

Harvard Slavic Literature & Culture Courses Fall 2022

FRSMR61U: Reading the Novella: Form and Suspense in Short Fiction

Professor Jonathan Bolton

T 12:00–2:00pm

Barker 211

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 Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilich* to James Joyce's *The Dead*, 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 Eileen Chang, Henry James, Leo Tolstoy, H. G. Wells, 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 writing each week; a number of short creative and analytical assignments will help you understand the choices made by authors as they shape their stories for this most demanding and exciting of fictional forms.

[Course site](#)

FRSEMR64T: Immigrant Memoirs: Women's Lives from Eastern Europe

Professor Aleksandra Kremer

Wednesdays, 3:00–5:00pm

Barker 211

In this seminar we will read memoirs and personal essays (as well as a few poems and a play) written by women who had moved from eastern Europe to the United States (and in some cases to the UK and Canada, too). What did they think about their new countries? What happened to their first languages as they lived surrounded by the English language? What did their alienation and assimilation look like? How did their attitude to English evolve? We will read about identity, memory, and loss, about abandoning and rediscovering one's ancestry, about children and adults, about working-class immigrants, successful writers, and part-time college teachers, and their varying reasons for emigration, which included wars, discrimination, poverty, and love. The authors we will discuss come from Poland, Ukraine, and Russia, from former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and include several Jewish and Yiddish-speaking writers. The earliest migrations described in these memoirs take place around World War II and the Holocaust, the most recent texts refer to the war in Ukraine. What image of eastern Europe emerges from these texts? How do these stories inform our views of ethnicity and immigration today? What do they tell us about our own identities? All students interested in these questions are welcome to join us, there are no prerequisites.

[Course site](#)

Slavic 118: Reading Tolstoy's War and Peace

Professor Julie Buckler M 12:45-2:45pm Barker 103

Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace (1865-69) is a magnificent work of art by a world-class writer tackling life's "big questions" and it is also a pleasure to read. We will go through War and Peace closely together, savoring the details, while exploring Tolstoy's artistic biography and the larger cultural and historical contexts for classic Russian novels. We will also consider the significance of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) in Russian history. How many different ways are there to interpret Tolstoy's work? What issues arise in translation? How does the pacing of the novel relate to nineteenth-century conceptions of time, space, narrative, and genre? What are the problematic distinctions between history and literature that the novel raises?

[Course site](#)

Slavic 126: Structure of Modern Russian

Professor Steven Clancy MWF 10:30-11:30am Harvard Hall 104

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.

Slavic 134: Prague: A Cultural History

Professor Jonathan Bolton W 12:45-2:45pm Barker 012

An introduction to the history of Prague and Bohemian culture from the Middle Ages through World War II, focusing on the interplay of political, religious, and literary history. Beginning with the medieval court of Charles IV, we will consider the rise of religious dissent, the fate of Jan Hus and the Hussite wars, and the eccentric humanism and mysticism of Emperor Rudolf II in the sixteenth century. We will then look at the political and religious dynamics that led to the defenestration of Prague and the reimposition of Catholic rule during the Baroque period. Finally, we will look at the birth of modern Czech culture in the National Awakening of the nineteenth century and the creation of a modern Czechoslovak state between the world wars. We will also consider the changing fates of Prague Jewish culture throughout this period.

Note: All readings are in English, and no prior knowledge of Czech or Central European history is expected.

[Course site](#)

Slavic 148: Strange Russian Writers

Professor Stephanie Sandler

TuTh 10:30-11:45am

Barker 114

Studies Russia's rebels, deviants, martyrs, loners, and losers as emblems of national identity. Stories, films and poems that project Russia's distinctive obsessions with history and religion. Includes Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Leskov, Babel, Kharms, Platonov, Nabokov, Petrushevskaya, Shalamov, Dobychn; films by Tarkovsky, Askoldov, Sokurov.

