

Spring 2005
RUSS G6204
Reading Turgenev
Prof. Cathy Popkin

Course Description:

“Reading Turgenev” offers a detailed consideration of some of the major, as well as some of the minor, works of Ivan Turgenev and of his place in the Russian Realist tradition. But the course is also meant to do more than this, in the conviction that graduate courses must do more than simply “cover” material. “Reading Turgenev” is thus also an attempt to look critically at the genre of the “author course” and consider the methodological problems inherent in characterizing an author’s oeuvre, reconstructing an authorial position, and identifying his or her role in a great historical narrative of development.

In the case of Turgenev this is particularly trenchant, since he is so often read for his historical significance—both as an important figure in the development of the novel in Russia and for his realistic depictions of nineteenth-century Russia. It is the goal of this course, however, to foreground the question of what Turgenev is read *for*. Certainly some of his contemporaries and immediate successors (most notably Dostoevsky) held strong opinions about both Turgenev’s ethical positions and his poetic practices and resolved not to bother reading him at all; ever since then, Turgenev’s polite country estates have formed a nice counterpoint in the history of Russian literature to Dostoevsky’s “spider hell.” But surely we are missing something if we read Turgenev for his estates, and something important may be obscured in a narrowly historicized consideration of his work. “Reading Turgenev” thus borrows its title from the novella of William Trevor, a twentieth- (and twenty-first-) century Irish writer with no roots in the Russian tradition that has so strictly defined how to read Turgenev. What might it mean to read Turgenev here and now? The course will (responsibly) consider the ways he has been read and situated in the tradition over the past 150 years, but it will do so also in an effort to identify—or generate—productive modes of reading Turgenev ourselves.

Course Requirements:

Each student is responsible for leading the discussion of one work (or, in the case of the novels, one section of a work). Written assignments: 3-page review of a recent book or article on Turgenev; 15-page analytical paper on an aspect of Turgenev’s work (topic to be cleared with instructor).

Reading List and Weekly Syllabus:

<u>week 1</u>	Introduction “Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka”
<u>week 2</u>	“Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka”

Zapiski okhotnika (selections)

<u>week 3</u>	<i>Zapiski okhotnika</i>
<u>week 4</u>	<i>Rudin</i>
<u>week 5</u>	<i>Rudin</i>
<u>week 6</u>	“Poezdka v Poles’e” (or “Asia”)
<u>week 7</u>	<i>Dvorianskoe gnezdo</i>
<u>week 8</u>	<i>Dvorianskoe gnezdo</i>
<u>week 9</u>	“Pervaia liubov”
<u>week 10</u>	“Gamlet i Don Kikhot” <i>Otsy i deti</i>
<u>week 11</u>	<i>Otsy i deti</i>
<u>week 12</u>	<i>Otsy i deti</i> “Dovol’no”
<u>week 13</u>	“Sobaka” “Kazn’ Tropmana” “Son”
<u>week 14</u>	“Rech’ po povodu otkrytiia pamiatnika A.S. Pushkinu v Moskve” “Pesn’ torzhestvuiushchei liubvi” <i>Poemy v proze</i> (selections)