

Slavic Languages and Literatures

2017-18 Course Catalog

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Slavic 91R: Supervised Reading and Research

Justin Weir, Steven Clancy

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: A graded course. Permission must be obtained from the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the instructor under whom the student wishes to study. Hours to be arranged.

Slavic 97: Tutorial - Sophomore Year

Aleksandra Kremer

Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

An interdisciplinary introduction to major issues in the field of Slavic Languages and Literatures, including critical theory, modes of interpreting literary texts, the forces structuring national and regional identities, as well as great authors of the Slavic literary traditions, including Russian, Czech, and Polish works.

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: Required for Slavic Language and Literature concentrators. Open to non-concentrators provided they contact the instructor before the beginning of the semester.

Slavic 98: Tutorial - Junior Year

Vera Koshkina

Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

In spring 2018, the Slavic junior tutorial will focus on the close reading of three works of the recipient of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature, Svetlana Alexievich.

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: Required of junior concentrators in Slavic Literatures and Cultures.

Slavic 99A and 99B: Tutorial - Senior Year

Justin Weir

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

For senior concentrators in Slavic Literature and Culture. Students work with a faculty advisor on a senior thesis or capstone project.

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: Required for senior concentrators in Slavic Literature and Culture. Students who wish to enroll must obtain the signature of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Honors students must also complete Slavic 99b.

FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

Slavic 126: Structure of Modern Russian

Steven Clancy

Fall 2017

Schedule: M W F 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Introduction to Russian phonetics, phonemics, morphophonemics, and inflectional and derivational morphology. Course goal is to give a deeper understanding and appreciation of the regularities and complexities of Russian through a close study of its sounds and words.

Instructor Permission Required

Recommended Prep: Russian B, BAB, BT or placement at the third-year level. No knowledge of linguistics required.

Slavic 130: Russian Poetry and Its Borders: Conference Course

Stephanie Sandler

Spring 2018

Schedule: T 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Without borders, can there be poetry? A white paper border surrounds printed poems; digital poems are bounded by the screen on which they are read; national boundaries keep cultural and linguistic traditions distinct; and aesthetic conventions create genres and demarcate poetry from music or dance or film. How Russian poetry perversely challenges such limits, and how it thrives at the edges of the permissible, will be the subject of this course.

We will study the cultural practice of poetry as it crosses four kinds of borders –performative, linguistic, geographic, and aesthetic. That yields four large topics: poetry in public places (how does poetry speak of politics, and how does it write collective trauma?); poetry and translation (how does translation change poetic practice? how to read mixed-language poems?); poetry and emigration/ exile (what happens to identities and allegiances when poets cross geographical borders? What happens to the poet's language?); and poetry and the other arts (how have music, film, drama, paintings, photography, and the philosophical essay been felt in poetry? can poems become visual artifacts, or scripts for performance?).

Examples from the work of Aygi, Brodsky, Dragomoshchenko, Glazova, Kaminsky, Khlebnikov, Mandelstam, Mnatsakanova, Nabokov, Pushkin, Sedakova, Slutsky, Vvedensky. Comparisons to American poets, including Susan Howe and Anne Carson, and to films by Tarkovsky and others.

Slavic 146: Cultures of Russian Revolution

Kevin Platt

Fall 2017

Schedule: M 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

100 years ago this fall, Russia's October Revolution of 1917 launched one of the most audacious attempts ever to transform not only human social life, but humanity itself. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed amid nearly universal consensus not only that this project had failed, but that no such utopian revolutionary undertaking could ever succeed. In the intervening three quarters of a century, Marxist revolution defined the political landscape of the world—as a rallying cry for some, as a dark menace for others.

This interdisciplinary course will study the history, cultural representation, memory and continuing resonance of the

events of October 1917. Readings will include theoretical studies and classical texts of revolution (K. Marx, V. Lenin, H. Arendt), documentary and historical accounts of the Russian revolution (J. Reed, R. Stites), representations and responses to the October Revolution in art, literature and film from around the globe (S. Eisenstein, A. Kollontai, D. Rivera), examination of revolutionary memory and commemoration in later years (G. Orwell, A. Sinyavsky, H. Frank), and consideration of the meaning of revolutionary history and practice in the present day (N. Tolokonnikova, V. Putin).

Slavic 149: Soviet Film Realisms: Socialist Realism, Neorealism, Surrealism

Vera Koshkina

Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

What is cinematic realism? What are the most effective techniques and genres for capturing the Soviet reality? From its inception in 1934 Socialist Realism was the dominant aesthetic style of the Soviet cinema. Soviet film, along with other arts aspired to a "historically concrete *representation* of reality in *its* revolutionary *development*." In the course of subsequent fifty years interpretations of this formulation of Socialist Realism led to the development of a variety of "realisms" in Soviet cinema, all alternately representing the Soviet reality in its idealism, stark harshness or humorous absurdity.

