

Slavic Languages and Literatures

2017-18 Course Catalog

COURSES OFFERED BY SLAVIC FACULTY IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS

FRESHMAN SEMINARS

Freshman Seminar 36G: The Creative Work of Translating

Stephanie Sandler

2017 Fall (4 Credits)

Schedule:

W 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Translation makes culture possible. Individual writers and thinkers draw sustenance and stimulation from works created outside their own cultures, and artists working in one format get ideas from those working in entirely different media. Translation between languages and between art forms will center our seminar's work. Taking a broad view of translation as a mental activity, we will study poems, fiction, film, photography, and music. We will stretch our own imaginative capacities by transposing material across media and genres, creating homophonic translations, and translating between languages. We will work individually as well as collaboratively. We will read a small amount translation theory, and some reflections by working translators. We will invite into our classroom a few practicing poets, artists, and translators and attend poetry readings and lectures at Harvard. The only requirement is some knowledge of a language besides English –and a readiness to play with languages, art forms, and texts. Readings from Kazim Ali, Walter Benjamin, Jorge Luis Borges, Joseph Brodsky, Anne Carson, Emily Dickinson, Forrest Gander, Susan Howe, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Nabokov, Sappho, W. G. Sebald, Tracy K. Smith, Marina Tsvetaeva, Wang Wei, and the Bible; music by John Adams, David Grubbs, and others; artwork by Peter Sacks. Films to include *Despair* and *The Golem*.

Instructor Permission Required

Recommended Prep: Requires knowledge of one language besides English.

Requirements: Course open to Freshman Students Only

Freshman Seminar 60G

Word–Sound–Image: Poetry as a Language Laboratory (23:004)

Aleksandra Kremer

2017 Fall (4 Credits)

Schedule:

W 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Typical means of everyday communication, such as speaking, writing, or printing, can be taken to extremes in poetry. What sounds and images can we find in poetic texts? What materials and tools have been used to create poems? What happens on the borderlines between poetry and other arts? In our seminar we will study poems from different times and regions, with a special emphasis on the twentieth-century European and American experimental literature. We will discuss visual poetry from Ancient Greece and Renaissance England, poems about paintings by Rilke and Auden, avant-garde texts and performances of Futurist and Dadaist artists, postwar French sound poetry, international concrete poetry movement, contemporary artists' books, as well as recordings and readings of major poets. We will look for poetry in Harvard Art Museums and listen to recordings in the Woodberry Poetry Room. We will examine artists' books from Harvard libraries, attend a poetry reading in Cambridge, view electronic archives of poetry, analyze voices of poets performing their texts, and study poems which are barely legible. We will confront these poetic experiments with scholarly texts from such disciplines as sound studies, art history, acoustic phonetics,

graphic design, and literary studies. Finally, we will ask what are the gains and challenges of using innovative techniques and technologies in poetry and art.

Instructor Permission Required

Requirements: Course open to Freshman Students Only

Freshman Seminar 61U

Reading the Novella: Form and Suspense in Short Fiction (205181)

Jonathan Bolton

2017 Fall (4 Credits)

Schedule:

T 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Short enough to read in a single sitting, but more complex and absorbing than short stories, novellas give us some of our most intense reading experiences. Indeed, many of the enduring classics of world literature, from Melville's *Benito Cereno* to Chekhov's *The Duel*, take advantage of the novella's compression and acceleration of plot—features that are also suited to horror, mystery, and other forms of "genre" fiction. In this seminar, we will read some of the great masters of the novella form, including Anton Chekhov, Henry James, Leo Tolstoy, Alice Munro, and Katherine Anne Porter, as well as other examples from around the world, including Eastern Europe, China, and Japan.

Readings of 50-125 pages a week (all of it in English) will allow us to work closely with some classics of modern fiction, going down to the level of word choice and sentence structure, but we'll also consider the way authors build and sustain suspense, the different forms of narrative resolution, and other questions of plotting and structure. We will also talk about how to get the most out of your weekly reading experiences—I'll ask you to set aside solitary time for your reading each week and, as far as possible, to read each novella in just one or two sittings. You'll keep a reading journal, including 2-3 pages of unstructured writing each week; a number of creative assignments and a final paper will help you understand the choices made by authors as they shape their stories for this most demanding and exciting of fictional forms.

