RUSS 418: 18th-Century Russian Literature

Mon and Wed 2-3:20 313 Gregory Hall

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Course description: This course will introduce the major figures, genres, and works of eighteenth-century Russian literature. The literary works will be examined both in their connection to Western European cultural movements and in their unique context of the budding Russian literary tradition.

Course objectives: The primary objective of the course is to familiarize students with the often neglected literary heritage of the eighteenth century and to explore its critical role in forming the Russian modern literary tradition. In addition, students will expand their understanding of the versification and genre systems and will learn to understand the idiosyncratic value system and mentality underlying eighteenth-century literary production and cultural developments.

Course materials:
Primary texts:

2. Website “Russkaia virtual’naia biblioteka: 18 vek”:
   http://www.rvb.ru/18vek/
3. Harold B. Segel, ed. and trans. The literature of eighteenth-century Russia; an anthology of Russian literary materials of the age of classicism and the Enlightenment from the reign of Peter the Great, 1689-1725, to the reign of Alexander I, 1801-1825 (New York: 1967)
4. Additional texts will be placed on electronic reserve.

Secondary works:

2. Additional materials will be placed on electronic reserve.

For more sources, see bibliography.

Course requirements and policies:
Attendance and participation. The format of the course is lecture-discussion, therefore regular attendance and active participation is expected from all students. Any unexcused absence will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation part of the final grades. **Students with 6 or more unexcused absences will receive an F.**

Readings. Primary texts will be available in both English and Russian. **Graduate students in Russian literature are required to read at least 50% of the primary readings in the original.** Undergraduate students are encouraged to read small parts of the original texts (especially poetry). You must have the texts with you in class!!! Please always bring the anthologies or print-outs of the electronic texts. **Your participation grade will be lowered if you fail to bring the texts regularly.**

Oral presentation. Each student will prepare an oral presentation (10 min. for undergraduate students, 15-20 min. for graduate students) that will provide additional background on the authors and some theoretical issues. The topics are listed below and are incorporated in the schedule of readings:

1. Vasilii Trediakovskii and his peculiar place in Russian cultural memory—**Sept. 2nd.**
2. The reform of Russian versification (GS)* —**Sept. 9**
3. Lomonosov’s role in Russian history and culture—**Sept. 14.**
4. Aleksandr Sumarokov—**Sept. 21**
5. Hierarchy of genres in Russian and European Classicism (GS).*—**Sept. 23.**
6. The epic genre in the European tradition and in 18th-century Russian literature*—**Oct. 5**
7. Catherine the Great as an empress and a woman of letters—**Oct. 12**
8. Nikolai Karamzin’s life and career—**Oct. 21**
9. Gavriil Derzhavin’s life and art—**Nov. 9**
10. Aleksandr Radishchev—**Nov. 30**

The topics marked with an * must be covered. The topics marked GS must be presented by a graduate student.

Most presentations will take place early in the semester, so please choose your topic and sign up as soon as possible. The presentations must be based on scholarly sources, and graduate students’ presentations should involve substantial research. Wikipedia and other sources of this kind can be used only as a starting point. A useful source on the individual authors, *The Dictionary of
Literary Biography, vol. 150: Early Modern Russian Writers, Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (1995), has been placed on course reserve. You can also use the bibliography list provided separately. Please discuss your presentation with me in advance.

Papers:
Two short papers for undergraduate students and three for graduate students are required (see the schedule of readings for the dates). These papers should be 2-3 pp. long (double-spaced) and offer an analysis of some aspect of a literary work covered before the due date for the paper. !!! These papers must be interpretative and not impressionistic or descriptive.

Quiz:
A quiz on the basics of versification will be given on September 21st. See the schedule of readings for more details.

Final examination:
The final examination will test students’ knowledge and understanding of major genres, authors, works and problems in eighteenth-century Russian literature covered in the course of the semester.

Final grade breakdown:
Attendance and participation 15%
Presentation 20%
Papers 25%
Quiz 10%
Final exam 30%