

Tolstoy's *War and Peace*

RUSS 194, Fall 2003

MWF 2:20-3:20, HUM 212

www.macalester.edu/russian/courses/RUSS194.html

Hilde Hoogenboom

651-696-6528, HUM 205

Off. hrs 11-12 MWF & by appt.

hoogenboom-at-macalester.edu

Writing Assistant:

Susannah Johnson

651-699-1052

sajohnson-at-macalester.edu

Course Description

In 1863, at age 35, Tolstoy 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." Since it appeared the work has been understood in vastly different ways by Russian and foreign readers alike. 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 WWII, "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 the entire book. Our exploration of *War and Peace* includes Tolstoy's own letters and later interpretations in Bondarchuk's film (1967) and Prokofiev's opera (1952). We will examine such twentieth-century critical approaches to *War and Peace* as formalism, prosaics, cultural semiotics, literary history, feminist theory, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and post-colonial theory, along with the responses of writers at the time as we cover the big questions. These include: the individual in relation to history, free will, the psychological hero, knowledge, historical determinism, death, and war, as well as more specific subjects such as the cultural war between Russia and France, the Napoleonic Wars, the nobility, and love, all in the context of Tolstoy's larger artistic program.

Requirements

This course combines daily writing assignments of one paragraph on questions that I assign for each class with several longer creative pieces and critical essays. Sometimes I will call on students to read their paragraphs. Students will briefly present ideas for their final projects to the class for comments before working on them.

During the first week, students should choose a major theme to follow throughout the novel for the whole semester and be responsible for students' questions on that theme. Students can choose to write a final paper on their theme.

Our writing instructor is Susannah Johnson and peer tutors are also available at the Max Center. You should arrange to meet with Susannah during the second week of classes to go over your first writing assignment and learn how to edit and revise your work for this course. I expect you to consult with her on all your writing projects and

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.

You must finish reading the book by December 1st to complete your final projects. There is no final exam.

Required Texts

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Norton Critical Edition, 2nd edition
Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

Recommended on Reserve

Kathryn B. Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace*, 1996
Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in War and Peace*, 1987

Writing Assignments (% of your final grade)

1. Daily paragraph (10%)
2. 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 *War and Peace*. (10%)
 - Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* 1896, 50-3.
 - Vladimir Nabokov, "L'envoi," *Lectures on Literature* (1950s), 181-2.
 - Louis Menand, "Comp Time," *The New Yorker*, Sept. 11, 2000, 92-4.

At the end of the course we will revisit this exercise when you write a response to your response. Due in class Wed. Sept. 3; discuss with writing assistant the week of Sept. 8th; revised response due in class Mon. Sept 15.

3. Write a character sketch (1-2 pages) of an important person in the style of *War & Peace*. Due in class Wed. Sept. 24. (10%)
4. The bibliographic workshop will focus on Tolstoy, and you should be gathering information 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. Due in class Mon. Oct. 13th. (20%)
5. Review the film and/or opera in relation to the novel (4-6 pages). Due in class Mon. Nov. 17th. (20%)
6. Final project (7-10 pages) can be collaborative: oral presentation in class Mon. Dec. 1 and 3, due in class Fri. Dec. 12. (30%)
 - a. Write a paper on the aspect of the novel that you have followed.
 - b. Summarize the novel as 1) a cartoon, 2) a film treatment, or 3) a play draft.
 - c. Write a proposal for a publisher for the continuation of the novel and submit a writing sample.

Readings

Week 1

Sun. Aug 31 Introduction: On Becoming (Re)readers and (Re)writers

- Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* 1896, 50-3.
- Vladimir Nabokov, "L'envoi," *Lectures on Literature* (1950s), 181-2.
- Louis Menand, "Comp Time," *The New Yorker*, Sept. 11, 2000, 92-4.

W Sept 3 Book One, Chapters 1-3, 3-29

Due: Response paper

F Sept 5 Book One, Chapters 4-10, 30-60

Week 2 Meet with Writing Assistant

M Sept 8 Book One, Chapters 11-16, 60-94

- The Publication History of *War and Peace*, 1081-2
- The Author on the Novel, 1083-96

W Sept 10 Book Two, Chapters 1-5, 95-128

- Kathryn Feuer, "The Book that Became *War and Peace*," 1142-8

F Sept 12 Book Two, Chapters 6-13, 128-57

Week 3

M Sept 15 Book Two-Three, Chapters 14-16 and 1, 157-86

Due: Revised response paper

W Sept 17 Book Three, Chapters 2-8, 187-219

F Sept 19 Book Three, Chapters 9-13, 219-55

Week 4 Draft and revise character sketch

M Sept 22 Book Four, Chapters 1-9, 257-86

W Sept 24 Book Four-Five, Chapters 10-15, 1-2, 286-317

- Ivan Turgenev, "Comments on *War and Peace*," 1107-8
- Constantine Leontiev, "The Greatness and Universality of *War and Peace*," 1109-10
- Henry James, "Loose Baggy Monsters, A Monster Harnessed," 1114
- Victor Shklovsky, "Details in *War and Peace*," 1114-26

