SL11: Topics in Nineteenth-Century Slavonic Literature and Culture: Tolstoy

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Introduction
This paper gives students the opportunity to delve deeply into the life and writings of one of Russia’s greatest and most prolific writers, Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910). He not only changed the shape of Russian and world literature, but also impacted political and social movements across the globe. The bulk of the paper will focus on his masterpiece, *Voina i mir* (1865-69), which in its scope and ambitions challenged all the reigning ideas of its time about how history is recorded, how novels are written, and about the individual’s place in the world. Tolstoy’s life was vast; he grew up in a serf-owning gentry family shortly after the Decemberist Revolt and died just years before the Bolshevik Revolution. During that time, he thought and wrote about all the burning questions of his day, so while this paper has a single-author focus, it also gives us the chance to consider most aspects of nineteenth-century Russian literature and culture.

A full year devoted to Tolstoy will enable students to trace the evolution of his thought and writing from his early war stories and experiments in narration, through *Voina i mir*, to the late novellas and non-fiction where he boldly proclaimed his new worldview arrived at after spiritual conversion. It will also offer the space to consider Tolstoy’s legacy through different lenses, from a feminist approach to his writing on women, to a postcolonial examination of his writings about the Caucasus, to an ecocritical examination of his views on nature. For Tolstoy, all the big questions of life—how must I live? what must I do? what is the purpose of science and art? what is religion? how should society be structured?—were open and pressing. Engaging with Tolstoy on his own terms means wrestling with these burning questions anew.

### Overview of Texts and Topics for 2023-24

**Set Text:**
*Voina i mir* (1865-69)

**Topics:**
1. Early writings (pre-1860)
2. Late writings (1880-1910)
Teaching
Weekly lectures in Michaelmas and Lent, except Michaelmas week 5, which will be run as a seminar; weekly revision seminars in Easter. Nine supervisions throughout the year held fortnightly (except Michaelmas week 5/6).

Lecture Schedule

Michaelmas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intro and Biography</td>
<td>Early war writings</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Early war writings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Narrating the self</td>
<td>Narrating the self</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Diaries and Letters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> preparation for <strong>Voina i mir</strong> – Tolstoy on his aims</td>
<td>Participation in seminar in place of a supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td></td>
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Lent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voina i mir</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tolstoy’s spiritual crisis: <strong>Ispoved’</strong> and <strong>Zapiski sumasheshdshchevo</strong></td>
<td>Post-conversion Tolstoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex and Art: <strong>Kreutzerova Sonata</strong> and <strong>Chto takoe iskusstvo?</strong></td>
<td>Post-conversion Tolstoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Death: <strong>Smert’ Ivana Il’icha</strong> and <strong>Khoziain i rabotnik</strong></td>
<td>Post-conversion Tolstoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Faith: <strong>Otets Sergii</strong> and late religious writings</td>
<td>Post-conversion Tolstoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Returning to war: <strong>Hadji Murad</strong></td>
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Assessment

The exam consists of four sections: A, B, C, and D. Section A is comprised of commentary passages and essay prompts about the set text, **Voina i mir**. Section B is comprised of essay prompts about Topic 1, Tolstoy’s pre-1860 writings. Section C is comprised of essay prompts about Topic 2, Tolstoy’s post-1879 writings. Section D is comprised of essay prompts that can be responded to using **Voina i mir** in combination with any other works by Tolstoy.

All students answer three questions.

Students for Part IB (Options A & B) answer:
- either 1 or 2 questions from Section A (if 2, one must be a commentary and one an essay question)
- 1 question from section B and/or one question from section C
If you choose to answer only one question in Section A, you may answer 1 question from section D in place of a question from B or C

**Students for Part II** answer:
1 question from Section A and
1 question each from any combination of B, C, or D

Candidates for this paper may not draw substantially on material from their dissertations or material which they have used or intend to use in another scheduled paper. Candidates may not draw substantially on the same material in more than one question on the same paper.
**Preparatory Reading and General Background**

Students are urged to buy and read the Set Text, *Voina i mir*, over the summer or during the year abroad. The following reading list serves as an introduction to the subject.


**Reading Lists**

**Topics 1 and 2**

Remember that you will be making *selections* from among the primary texts here; they are not all compulsory reading. Suggestions will be made in lectures about different routes through the material.