This course surveys a broad selection of Soviet films and film realisms (Socialist Realism, Neorealism, Magical Realism, Surrealism) from the 1930s to 1980s. It combines considerations of film form and cinematic technique with the discussion of the ever-difficult concept of realism in art. Students will develop a familiarity with the history of Soviet cinema as well as 'visual literacy' –critical vocabulary and analytical tools that will enable them to respond to visual material critically and creatively. The screenings for this course will include musical comedies of Grigori Alexandrov, historical epics of Sergei Eisenstein, surrealist dreamscapes of Andrei Tarkovsky and Tengiz Abuladze as well as absurdist collages of Soviet reality of Kira Muratova among many others.

Slavic 152: Pushkin

William Todd

Spring 2018

Schedule: W 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

A survey of the lyrics, narrative poems, fiction, and critical prose of Russia's "national poet." Close reading of the texts; attention to contemporary cultural issues. Lecture and discussion.

Recommended Prep: Good reading knowledge of Russian.

Slavic 154: Nabokov

Justin Weir

Spring 2018

Schedule: T Th 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

This course explores Vladimir Nabokov's novels, focusing primarily on his Russian works in English translation (*Despair*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, *The Gift*) but concluding with his English language masterpiece *Lolita*. We will consider, among much else, themes of cross-cultural literature, self-translation, and emigration, and the course will pay particular attention to Nabokov's interest in cinema and film aesthetics.

Slavic 159: Chekhov

Yuri Corrigan

Spring 2018

Schedule: F 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

This course explores how Chekhov revolutionized the short story while simultaneously laying the foundations for modern drama. Reading his four major plays and a wide selection from his prose, we trace the arc of his career, looking closely at his aesthetic innovations, moral psychology, and philosophical perspective. Finally, we probe the

relationship between the prose and drama by working together to dramatize his stories. Students will write, produce, and/or act in a final collective performance, thus retracing for ourselves Chekhov's steps in moving between art forms and inventing a new kind of psychological theater. All readings are in English translation.

Slavic 175: Introduction to Polish Culture

Aleksandra Kremer

Fall 2017

Schedule: T Th 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Poland was one of the largest countries in Europe and a multi-ethnic commonwealth; just two centuries later, it had been erased from the map, occupied by three different empires and subjected to constant struggles for independence. Today, it is a medium-size monolithic nation state in the middle of Europe, closely watched for its political developments.

Our course will survey key topics in Poland's 1000-year history by examining important works of literature, art, architecture, and film. We will consider how the past, both celebrated and contested, can shape a country's contemporary politics and cultural landscape. We'll also examine the interplay between local, national, and international geographies as we track Poland's ever-changing borders; students will create a personal travel guide and symbolic map of Polish culture, considering the contributions and histories of Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Germans and Russians in what was one of Europe's most multi-ethnic and multi-confessional spaces.

Slavic 177: Postwar Polish Poetry

Aleksandra Kremer

Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

Czeslaw Milosz, Wislawa Szymborska, Zbigniew Herbert, and Adam Zagajewski have been widely read and translated by American poets and critics, who have identified a "Polish School of Poetry" oriented on witnessing history, ethics, and politics, and associated closely with the traumas of World War II and Communist rule. But how accurate is this picture, and what does Polish poetry look like "from the inside"?

In this course, we will combine these perspectives, confronting canonical authors with lesser-known, experimental and contemporary poets, and we will ask how Polish poetry has changed since the democratic transition of 1989. What shapes poetry's role in society? What makes poetry political? Are some kinds of poetry more "translatable" than others, and how does this shape the American reception of Polish poets? Our course discussions will combine close reading with consideration of social and political context (censorship and newspeak); we will also consider recordings and performances, translation and emigration, as well as larger themes of privacy, feminism, and religion.

Course Notes:

Intended for all students interested in poetry. No prior knowledge of Polish language or literature is required. All readings will be in English.

Slavic 181: Russian Poetry of the 19th Century

John Malmstad

Fall 2017

Schedule: W 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

The major themes and modes of Russian poetry from pre-Romanticism to 'pure art.' Selections from Zhukovsky, Batiushkov, Baratynsky, Yazykov, Lermontov, Tiutchev, Nekrasov, Fet, and others.

Instructor Permission Required

Recommended Prep:

Russian 101 or an equivalent acceptable to instructor.

Slavic 182: Political Novel

Jonathan Bolton

Spring 2018

Schedule: TBD

What makes a novel “political,” and what contribution can novels make to political theory? How do novels manage to stage political debates rather than arguing clearly for one side or the other? What archetypal dramas –protest against authority, the loss of political innocence, the battle between tolerance and conviction –have shaped the political novel in its various traditions from the eighteenth century to the present?