Instructor Permission Required

Requirements: Course open to Freshman Students Only

Freshman Seminar 62C

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (Russian Revolution Imagined, Documented, Advertised) (205532)

Vera Koshkina

2017 Fall (4 Credits)

Schedule: T 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Political change takes place in images and on screens as much as on the streets. Activists, artists and politicians have long understood that pictures speak to global audiences beyond spoken language. However images serve to expose and document as much as to mask and suppress other realities. This seminar examines the role images played in the Russian Revolution of 1917 in its attempts to fundamentally transform existing social order. The 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in the fall of 2017 serves as an occasion to explore it as one of the first political uprisings in which modern media—photography, poster art, moving images—were used to imagine, document, represent and suppress revolutionary change. Even before 1917, Russian artists ignited revolutionary imagination in breaking with representational conventions and bringing new media into their creative work. The Soviet State subsequently adapted their representational strategies and new technologies. In 1918, the so-called Soviet agitation trains traveled to remote villages bringing documentary footage of the Russian Revolution to mostly illiterate peasant audiences, spreading the visual story of revolution before the coming of television. We will consider the legacy of the imaginings, transmissions and visual manipulations of history, looking at photography, visual art, documentary and feature film, folk art, children's drawings, propaganda posters, and public spectacles

and festivals. We will also read theoretical texts by artists, writers, filmmakers and politicians who imagined the new world and the role of visual art and new media in its transformation. What kind of social conditions made the new aesthetic choices relevant? Who is doing the depicting and what is and is not shown? What does it mean to visualize politics more broadly?

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: The seminar includes required trips: a visit to the Harvard Art Museum to examine original artwork, special screenings of 35mm films at the Harvard Film Archive, and a visit to view the rare books collection at the Houghton Library.

Requirements: Course open to Freshman Students Only

GENERAL EDUCATION

Aesthetic & Interpretive 60: Literature and Art in an Era of Crisis and Oppression: Modernism in Eastern Europe

George Grabowicz

2017 Fall

Schedule:

M 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

The course will examine seminal literary works (with forays into film and art) from Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20th century with special attention to their response to convention, censorship and totalitarian strictures as well as "high modernist" experimentation and a "low modernist" focus on popular genres and a new poetics of trash. Focus on Kafka, Zamiatin, Bulgakov, Capek, Nabokov, Platonov, Witkacy, Schulz, Gombrowicz, Kulish, Xvyl'ovyi, Vertov, Dovzhenko and others.

Course Notes: All texts can be read in English translation.

Culture & Belief 38: Apocalypse Then! Forging the Culture of Medieval Rus'

Michael Flier

2017 Fall

Schedule:

MW 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

When the natives of Medieval Rus (later Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) accepted Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century, their nature-based paganism gave way to a powerfully sensual belief system that made good use of the visual and the verbal to prepare these newest Christians for the coming Apocalypse and Last Judgment. We investigate this transformation from the conversion of Saint Vladimir and the excesses of Ivan the Terrible through the Time of Troubles and the modern turn of Peter the Great. The class features close analysis of architecture, icons and frescoes, ritual, folklore, literature, and history to understand this shift in worldview, including the role of women. Special attention is devoted to the ways in which Medieval Rus is portrayed in film, opera, and ballet.

Course Notes: All readings in English. This course fulfills the requirement that one of the eight General Education courses also engage substantially with Study of the Past.

Ethical Reasoning 28: Moral Inquiry in the Novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky

Justin Weir

2017 Fall

Schedule:

TR 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

This course considers how Tolstoy and Dostoevsky take up moral inquiry in their fiction, introduces students to philosophical texts that informed their major fiction, and asks why the novel as a literary genre may be a good forum for the discussion of ethics. We will read Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as selected texts from Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and others.