**Secondary Readings**

The suggestions for secondary reading represent a collection of resources and menus of possibilities: no one expects you to do all of the reading below! Your supervisor will help you to orientate yourself within the bibliography, and to use your time efficiently, by suggesting those texts which most closely relate to the themes and approaches that interest you. There are also MANY excellent books and articles not listed, so you are encouraged to do your own sleuthing.

**Standard edition of Tolstoy’s works**


* Note: you will often see this abbreviated as PSS

**Useful websites**

*Tolstoy Studies Journal* (includes digital back issues, images, and links to resources including the *PSS*): [https://www.tolstoy-studies-journal.com/](https://www.tolstoy-studies-journal.com/)

*Слово Толстого* (word search in all of Tolstoy’s works): [https://slovotolstogo.ru/](https://slovotolstogo.ru/)

**Biographies**


Historical Background

Introductory Tolstoy Readings
General Tolstoy Readings


Set Text

Война и мир (1865-69)
There are numerous editions of this book (of course). You are encouraged to buy both a Russian copy and an English one so that you can more easily take notes, mark passages, and keep track of where you are in the whole.

I do not expect anyone to read the whole of Voina i mir in Russian (!), but obviously everyone is expected to read the whole work in English. For English translations, I recommend either Pevear and Volokhovsky or the Oxford World’s Classics Maude translation edited by Mandelker.

I am providing here a list of the sections that I think will be most important to read in Russian, based on three selection criteria: 1) most famous/significant passages, 2) passages with particular linguistic features that are lost in translation, 3) passages that represent characteristic features of Tolstoy’s use of the Russian language. Part II students should try to read a substantial portion of these sections. For Part IB students I am providing a narrower selection (“focus on”). Chapters listed in bold are especially important to engage with in the original.
Том первый
Часть первая: I-XI, XVIII-XXI, XXV
  Focus on: I-II, VIII-IX, XIX-XX
Часть вторая: VII, XV
  Focus on: VII
Часть третья: I-II, VI-VIII, XII-XIII, XVI, XIX
  Focus on: XVI, XIX
Том второй
Часть первая: I, IV-V, IX, XII-XVI
  Focus on: IV-V
Часть вторая: III-IV, XI-XIII, XVIII
  Focus on: XII
Часть третья: I-III, VIII-X, XVI-XVII, XIX-XX
  In I-III pay attention to the old oak
Часть четвертая: V, VII, X-XII
  Focus on: VII
Часть пятая: V, VIII-X, XIX-XXII
  Focus on: VIII-X, XXII (esp. the comet)
Том третий
Часть первая: I-II, VI-VII, XV, XIX-XX
  Focus on: I, XV
Часть вторая: VII-XI, XIX, XXI-XXV, XXVII-XXVIII, XXXI-XXXII, XXXVII, XXXVIII
  Focus on: VIII, XXV, XXXI, XXXVII
Часть третья: IV, IX, XVI, XX, XXVIII-XXX, XXXII
  Focus on: IV, IX, XXXII
Том четвертый
Часть первая: IV, X-XIII, XV-XVI
  Focus on: X, XIII, XVI
Часть вторая: XIV, XIX
Часть третья: II, V-XI, XV
  Focus on: X, XV
Часть четвертая: II-III, IX, XI, XV, XX
  Focus on: IX
Эпилог
Часть первая: I, VIII-X, XVI
Часть вторая: I, VII, XI-XII

Secondary Sources


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**Topic 1: Pre-1860 writings**

**Primary Readings**

Севастополь в декабре месяце (1855)
Севастополь в мае (1855)
Набег (1853)
Рубка леса (1855)
*История вчерашнего дня (1851)
Детство (1852)
Три смерти (1859)

Selections from Tolstoy’s Diaries and Letters (English and Russian pp)


recommend reading this edition because it includes incredibly helpful notes that explain Tolstoy’s references.

*Everyone is required to read the short, unfinished «История вчерашнего дня» as a foundational text we will refer back to in thinking about how Tolstoy writes.

**Secondary Sources**


There are also many excellent readings on specific texts included in *Tolstoy’s Short Fiction* (Norton Critical Edition, trans. Michael Katz).

**Topic 2: Post-1880 writings**

**Primary Readings**

Исповедь (1882)
Записки сумасшедшего (1883)
Крейцерова соната (1889)
Послесловие к «Крейцеровой сонате»
Что такое искусство? (1898)
Смерть Ивана Ильича (1889)
Хозяин и работник (1895)
Отец Сергий (1898)
Царство божие внутри вас (1894)

**Secondary Sources**


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