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RUSS 306L.01: Evil and the Supernatural in Russian Literature

Clint B. Walker

University of Montana, Missoula

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Prof. Clint Walker
LA 330, x2401
clint.walker@mso.umt.edu

Evil and the Supernatural in Russian Literature
RUSS 306L/MCLG 306L, spring semester 2018
Tues and Thurs, 9:30-10:50am, SS 254

Office Hours: M 10-11am and 12-1pm, W 10-11am in LA 330

Evil & the Supernatural in Russian Culture

Evil is seemingly omnipresent in mass culture today—one need only turn on a television, surf the web, dip into a novel, or download a movie. What is the nature of evil? Where does it come from? How does it spread? How can it be combated? What is the relationship between conceptions of evil and the supernatural? How do specific historical and cultural contexts influence notions about the nature of evil? How about the perceived role of the supernatural in causing and/or spreading evil?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students in this course will read, discuss and critically analyze a wide array of classic texts in Russian 19th and 20th century Russian literature in which the themes of evil and/or the supernatural play a vital role. By using Russian literary texts as a key lens to study the perceived nature of evil, students will acquire the ability to identify key manifestations of perceived evil in disparate periods of Russian history and culture. Moreover, they will learn to distinguish among various ideas and theories about the nature of evil and its perceived root causes in human life. Students will see the vital link between ideas and conceptions about the nature of evil as reflected in a specific text and the historical and cultural context in which the text was originally created. Both in class discussions and debates as well as in written analytical papers, students will analyze and evaluate the relationship between reigning conceptions of evil in Russian culture in disparate historical periods and belief in specific natural and supernatural forces as major causes of evil in daily life. By exploring conceptions of evil as reflected and explored in Russian literary classics, students will equip themselves to analyze and evaluate more critically contemporary ideas and theories about the nature and root causes of evil in the world as reflected in mass culture of the twenty-first century.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

Regular attendance & timely reading of all assigned works
Active participation in class discussion (and timely preparation of discussion question sheets)
Possible short in-class writing (no more than twice in the semester)
One 4-5 page short paper
One longer 8-10 page analytical paper* (minimum of two outside sources)

DHC (Honor's College) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

In addition to the GENERAL REQUIREMENTS listed above, students taking the course for DHC Honors credit will be required to sign up to present a reading for one class period (either individually or in groups, depending on the number of DHC students enrolled in the course). Each class presentation will: 1) introduce the work assigned for the day; 2) familiarize the class with one key secondary source or piece of scholarship related to the assigned work; 3) lead class discussion for that day. As part of preparation for leading class discussion, DHC students will be expected to meet with the instructor during an office hour at least one full week prior to the date of the presentation in order to discuss expectations.

Finally, within a period of one week after making this presentation, DHC students will be expected to turn in a two-page typed self-evaluation of their presentation exercise. The evaluation should address three main questions: 1) what did you learn from this presentation experience? 2) what do you feel you did especially well? 3) where do you feel you could improve in future presentations of material and/or in acting as a facilitator of classroom discussion?

REQUIRED TEXTS and MATERIALS: the cost is \$45 for all materials due to your professor

The Russian Fairy Book
Ruslan and Ludmila by Alexander Pushkin
The Captain's Daughter and Other Stories by Alexander Pushkin
Tales of Good and Evil by Nikolai Gogol
Hero of Our Time by Mikhail Lermontov
Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession DVD of film by L. Gaidai based on a play by M. Bulgakov
The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov
Life of Insects by Viktor Pelevin
Coursepack (works by Anton Chekhov, Daniil Kharms, Anna Starobinets)

GRADING:

25%	Attendance, Class Participation and Discussion (DHC presentations included here if appropriate)
25%	Discussion Question Sheets and in-class writing (whatever out of this is assigned)
20%	Short Paper (4-5 pages)
30%	Long Paper (8-10 pages)

GRADING SCALE

A = 93-100	C+ = 77-79	D- = 65
A- = 90-92	C = 73-76	F = 64 and below
B+ = 87-89	C- = 70-72	
B = 83-86	D+ = 68-69	
B- = 80-82	D = 66-67	

PAPER GUIDELINES:

