 11/23 "Father Sergius" (1898), 501-46
- R 11/25 Thanksgiving, no class
- 16T 11/30 *Hadji Murad* (1904), 549-668
Due: final paper
- R 12/1 Tolstoy's death in 1910: *The Last Station* (112 min.), directed by Michael Hoffman, based on the novel by Jay Parini, starring Christopher Plummer and Helen Mirren
- 17T 12/7 Conclusion

NO FINAL EXAM

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is bad scholarship with serious consequences. Do not do it. It is the equivalent of being caught doping in athletics: an attempt to gain a competitive advantage by illegal means. Here are some ASU guidelines that you will have covered or will cover in ASU101: <http://clte.asu.edu/firstYrSeminar/core/integrity/>
<http://clas.asu.edu/files/AI%20Flier.pdf>

We will review proper ways to acknowledge ideas and quotations by others before you write your first paper. Papers for this course do NOT require research, just that you read the texts carefully, think about how they work and what that means, and articulate YOUR ideas clearly.

Guidelines for Papers

Papers must be double-spaced and responsive to all aspects of the assignment, including length (provide a word count on the first page), and prepared according to the Modern Language Association or *Chicago Manual of Style*. *Make sure you document every reference--in quotation or paraphrase--including page numbers whenever possible.* Your name should appear only on the back of the last page. Feel free to write in the first person. Support claims with evidence and conclusions with argument. Avoid wordiness and hyperbolic words like *extremely*.

Paper grades:

An “A” paper demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but also has applied them in an imaginative and incisive way. The paper shows a command of language that allows the writer to express worthwhile ideas or perceptions clearly, effectively, in detail and with virtually no mechanical errors. There is grace to the sentence structure, which is clear and varied throughout. The paper consistently includes adequate documentation. The “A” grade is reserved for exceptional papers; “A-” papers tend to be exceptional in part but marred by one or two problems.

A “B” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course, and has applied them with some originality. The paper shows the writer can organize a coherent essay with few mechanical errors. The thesis statement is clear and is responsive to the assigned topic. It is supported with strong, logical argumentation and use of evidence. The paper for the most part includes adequate documentation.

A “C” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course, but needs to pay more attention to detail in reading or writing. Thesis statement and topic sentences are weak, and documentation is erratic.

A “D” paper demonstrates that the writer has only a minimal understanding of the concepts of the course. Significant gaps in the writer's comprehension indicate the need for more study. Moreover, the writer's basic compositional skills are below satisfactory for university work. Documentation is unsatisfactory.

An “NC” paper demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course. Because of the writer's lack of skill or concern, the work includes gross errors as well as a conspicuous lack of content. Documentation is negligible. The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

A paper may combine different levels of work. In that case, the grade will depend on the paper's overall demonstration of knowledge of the material and of writing skills.