RUSS/CWL 323: Tolstoy

Tue/Thu 3-4:20 169 Davenport Hall

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Office: 3133 FLB
Office hours: Mon/Thu 10-11am
Office phone number: 244-1063

Required text:

Please use this translation only!!!

Recommended text:

This is a useful background source, especially for oral presentations on Tolstoy and the woman question, Tolstoy and religion, and Tolstoy and American criticism.

Online resources:
   (A library guide on Tolstoy’s “Death of Ivan Ilyich,” which offers a wealth of both research and fun information on Tolstoy in general)

   The site of Tolstoy Studies Journal. The site has various useful links, including “Tolstoy filmography” (can be used for a presentation on “Tolstoy on screen”). Here you can also watch Tolstoy himself in a short film shot on his 80th birthday in 1908.

Course description and objectives: In this course we will be reading closely Tolstoy’s major novel War and Peace. We will discuss a range of issues raised by this work, from Tolstoy’s views on history and human psyche to his artistic methods and narrative techniques. We will also situate these problems in a larger context of Tolstoy’s time and his oeuvre as a whole. In this course, students will acquire a deep understanding of Tolstoy as a thinker and an artist, will enhance their knowledge of nineteenth-century Russian literature and culture, and, importantly, will develop skills of literary analysis, particularly close reading of texts.

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. You must have the book with you in each class—otherwise your participation grade will be lowered. Any unexcused absence, too, will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation part of the final grade. Students with 6 or more unexcused absences will receive an F.

Oral presentation. Given the size of the class, each student will have to find a partner to work with on the presentation. Each pair (or a small group) will select one topic and will prepare a 20-
**min.** long presentation. Please sign up for a presentation no later than **Feb. 1st.** For topics and guidelines, see below.

**Papers:**

1. A brief essay, 3 pp. long—a **close reading** of a passage from *War and Peace* that we have not discussed in class in depth. **Due by March, 3rd.**
2. A longer paper (10 pp.). **Due by May 15th in my mailbox (3080 FLB).** Please consult me when choosing a topic for this paper.

**Final grade breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance and participation</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>1st paper</th>
<th>25%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2nd paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Topics for oral presentations:**

1. Tolstoy’s technique of “defamiliarization” or “estrangement” [ostranenie]: Viktor Shklovsky’s essay “Art as Device” [Искусство как приём]—**Jan. 29th.**
   I will provide you with a copy of Shklovsky’s article.
2. The image of Napoleon in Russian Literature—**Feb. 10th.**
3. Freemasonry in Russia—**Feb. 17th.**
5. Tolstoy’s views on art—**March 10.**
6. Tolstoy and religion; “Tolstoyanism”—**March 19.**
7. The Battle of Borodino and its significance—**April 2nd.**
8. Tolstoy’s artistic crisis—**April 16th.**
9. Tolstoy, the 1860s, and the “woman question”— **April 28.**
10. Tolstoy in American criticism: Isaiah Berlin’s *The Hedgehog and the Fox* and Hugh McLean’s response to it—**Thu, April 30.**
   Hugh McLean’s article “Foxes and Hedgehogs: Berlin and Tolstoy” is available in his *In Quest of Tolstoy*

When preparing your presentation, follow the following **guidelines:**

1. Use at least two scholarly or academic sources. Wikipedia and the like are acceptable only as a starting point for your research.
2. Split the material between the two participants evenly, so each of you speaks for about 10 min.
3. Provide a typed handout with important quotes, facts, and concepts, for the class (and maps, film clips, etc. when appropriate)
4. End with a question for discussion that links your topic to an aspect of the reading we have done thus far.

If your oral report is devoted to a critical essay, make sure to include the following in your work:

a. Define key terms, e.g. “defamiliarization.” Give a key passage where the term occurs.

b. What position is the author trying to refute?

c. Give an example of how the author’s ideas can be used fruitfully to analyze a passage from Tolstoy that the author does not explicitly discuss.

d. What does the author’s argument overlook? Its weak points?