

RUSS 603 (Spring 2010)  
Graduate Seminar

Russian Realist Literature and Painting

Instructor: Molly Brunson  
 Meetings: W 9:20-11:10; LC 103  
 Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-4:30, or by appointment  
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**Course Description**

This graduate seminar will take the form of an interdisciplinary examination of the development of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian Realism in the literary and visual arts from the 1840s through the 1890s. Through the consideration of representative works from the literary and painterly canons, we will define the parameters of an aesthetic of Russian (and European) Realism. We will pay particular attention to questions of genre and medium, the relationship between artist, audience, and critic (as well as the border between art and life), and the self-conscious development of cultural institutions and traditions (such as journals, *kruzhki* (circles), and museums). Topics will include the Natural School and the physiological sketch; the artistic strategies and polemics of critical Realism; literary and painterly landscapes; narrative, genre, and the rise of the novel; the Wanderers and the articulation of a Russian school of painting; the limits and limitations of Realism. We will read novels, short stories, and critical works by Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Goncharov, Tolstoy, Fet, Chekhov, and others. Painters of focus will include Fedotov, Perov, Shishkin, Kuindzhi, Repin, and Kramskoy. Secondary readings will be taken from Russian and Soviet classics of literary scholarship (Eikhenbaum, Bakhtin, Vinogradov, Ginzburg, to name just a few), as well as more recent literary and art historical scholarship (both Russian and non-Russian). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the seminar, a secondary concern will be the particular methodological demands of interart scholarship.

Readings will be in Russian. Discussion and assignments will be in English.

\*\*The seminar is also open to (and indeed welcomes) students with no knowledge of Russian, as long as they demonstrate a serious interest in the topic and make special arrangements with me at the beginning of the semester.\*\*

### Primary Texts

N. A. Nekrasov (ed.), *Физиология Петербурга* (*The Physiology of Petersburg*, 1845)  
 I. A. Goncharov, *Обыкновенная история* (*A Common Story*, 1847)  
 I. S. Turgenev, *Записки охотника* (*Sketches from a Hunter's Album*, 1847-52)  
 L. N. Tolstoy, *Детство* (*Detstvo*, 1852)  
 L. N. Tolstoy, *Севастопольские рассказы* (*Sebastopol Sketches*, 1855-6)  
 A. A. Fet, Selected poetry  
 I. S. Turgenev, *Отцы и дети* (*Fathers and Children*, 1862)  
 F. M. Dostoevsky, *Идиот* (*The Idiot*, 1868)  
 A. P. Chekhov, *Три сестры* (*Three Sisters*, 1901) and selected short stories

Course Website - [http://wordpress.common.yale.edu/russ603\\_spring2010/](http://wordpress.common.yale.edu/russ603_spring2010/)

Weekly reading prompts, supplementary readings and materials, and an image database can be found on the course website. While I outline below the minimal requirements for participation in this website (response blogposts and comments), I encourage you to use this resource actively to communicate your questions, observations, ideas, announcements, etc.

Nineteenth-century Russian art, with a few exceptions, is largely underrepresented in image databases, such as Yale's Digital Collection and Artstor. Therefore, I will begin gathering images for what I hope to be an extensive digital collection of Russian painting, drawing, and sculpture. This image database is a massive project. The digitization and uploading of images will be ongoing throughout the semester. Please check continually for new additions, and feel free to suggest artists, works, or other documents that should be scanned and included in the database. This resource will remain available to seminar participants and other interested scholars after the end of the semester, so I strongly encourage as much participation as possible in this project.

### Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance and active participation in seminar discussion
2. Occasional informal presentations, either on the assigned readings or other topics of particular interest to the presenter
3. 5 short response blogposts (not exceeding 500 words) and 5 comments – to be posted no later than 5 PM the night before seminar. The topic and date of your posts are at your discretion. Again, this is the bare minimum. I strongly urge you to make the course website your own, and take advantage of its intellectual potential.
4. 1 final research paper (20-25 pp.)
5. 1 class presentation on final paper project

Undergraduates will not be required to give informal presentations and will write a 10-12 page final paper.

### Class Schedule

Be sure to consult the weekly assignment prompt for up-to-date texts and instructions (some of the readings will be required, some will be optional). All supplementary readings will be available on the course website.

- 01.13 Introduction: reality, realism, and Realism
- 01.20 The Creation of the Natural School  
N. V. Gogol, “Невский проспект” (“Nevsky Prospect,” 1835) and “Шинель” (“The Overcoat,” 1842)  
N. A. Nekrasov, excerpts from *Физиология Петербурга* (*The Physiology of Petersburg*, 1845)
- 01.27 An anti-romantic realism  
I. A. Goncharov, *Обыкновенная история* (*A Common Story*, 1847)
- 02.03 Picturing urban everyday life  
Paintings from P. A. Fedotov and others
- 02.10 The real country  
I. S. Turgenev, excerpts from *Записки охотника* (*Sketches from a Hunter's Album*, 1847-52)  
I. A. Goncharov, “Сон Обломова” (“Oblokov's Dream,” 1849)  
Paintings from A. G. Venetsianov, V. G. Perov, and others
- 02.17 Young Tolstoy  
L. N. Tolstoy, *Детство* (*Childhood*, 1852)  
L. N. Tolstoy, *Севастопольские рассказы* (*Sebastopol Sketches*, 1855-6)
- 02.24 The Russian landscape in painting and poetry  
A. A. Fet, selected poetry  
Paintings from I. I. Shishkin, F. A. Vasilyev, A. I. Kuindzhi, and others
- 03.03 Realism in life and literature

I. S. Turgenev, *Отцы и дети* (*Fathers and Children*, 1862)

Spring Break

- 03.24 Writing a Realist novel  
F. M. Dostoevsky, *Идиот* (*The Idiot*, 1868)
- 03.31 Representing Christ  
F. M. Dostoevsky, *Идиот* (*The Idiot*, 1868)  
Paintings from I. N. Kramskoy, N. N. Ge, and others
- 04.07 The Wanderers and a Russian school of painting  
Paintings from I. E. Repin, I. N. Kramskoy, and others  
V. V. Stasov, selected critical essays
- 04.14 The limits of the real  
A. P. Chekhov, *Три сестры* (*Three Sisters*, 1901) and selected short stories  
Paintings from I. I. Levitan
- 04.21 Paper presentations and concluding remarks