Readings from Kleist, Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Melville, Conrad, Zamyatin, Olbracht, Gordimer, Coetzee, Bolaño, Le Guin, Teju Cole, and others.

Slavic 183: Reading Anna Karenina

Justin Weir

Spring 2018

Schedule: Th 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

In this course we will conduct a close reading of Tolstoy’s novel Anna Karenina —and a few additional short works of fiction and criticism. Readings are in Russian.

Instructor Permission Required

Recommended Prep: Reading knowledge of Russian required.

Slavic 189: The Other Russia: Twenty-First Century Films, Fictions, States of Mind

Stephanie Sandler

Fall 2017

Schedule: T Th 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Russia is in the news these days for its politics and espionage, but what about the daily lives of Russian people? Nothing gets at that reality in all its pettiness and grandeur better than Russian literature. The stories, poems, plays, movies, memoirs, and documentaries of the last twenty-five years are the subject of this course. We will trace the chaotic transitions of the 1990s, the disparities of wealth and polarized politics of the 2000s, the rise of religious thinking (Orthodox, Islam, Jewish), and the several conflicts at Russia’s borders. The impact of travel, diaspora, and the internet on breaking down old walls that once isolated the USSR will be as important as changes in the legal order. The different fates of former Soviet republics will be compared, with examples from Ukraine, the Caucasus, and the far North.

Writers include Svetlana Aleksievich, Joseph Brodsky, Elena Fanailova, Linor Goralik, Alisa Ganieva, Boris Khersonsky, Viktor Pelevin, Liudmila Petrushevskaya, Vladimir Sorokin, and Serhiy Zhadan. Films to include *Leviathan*, *Four*, *Alexandra*, *My Joy*, and *Maidan*. Students will also interview and create portraits (visual, verbal, and video) of émigrés from the former Soviet Union living in the Boston area, using the interviews as a context for the cultural representations of life in and beyond Russia.

Course Notes: All readings in English, with added section for those able to read in Russian

Slavic 192: Literature as Institutions

William Todd

Fall 2017 (4 Credits)

Schedule: W 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

A study of literary production, dissemination, and reception in selected periods of Russian literature from the Middle Ages to the present. Readings in social theory, cultural studies, literary criticism, and imaginative literature.

Course Notes: Open to advanced undergraduates and graduates.

Slavic 197: The Power of the Powerless: Dissidents in Philosophy, Literature and Film

Jonathan Bolton

Fall 2017

Schedule: Th 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

From Socrates and Antigone to Pussy Riot and Ai Weiwei, we are fascinated by the courage of dissidents who oppose tyrannical regimes. But who are dissidents, and where do they gain the conviction, imagination, and political skill to stand up for their beliefs?

In this course, we will investigate the role of non-violent dissent in political and cultural life and in particular the figure of the dissident as represented in literature, political theory, journalism, and documentary film. After considering some classic statements of dissent, we will turn to recent and contemporary dissidents to think about their paths into protest, their complicated relationship with their fellow citizens, and their portrayal in domestic and international media. Our focus will be on individuals rather than on social movements, and on non-violent rather than violent or revolutionary protest. Drawing examples from the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, East Central Europe during the Cold War (Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany), and China, we will consider figures such as Václav Havel, Adam Michnik, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Vladimir Bukovsky, Liu Xiaobo, Ai Weiwei, Pussy Riot, and others.

Instructor Permission Required

Course Notes: All readings are in English.

GRADUATE COURSES

Slavic 201: Introduction to East Slavic Linguistics

Michael Flier

Fall 2017

Schedule: M 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Introduction to the structure and history of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian.

Requirements: Prerequisite: Linguistics 250

Slavic 223: 19th-Century Ukrainian Poetry

George Grabowicz

Fall 2017

Schedule: W 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

A survey of the major poets: Kotljarevs'kyj, Hulak and the pre-Romantics, Shevchenko, Kulish, Rudans'kyj, Franko, and Lesja Ukrajinka.

Recommended Prep: Reading knowledge of Ukrainian.

Slavic 300: Direction of Doctoral Dissertations

Jonathan Bolton, Julie A. Buckler, Michael Flier, George Grabowicz, Daria Khitrova, Aleksandra Kremer, Stephanie Sandler, William Todd, Justin Weir

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

Schedule: N/A

Instructor Permission Required

Slavic 301: Reading and Research

Jonathan Bolton, Julie A. Buckler, Steven Clancy, Michael Flier, George Grabowicz, Daria Khitrova, Aleksandra Kremer, Stephanie Sandler, William Todd, Justin Weir

Jonathan Bolton

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

Schedule: N/A

Instructor Permission Required