

LT224/SL424 Leo Tolstoy (Fall 2015, MWF 9:55, Van Hise 374)

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“When I was in prison, I was wrapped up in all those deep books. That Tolstoy crap – people shouldn't read that stuff.”
– Mike Tyson, heavyweight boxer

Course objectives. This course is an introduction to the writing of the great 19th-century Russian author Leo Tolstoy (Лев Николаевич Толстой). We will read and analyze selected fictional works (short stories and novellas) by Tolstoy from his early and late periods, and we will undertake a close reading of one of his “novels of length,” *Anna Karenina*. In addition, we will watch film adaptations based on two of his works and compare and contrast these with Tolstoy’s original texts.

An important part of this course will be hands-on literary analysis: What is the relationship in Tolstoy’s works between form and meaning? What is the significance of story-telling and how might it model a quest for self-knowledge if not also truth? What is the value of reading and how can we read critically to realize that value fully? In what ways are we all, to one degree or another and whether we realize it or not, “literary” critics?

Since the key questions that Tolstoy asked – *Who am I? What am I? How should I live my life?* – are also basic human questions, a focus of the course will be on Tolstoy’s relevance for how we live our own lives in early 21st-century America.

The course is open to all students interested in Tolstoy. No previous experience with (Russian) language and literature is assumed.

Resources. For the most part, we will read primary texts (Tolstoy’s own words). Secondary literature (by critical readers of Tolstoy) will be integrated into classroom discussion and may be used for fulfilling course assignments. Other course materials will include web-based resources and handouts to be uploaded to Learn@UW.

There are three required books (see the UW course page under textbooks for detailed book information). Since we will be doing close-readings of the texts, please make every effort to get these translations.

- *Anna Karenina*. Trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky, 2004.
- *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*. Trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky, 2010.
- *A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, 1988.

Film materials are available via streaming from a UW-connected device or by purchasing the films to watch on your own. Required films are the following:

- *Anna Karenina* (Tom Stoppard’s version, 2012): <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1781769/>
- *Ivansxtc* (by the director Bernard Rose, 2000): <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0238321/>

Assignments. The following will be required for successful completion of the course.

1. **Active participation in the class that indicates a familiarity with the readings.** We will be breaking down into small groups to discuss guide questions and generate the outlines of a collective critical

response. Participation also includes attendance (see also below). Preparedness and participation comprise **10% of your final course grade**.

2. **Writing in an informal journal of reactions to the readings and class discussions.** The reaction journal will be collected and read by the instructor at two points during the semester (see below for dates). Guidelines and suggestions for writing will be given. Journal work is **40% of your final grade** (20% each).

3. **Two tests** that will focus on Tolstoy's context as well as the readings that we have discussed in and for class and will consist of identification/references and short answers (see below for dates). The test grade will make up **30% of your course grade** (15% each).

4. **Completion of a final project**, which will be a writing assignment of five to seven pages in length (double-spaced). Guidelines and suggestions for the project topics will be discussed in class. The final project will account for **20% of your course grade**.

Tuesday section. For those (Russian learners) taking the course for four credits, there will be an additional meeting on Tuesdays at 9:55am in Sterling Hall 2333. Activities and requirements for the Tuesday section will be outlined separately.

Grading. Grades will be given according to the scale below. Please keep in mind that an A is the highest grade that can be given, and it needs to be deserved as such.

92+ A
89-91 AB
82-88 B
79-81 BC
70-78 C
60-69 D

Absences. Please try to notify the instructor of absences in advance and arrange to get notes and work from a colleague. **More than three unexcused absences** (ie, one full week of class) **will result in the loss of 10% of the final grade**.

As the instructor for the course, I am committed to helping you to learn as much as possible from the course and achieve the course objectives. I am available for consultations outside of class: make an appointment to visit me in my office, email me with questions or ideas, or text or email me at home with questions.

Semester Schedule

Week 1

W 9-2 Introduction to Tolstoy and to critical reading
F 9-4

Week 2

M 9-7 Labor Day: no class.
W 9-9
F 9-11

Week 3

M 9-14	<i>Strider</i>
W 9-16	<i>Three Deaths</i>
F 9-18	<i>Sevastopol Sketches</i>
Week 4	
M 9-21	Introduction to <i>Anna Karenina</i>
W 9-23	<i>AK</i> : Book I
F 9-25	Sample/trial journal entry due
Week 5	
M 9-28	<i>AK</i> : Book II
W 9-30	
F 10-2	<i>AK</i> : Book III
Week 6	
M 10-5	
W 10-7	<i>AK</i> : Book IV
F 10-9	
Week 7	
M 10-12	<i>AK</i> : Book V
W 10-14	
F 10-16	<i>AK</i> : Book VI
Week 8	
M 10-19	
W 10-21	<i>AK</i> : Book VII
F 10-23	
Week 9	
M 10-26	<i>AK</i> : Book VIII
W 10-28	
F 10-30	No class: finalize journals, prepare for our first test, watch the <i>AK</i> film
Week 10	
M 11-2	First journal pass due and first test
W 11-4	<i>AK</i> film discussion
F 11-6	
Week 11	
M 11-9	Guest instructor: <i>A Confession</i>
W 11-11	
F 11-13	
Week 12	
M 11-16	<i>The Death of Ivan Il'ich</i>
W 11-18	
F 11-20	No class: write in journals, watch the <i>Ivan Il'ich</i> film
Week 13	
M 11-23	Guest instructor: <i>After the Ball</i>
W 11-25	No class: finalize journals and watch the <i>Ivan Il'ich</i> film
F 11-27	No class: Thanksgiving Day
Week 14	
M 11-30	Second journal pass due and <i>Ivan Il'ich</i> film discussion

W 12-2 *The Kreutzer Sonata*
F 12-4 *Father Sergius*

Week 15

M 12-7 Selected didactic folk tales
W 12-9 No class: prepare for second test
F 12-11 Second test

Week 16

M 12-14 Last class

Final projects are in lieu of a final exam, and will be due by noon on Saturday, 12-21.