Analytical Readings: 19th Century Russian Literature

LITT 3001 RLPR

Russian Language

Russian

3

45

Fall 2020

Course Description

This analytical reading course consists of annotated readings and analysis of works of prominent Russian writers and poets of the nineteenth century. The content of the course includes theoretical (overview of the life and work of writers and poets studied) and practical (text of the works) material.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

Acquire knowledge on the life and the work of prominent nineteenth-century Russian writers

Master the skills of various types of analysis of a literary text: cultural, literary, and linguistic analysis

Course Prerequisites

Successful completion of this course requires knowledge of a higher level of Russian grammar and vocabulary. This level, in our opinion, corresponds to an advanced level of Russian.

Methods of Instruction

The course combines lecture mode of teaching with the class open discussion model. The teaching process will include the use of PowerPoint material presentation, poems and short stories (in Russian), films and video clips relating to discussed topics.
Assessment and Final Grade

1. Class Participation  20%
2. Homework  25%
3. Essays  30%
4. Oral Examination  25%

TOTAL  100%

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Active participation in class discussions is required. Students are expected to complete class readings for the assigned date and come to class ready to analyze and debate issues raised by the readings.

Homework

Students are expected to complete class readings for the assigned date and come to class ready to analyze and debate issues raised by the readings.

Essays

5% each

In the course of the semester, each student will write a total of 6 essays, each essay being approximately top-page long. The topic of the essays will be chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Oral Examination

At the end of the course there is an oral exam, which will test the students’ factual knowledge and their ability to analyze literary texts covered in this class.

Attendance
Attendance is crucial for successful completion of the class. Students are allowed to have two unexcused absences for each course for the whole semester program. These allowed unexcused absences should be used for situations such as minor illnesses without a doctor’s note or personal situations that prevent the student from attending the class. Allowed unexcused absences should not be used in a planned way for travel or other activities. Unexcused absences beyond the limit of two will lower a student’s grade by 2 points on the 100-point scale each. For example, if your overall score in the class is 90 (an equivalent of A) and you have had three unexcused absences, your final score will be 88 (B+).

Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Class  1.0  Life and creative work of Alexander Pushkin

Love lyrics by A. Pushkin. Poem “I loved you”

Class  2.0  

Philosophical lyrics by Pushkin: “Anchar,” “Upon the Hills of Georgia,”

Week 2
Class  3.0  Pushkin’s novella The Squire’s Daughter (from the cycle The Belkin Tales)

Commentated reading Possible topics for essay: 1. Pushkin’s love poems 2. “Anchar” as an allegorical poem 3. Image of the Russian landed gentry as seen through Pushkin 4. The problem of “East vs. West in the novella The Squire’s Daughter

Class  4.0  Film The Squire’s daughter (1995, dir. Mikhail Sakharov)

Commentated screening of selected fragments

Essay 1 is due

Week 3
Class  5.0  Life and creative works of Mikhail Lermontov
Class 6.0  Mikhail Lermontov’s lyrics


Week 4
Class 7.0  Mikhail Lermontov, novel A Hero of our Time (fragments)

Possible topics for essay:

1. The theme of loneliness in Lermontov’s poems
2. Describe the ‘strangeness’ of Lermontov’s love to his fatherland.
3. The fault and the tragedy of Pechorin
4. Generational portrait of the 1930s through the creative works by Lermontov

Class 8.0  Novel A Hero of our Time

Psychological portrait of the main character.

Essay 2 is due

Week 5
Class 9.0  Life and creative works of Nikolai Gogol (a survey)

Class 10.0  Gogol’s novella, The Overcoat.

Multiple interpretations of the novel: social, philosophical, religious, mythological

Possible topics for essay:

1. The motif of the ‘small man’ in Gogol’s novella The Overcoat.
2. Images of Petersburg in Gogol’s creative works
3. Film adaptation of Gogol’s novella The Overcoat
Week 6
Class 11.0

For both week 6 classes...

Film adaptation: The Overcoat (1959; dir. Alexei Batalov)

Commentated screening of the film.

Discussion.

Essay 3 is due

Week 7
Class 13.0 Life and creative works of Ivan Turgenev

Class 14.0 Novella First Love

Psychologism of Turgenev’s prose

Possible topic for essay:

1. Problem of ‘fathers’ and ‘children’ in Turgenev’s novella First Love.

Week 8
Class 15.0 Film screening First Love (1968, dir. Vassily Ordynsky)

Discussion and interpretations

Essay 4 is due

Class 16.0 Life and creative works of Fyodor Dostoevsky

Week 9
Class 17.0 Dostoevsky’s short story “Fir tree and violin”
Commented readings

Class 18.0 Problem of social inequality in creative works by Dostoevsky.

Essay 5 is due

Week 10
Class 19.0 Film adaptation: Crime and Punishment (1969, dir. Leo Kulidzhanov)

Interpretations and discussion

Class 20.0 Image of St. Petersburg in creative works by Dostoevsky

Possible topics for essay:

1. “Poor people” in creative works by Dostoevsky
2. “Child’s tear” in Dostoevsky’s story Fir-tree and Violin
3. The image of misalliance in Dostoevsky’s prose
4. The image of social predator in Dostoevsky’s prose

Week 11
Class 21.0 Leo Tolstoy, his life and creative work

A survey.

Essay 6 is due

Class 22.0 Three Hermits: philosophical parable by Tolstoy

Tolstoy’s views on faith, religion and church

Week 12
Class 23.0 Review

Review for final exam

Class 24.0 Final Exam
Course Materials

Readings


Lermontov Mikhail. Lermontov Poems (Russian Edition)


