

## Russian 290: Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know: Heroes and Heroines of Russian Literature

### Paper # 3: about 2000 words (about 8 pages)

This paper is a chance for you to explore further a topic, issue or reading that got your attention thus far; to address some of the course's main issues across texts. The goal is to come up with an interesting idea that lets you get further into understanding the course's main questions. The paper should be carefully thought through and logically organized, and it should allow you to demonstrate that you've read our texts both carefully (using close reading techniques, as modeled numerous times in class) and deeply (meaning that you've interpreted the text in an original way).

We will use *Doctor Zhivago* as a lens through which to reflect on some of the larger questions of this course. In other words, this paper will have two goals: (a) it will allow you to think more deeply about *Doctor Zhivago*, and (b) it will tie the course together because it will force you to think about the evolution of the topic of hero-ism in Russian literature.

You can read works of criticism from outside of class and incorporate them into your argument if you'd like, but you're not required to do so.

The topics below – and their elaboration – are suggestions designed to help stimulate and structure your thinking; they are not prescriptive. Please choose one topic for your essay.

Suggested topics:

1. **Kind of hero.** We've talked about tragic heroes, questing heroes, Byronic heroes, anti-heroes, heroes of our (or their) time; heroes who are exceptional or unexceptional; heroes who change and who stay the same. In looking at *Doctor Zhivago* and one other novel, pick a model of heroism that you think works best and trace its importance in the two works.
2. **Love.** In most of our novels, the "love plot" functions as a central event that the authors use to reveal their heroes' inner workings and somehow reflect on larger societal issues. Discuss how the "love plot" functions in *Doctor Zhivago* and another one of our novels to reveal (or conceal?) larger societal plots and delineate the terms of exploration of heroism in the story.
3. **Gender and Hero-ism.** In our novels, the question of gender has variously intersected with the question of hero-ism. Discuss the role that gender plays in *Doctor Zhivago* and in one other novel.
4. **Place.** In *Doctor Zhivago* and our other novels, place – and our heroes' movement through it – has played a decisive role in helping us to understand the way the novel's heroes and heroines develop. Please discuss the role of place in *Doctor Zhivago* and one other work.
5. **Right Brain/Left Brain assignment.** The following option consists of two parts. Part 1: Write about 2 pages of: (a) Lara's diary in Yuriatin; AND (b) about 2 pages of a record kept by I-503. Part 2: Write about 4 pages that analyze what you tried to accomplish in Part 1, why you did so, and what you learned by doing it; and what it tells you about the two characters in the two novels.
6. Using *Doctor Zhivago* and one other text, devise a topic of your own and develop it.

Upload the papers to Moodle **before 11:59 p.m. on Friday May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013.**