All papers should be typed or done on a computer. Respect your work—give each paper a title and include your name and the date! Use a standard 12 point font (Times New Roman recommended) and double-space. Proofread each assignment for typos, poor wording, mechanics, etc. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Please ask if you have a question about what constitutes plagiarism, but on the whole, if you consult another work for ideas, copy or paraphrase from another source, etc., then you need to acknowledge the source (including the work you consulted and the page number/s) in your paper with a footnote.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:

It is essential to the learning process that students treat each other and the instructor with respect. Under the Student Conduct Code, students who are found to be disruptive may be asked to leave the classroom. Disruptive behaviors may include but are not limited to:

- Using electronic communication devices, including cell phones and laptops for purposes unrelated to ongoing class activities.
- Carrying on side conversations that are distracting to the instructor and other students.
- Verbally interrupting the class with comments or questions not relevant to the course or to the current discussion.
- Failure to participate in assigned group activities.
- Significantly interfering with instructor's work activities during or outside of class.

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will be glad to work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Syllabus

****Note that what you see listed on the syllabus is what you should prepare for that day of class. For example, on Tues, Feb 27 you should come to class having already read "The Overcoat" by Gogol.**

January

Tues	23	Intro, Discussion of Syllabus and Expectations Analyzing Culture as a System: Intro to Semiotic Theory Tapping into The Source: The Lightsaber Duel Revisited General Intro: Evil and the Supernatural A Few Key Conceptions of Evil in Rus' and Russia
Tues	25	<i>The Russian Fairy Book</i> (first three tales for today, p. 1-61)
Tues	30	<i>The Russian Fairy Book</i> (finish the book for today, p. 63-112)

February

	Thurs	1	Pushkin, <i>Ruslan and Ludmila</i> (first half for today's class, p. 1-54)
	Tues	6	Pushkin, <i>Ruslan and Ludmila</i> (finish the book)
	Thurs	8	Pushkin, <i>Ruslan and Ludmila</i> (overview and film excerpts)
	Tues	13	Pushkin, "The Shot," "The Snowstorm," "The Undertaker"
	Thurs	15	Pushkin, <i>The Captain's Daughter</i> (first half for today, p. 1-65)
	Tues	20	Pushkin, <i>The Captain's Daughter</i> (finish the novel, p. 66-139)
	Thurs	22	Gogol, "The Nose" in <i>Tales of Good and Evil</i>
	Tues	27	Gogol, "The Overcoat" in <i>Tales of Good and Evil</i>
March	Thurs	1	Lermontov, <i>Hero of Our Time</i> ("Bela, Max Maximych, "Taman")
	Tues	6	Lermontov, <i>Hero of Our Time</i> ("Princess Mary")
	Thurs	8	Lermontov, <i>Hero of Our Time</i> ("The Fatalist")
	Tues	13	Short Analytical Paper (4-5pp.) Due Today: Close analysis of one work (or up to two works) that we have read up to this point In Class: Evil & the Supernatural in Painting and Non-Verbal Art
	Thurs	15	Chekhov, "Ward No. 6" (in the coursepack)
	Tues	20	Lecture/Discussion on the Russian Revolution and Stalinism
	Thurs	22	Watch the film by L. Gaidai, <i>Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession</i> (based on the play by Mikhail Bulgakov)
	Tues	27	SPRING BREAK
	Thurs	29	SPRING BREAK
April	Tues	3	Kharms, very short stories (in the coursepack; up to but not including <i>The Old Woman</i>)
	Thurs	5	Kharms, <i>The Old Woman</i> (in the coursepack)
Tues10			Bulgakov, <i>The Master and Margarita</i> Pt 1, chaps 1-12
	Thurs	12	Bulgakov, <i>The Master and Margarita</i> Pt 1, chaps 13-18

Tues 17 Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, Pt 2, chaps 19-26

Thurs 19 Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*. Pt 2, chaps 27- end

Tues 24 **1-2 Page Outline of Long Paper due today**

In Class: Film Excerpts from *The Master and Margarita* TV series

Thurs 26 Pelevin, *Life of Insects*, p. 1-74

May

Tues 1 Pelevin, *Life of Insects*, p. 75-end

Thurs 3 stories by Anna Starobinets (in the coursepack)

Your **long paper** (8-10 pp.) for this course is due on **Wed., May 9 by 5pm (in LA 330)**.