All readings in English. Separate additional section for those able to read texts in Russian. This course is primarily for undergraduate students but graduate student enrollment is permitted with permission of the instructor.

[Course site](#)

Slavic 154: Nabokov

Professor Justin Weir

Th 6:45-8:45pm

Barker 114

This course on the major fiction of Vladimir Nabokov begins with his major Russian novels in English translation, including *The Defense*, *Laughter in the Dark* (*Camera Obscura*), *Invitation to a Beheading*, and *Despair*, and concludes with classic English works, *Speak, Memory*, *Lolita*, and *Pnin*. Topics in the course include emigration and cross-cultural translation, literary modernism, metafiction, nostalgia and stories of childhood, as well as the literary representations of tyranny, violence, and abuse. We will pay additional attention to Nabokov's interest in film and film aesthetics, and we will consider four screen versions of his novels (*Luzhin's Defense*, *Laughter in the Dark*, *Despair*, and *Lolita*).

No knowledge of Russian is required

[Course site](#)

Slavic 171: The Holocaust in Polish Memory

Professor Aleksandra Kremer

Tu 9:45-11:45am

Barker 316

Hitler's plan to destroy European Jewry was carried out by the Nazis mostly on the territory of occupied Poland, where three million Jews had lived before World War II. The Poles' position has often been described as that of bystanders; nevertheless, Polish behavior also encompassed more direct involvement—whether complicity and murder, or attempts at rescuing Jews. How is this time remembered in Poland? How is it represented in Polish and Polish-Jewish literary texts? What is the relation between the Holocaust memory and Polish wartime history? What do we know about German and Soviet occupations of the country? How was the memory of the Holocaust and World War II

shaped and used by communist Poland? What happens to this memory today? We will look for answers in different short stories, novels, poems, memoirs, and films created between the 1940s and the present day, and confront them with recent scholarship.

Note: All readings in English. Students who wish to read Polish texts in the original may arrange a special section with the instructor.

[Course site](#)

Slavic 193: Intro to Russian & Soviet Film

Professor Daria Khitrova MW 3-4:15pm Robinson 223

The course introduces students to some of the most influential films in the history of cinema, such as the dynamic and politically-charged montage movies of Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, and their avant-garde contemporaries of the 1920s and 1930s. We will examine early Russian melodramas, the film culture of the Bolshevik Revolution, the exotic and eccentric movie-land fashioned by Russian emigres in Paris and Berlin, and the strictures of Stalin-era Socialist Realism. Students will learn about the analysis of film style, from framing to editing to acting, as well as the political and social contexts of filmmaking and film-going. Films to be considered include: *Cameraman's Revenge*, *Child of the Big City*, *The Man with the Movie Camera*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, and *Ivan the Terrible*. Readings (all in English) include classic film theory of the era and critical reviews.

***Slavic 260: Russia and Race**

Professor Justin Weir Tu 12:45-2:45pm Barker 373

This graduate seminar, run as a workshop, will be aimed at providing graduate students with the background knowledge and tools for teaching an undergraduate course on race in Russian culture. We will consider 19th- and 20th- Russian/Soviet literature and film (including works by Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy), Russian intellectual history, Soviet ethnic policy, and the reception of Russian/Soviet novels and theory in American literature (primarily Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright). Questions to be posed include the historical role of race in Imperial Russian and Soviet culture, the entanglement of race and ethnicity in Russian and Soviet cultural politics, and the possibilities and limitations of comparisons with American culture.

Note: Open to graduate students only. Instructor's permission required to enroll.

Prerequisites: Reading knowledge of Russian required.

***Slavic 399A: Proseminar**

Professor Stephanie Sandler

W 12:45-2:45pm

Barker 103

Introduction to graduate study in Slavic. Selected topics in literary analysis, history, theory, and professional development. Students must complete both terms of this course (parts A and B) within the same academic year to receive credit.

Reading knowledge of Russian required.