Spring Semester, 2008  Russian 1307  Chekhov

**Russian 1307: CHEKHOV**
[CAS Literature & Foreign Cultures Requirement]
[Lectures and Readings in English]

**Requirements:**
- Time: Tues/Thurs 1-2:15
- Place: 149 C/L
- Instructor: Jane G. Harris
- Office hours: Tues 2:30-5 1417 C/L - Slavic Dept
- E-mail: jpharris2003@yahoo.com

**Required Texts:**
1. *Anton Chekhov: Stories* trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky [PV],
2. *Viking Portable Chekhov*, trans Garnett/Yarmolinsky [GY],
3. Norton ed. *Anton Chekhov’s Plays* [Plays],
4. *Xeroxes/Scans* [X]: stories and letters
5. *Recommended*: David Remnick, New Yorker article on translations, Nov. 7, 2005 [X]

Books available in the Pitt Bookstore. Also, check Hillman Library

**NOTE:** Some readings are longer than others! Make sure you allow enough time!

For **Russian majors**: If you are interested in reading some or all of the readings in Russian, please discuss this with me!

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**I: REQUIRED READINGS:**

**Week, Date**  | **Readings**
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1. Tu Jan 8  | **Introduction**, Syllabus, Requirements: Readings, translations [New Yorker article]
- Preparation of questions for each session, Oral reports, Papers, Exams
- Introductory discussion of Chekhov

Th Jan 10  | Earliest fiction 1883-1885: “Death of a Clerk,” “Small Fry,” “Huntsman;”
and “Malefactor” [PV] compare w “The Culprit” [GY];
“Chameleon,” “Sergeant Prishibeyev” [GY]
How to characterize “early Chekhov”? What to expect? Humor, Early themes
Some biographical background
Compare themes of law and justice with later perceptions of justice
Compare themes of inferiority complexes; various human relationships

2. Tu Jan 15  | 1886: “Panikhida,” “Easter Night” [PV], “Requiem” [X]
- Early religious themes: background and foreground motifs, Christian values,
tonality and coloration; use of language; writing. Narrator’s position.

Th Jan 17  | 1886: “Anyuta” [PV], “Requiem,” “Agafya,” “Chorus Girl,”
and “A Gentleman Friend,” “The Little Joke” [X]
- Attitudes toward/treatment of women. Narrator’s stance?
[Compare w later views of wo: “Ariadne,” “Fidget,” “Peasant women,” etc]

*3. Tu Jan 22  | Video: V-7232 Muratova, Dir. “Chekhov’s Motifs”, Part I. Based on 1886 story re family relations: “Difficult People” [read & discuss, for next time]*
Contemplating “encounters,” chance, and communication & fantasy

Th Jan 31 1888 “Name-Day Party,” “Attack of Nerves” [GY], letters 1888 [GY/PV]
Character development. Depiction of young professionals;
sense of self and responses to pain, to “the other”
Tension between social codes of behavior & individual human needs:
social and biological forces. Chekhov’s medical apperception.

5. Tu Feb 5 1889 “A Boring Story” [PV, 50 pp]; “The Bet” [X]
Confrontations: suicide vs. death in life; natural vs spiritual death
Character development: Youth and age. Confession; the dramatic situation

I: FIRST PAPERS DUE

*Th Feb 7 FIRST HOUR EXAM: 1880s: early and middle period

6. Tu Feb 12 1890: Letters re Sakhalin [X]; “Gusev” [GY], “In Exile” 1892, [PV] Transition
Autobiographical reminiscences; journey across Siberia. Exile and life.
What is happiness? What is living? Differing viewpoints, counterpoint.
Recurring imagery and symbols.

Th Feb 14 1891 “Peasant women,” 1892 “The Fidget” [PV], 1895 “Ariadne” [X],
1895 “Anna on the Neck” [PV] 1897 “In the Cart” [GY]
Women’s lives. Sympathy, empathy, criticism? Compare w earlier stories.

Malevolence of life; cultural suffocation; provincialism. Case histories. Madness?

Th Feb 21 1894 “Rothchild’s Fiddle,” “Student” [PV]
Sources of inner change: death, music, religious feeling, love
What connects the coffin maker, student, and “artist”?

8. Tu Feb 26 1896 “My Life” [X] Novella [NB: 86 pages; allow time!]
The forces of provincial life, moral confrontation, love, endurance
Sources of joy/happiness?

Th Feb 28 1898 Trilogy: “In the Shell,” “Gooseberries,” “About Love” [GY]
3 case studies of “shellness.” Compare trans of first two stories w [PV]
Spring Semester, 2008  Russian 1307  Chekhov  3

9. Tu Mar 4:  Video 1896-98 Drama: The Seagull Video [allow 2 days]
   Chekhov’s “Indirect Action” Dramas. How do they differ from the stories?
   Chekhov’s views of art, life, theatre; symbolism, impressionism, realism.
   READ: at least: ACT ONE

II: PAPERS DUE

**Th Mar 6:  No class. Read ahead.

10. Tu Mar 11 / Th Mar 13  No Classes: spring break

   Chekhov’s “Indirect Action” Dramas How do they differ from the stories?
   What is added? What absent? How do they change the nature of drama?
   Passions/Professions: actors, writers and family life. Different passions.
   Contemplation of art and life; symbolism, impressionism, realism.
   READ: the entire play! Review Act One

   Th Mar 20  SECOND HOUR EXAM  1890s

12. Tu Mar 25: 1899 Drama Uncle Vanya
   Video “Vanya on 42nd Street” Louis Malle version [2 days]. READ PLAY.

   Th Mar 27: Uncle Vanya [cont]
   How does this dramatic structure compare to “Seagull”?
   Basic motifs; basic structure. Use of monologues, natural language?
   How are characters individualized? How do they function as an ensemble?

13. Tu Apr 1: 1898-1899 “A Medical Case,” “The Darling,” “Lady with a Dog” [PV]

   Compare peasants/merchant life. Power of evil vs goodness

14. Tu Apr 8: 1904 Drama Cherry Orchard [2 days] Video/DVD Cacoyanis version
   Dramatic characterizations: Chekhov’s heroines and heros?
   READ: at least ACT ONE

III: PAPERS DUE

   Th Apr 10: Video Cherry Orchard [cont].
   Social changes. Values of past vs. future. Rise of peasantry, new Russian values?
   Symbols and impressions? Compare the plays.

   Conclusions: hopes, possibilities? Death, memory, continuity?

   Th Apr 17: THIRD HOUR EXAM: Dramas and Later stories