F Sept 26 Bibliographic workshop, Library 2nd floor

Due: Character sketch

Week 5

M Sept 29 Book Five, Chapters 3-13, 317-48

W Oct 1 Bibliographic and On-Line workshop, HUM304

F Oct 3 Book Five-Six, Chapters 14-18, 1-2, 348-80

- Dmitri Pisarev, "The Old Gentry," "[Nicholas Rostov]" 1099-1101
- George Gibian, "A Note on Russian Literary Criticism," 1179-81.

Week 6 Draft and revise college entrance essay for Tolstoy

M Oct 6 Book Six, Chapters 3-10, 381-410

- Isaiah Berlin, "Tolstoy's Attitude Towards History in *War and Peace*," from *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, 1129-36

W Oct 8 Book Six-Seven, Chapters 11-17, 1-4, 411-41
 F Oct 10 Book Seven, Chapters 5-13, 441-74

Week 7

M Oct 13 Book Eight, Chapters 1-11, 475-505
 Due: Tolstoy's college entrance essay and recommendation letter

W Oct 15 Book Eight, Chapters 12-22, 505-34

- Dmitry S. Mirsky, "About Tolstoy," 1137-42

F Oct 17 Book Nine, Chapters 1-9, 535-66

- Boris Eikhenbaum, "The Genre of War and Peace in the Context of Russian Literary History," 1126-8.

Week 8 The Movie

M Oct 20 Book Nine, Chapters 10-20, 567-97

- Caryl Emerson, "Where Bakhtin Misses the Mark on Tolstoy," 1166-7
- Lydia Ginzburg, "Causal Conditionality," 1167-78

W Oct 22 Book Nine-Ten, Chapters 21-23, 1-5, 597-629

F Oct 24 NO CLASS/FALL BREAK: Please read Culler's *Literary Theory*

Week 9 Culler's *Literary Theory*

M Oct 27 Book Ten, Chapters 6-14, 629-57

W Oct 29 Book Ten, Chapters 15-24, 657-87

F Oct 31 Book Ten, Chapters 25-34, 687-717

Week 10 The Opera

M Nov 3 Book Ten-Eleven, Chapters 35-9, 1-6, 719-51

- Gary Saul Morson, "Narrative and Creative Potentials in War and Peace," 1156-65.

W Nov 5 Book Eleven, Chapters 7-11, 751-85

F Nov 7 Book Eleven, Chapters 12-15, 786-819

Sunday November 9, 1 pm Shakespeare's Globe, *Twelfth Night*, at the Guthrie Theater

Week 11 Draft of Review

M Nov 10 Book Eleven-Twelve, Chapters 16, 1-2, 819-48

W Nov 12 Book Twelve-Thirteen, Chapters 3-4, 1, 848-85

- V.I. Lenin, "Leo Tolstoy as a Mirror of the Russian Revolution," 1111-13.

F Nov 14 Book Thirteen-Fourteen, Chapters 2-4, 1, 885-915

- Richard F. Gustafson, "States of Human Awareness," 1148-56.

Week 12

M Nov 17 Book Fourteen, Chapters 2-5, 915-49

Due: Review

W Nov 19 Book Fifteen, Chapters 1-4, 951-75

F Nov 21 NO CLASS

Week 13 Draft final project
 M Nov 24 Book Fifteen, Chapters 5, 975-96
 W Nov 26 First Epilogue, Chapters 1-2, 997-1019
 F Nov 28 NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK
 Please finish reading the novel!!

Week 14 Final project presentation in class
 M Dec 1 Presentations
 W Dec 3 Presentations
 F Dec 5 First Epilogue, Chapters 3-4, 1020-42
 • Nikolai Strakhov, "The Significance of the last part of *War and Peace*," 1101-7

Week 15 Revise final project
 M Dec 8 Second Epilogue, 1043-61
 W Dec 10 Second Epilogue, 1061-74
 F Dec 12 Discuss final projects and first response paper
 Due: Final project

NO FINAL EXAM

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.

We urge you to call on us for help with your papers and to work with other students, as long as you do not plagiarize their ideas. Plagiarism will be handled according to the Macalester policy on academic integrity in the student handbook (http://www.macalester.edu/~dstudent/handbook/academic_policies.html).

Revised: October 15, 2003