

# RUSSIAN 290: LOVE (AND OTHER DISEASES) IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

TTH, 1:50-3:20, Miller 210, Lewis and Clark College.

Fall 2011

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Office Hours: Tues. 12-1, Wed. 1-2, **\*\*and\*\*** by appointment



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## Course description:

Love fascinates. It drives nearly all our storytelling, and yet, time and time again, it seems to escape adequate description – much as the thing itself promises happiness and yet, often, leaves happiness just beyond our grasp? Talking about love seems to involve, paradoxically, both discourses of joy, mystical upsurge, and widening of horizons, but also ones of sickness, wounds, jealousy, insanity, boredom. Moreover, love as object of storytelling involves many other concerns – it begs the question of the relation between soul and body, real and ideal, vice and virtue, public and private, weakness and power; it raises issues of gender, sexual, and societal expectations; it gives access to psychological processes in ways few other subjects do.

In this course, we will look at the ways in which love has been treated in Russian literature. Because the Russian literary tradition started rather late and in many ways responded to the Western European tradition, both imitating but also revising it, it serves as a kind of mirror through which the broader tradition can be seen. Through studying the metaphors through which love has been *figured* in Russian literature, we will study the way these figurations both reflect the wider European literary currents, but also how they question, expand, and turn them. We will work deductively, practicing close reading as well as involving wider contexts when appropriate. In the two shorter papers we will concentrate on analyzing a particular work, whereas the longer final paper and research project will ask you to focus on a particular issue surrounding discourses of love and how two or three particular works address it.

**Objectives:**

- ✓ To read our works deeply and with enjoyment, while practicing close reading and interpretation
- ✓ To become aware of the figurative modes we use to talk about love, and be able to approach them critically.
- ✓ To learn (more) about the Russian literary tradition, and its evolution
- ✓ To improve our ability to critically discuss and cogently write about our texts.

We will read the following works:

Nikolai Karamzin, "Poor Liza" (1792)

\*\*Aleksandr Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin* (1823-1833)

Nikolai Leskov, "Lady Macbeth of the Mstensk District" (1864)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Meek One* (1876)

\*\*Lev Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877)

Anton Chekhov, "Lady with a Lapdog", "On Love", "Anna on the Neck" (1895-99)

Ivan Bunin, "Light Breathing" (1916)

Yuri Olesha, *Envy* (1927)

\*\*Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

Tatyana Tolstaya, "Sonya" (1984)

Viktor Pelevin, "Nika" (1992)

Vadim Kalinin, "The Unbelievable and Tragic History of Misha Shtrikov and His Cruel Wife" (2002)

The works that are starred are available for purchase at the LC Bookstore. The rest will be distributed on Moodle.

**Requirements:**

Because the class will be run more like a seminar than a lecture, it is imperative that you attend class, and that you come prepared. That means completing the day's reading assignment, reading any supplementary material on Moodle, and submitting, no later than noon on the day of class, by email (pyatkevich@lclark.edu), the reading response to the day's assignment. 2 absences and 2 missed reading responses are allowed for any reason; additional modifications may be made in cases of illness, religious observance, or personal emergency, but need to be discussed with me in person. Detailed directions about the two short papers (4-5 pages) and the final paper (10-12 pages) will be available later. You can rewrite all the papers.

**Grading** will be based on the following scale:

✓ Attendance	15%
✓ Participation	15%
✓ Reading responses (1/2 to 1 page) to be completed before each class	25%
✓ Paper 1	10%
✓ Paper 2	10%
✓ Presentation	10%
✓ Final Paper	15%

**Office hours:**

Please come to office hours with any questions, concerns, thoughts, ideas, notes, desires that you may have. I may not always be able to make allowances (though I'll try), but I will certainly listen and discuss.

**Email:**

Important class notices will be distributed *via E-mail*. Please make sure to check your @lclark.edu address at least once a day. You are responsible for any information that is announced in this fashion.

I will make every attempt to answer your emails promptly, usually within 24 hours. Periods when it may take longer will be announced in advance.

**Electronic devices in the Classroom:**

I prefer that you use pen and paper for taking notes, rather than more advanced devices (which may also distract you).

**University-wide policies:**

Lewis & Clark has university-wide code of conduct and code of academic integrity. As members of our class and our LC community, I expect you to adhere to these codes of conduct. If you have any concerns about yourself or another member, please come talk to me confidentially in office hours. You can read the relevant policies here:

<http://www.lclark.edu/live/files/6594-code-of-conduct-201011>

<https://college.lclark.edu/administration/academicconduct.php>

<http://www.lclark.edu/live/files/6597-college-policies-201011>

See, as well, the policy on disabilities:

<http://www.lclark.edu/live/files/6600-disability-policy>

### **Accessing MOODLE:**

Browse to our Moodle page from the main Moodle web page at <http://moodle.lclark.edu>:

1. Login using your L&C login and password
  2. Scroll down in the list until you find the desired department, click the link
  3. Locate RUSSIAN 290: Love and Other Diseases in Russian Literature and click on the course name.
  4. You will be asked to use an enrollment key, use the key: hedgehog
- After this one-time enrollment, you'll be able to see the course in your list of courses right underneath your login.