

MADNESS AND MADMEN IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE (REE 385/CL386)

Professor Michael Pesenson (Calhoun 404)

The problem of madness and insanity has preoccupied Russian writers and thinkers from the earliest days of Russia's troubled history. In this course we will cover a broad range of works from medieval saints' lives to post-modernist fiction to investigate the evolution of madness in Russian culture. The heroes of the novels and short stories we will explore range from holy fools to everyday madmen to chronically troubled spirits. The reading will include Pushkin's *Queen of Spades* and *Bronze Horseman*; Gogol's *Overcoat* and *The Diary of a Madman*, Dostoevsky's *The Double* and *Notes from the Underground*, Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*, Chekhov's *The Black Monk* and *Ward No 6*, Garshin's, *Red Flower*, Nabokov's *Despair*, Erofeev's *Life with an Idiot* and Pelevin's *Buddha's Little Finger*. We will also examine manifestations of fictional insanity in film, opera, and the visual arts.



Thursday, 8/30 – Introduction

Readings: “Life of Mikhail of Klopsk”; “Life of Isaakii the Cave Dweller” (Blackboard)

Svetlana Kobets, “Lice in the Iron Cap: Holy Foolishness in Perspective” and “Isaakii of the Kiev Caves Monastery: An Ascetic Feigning Madness or a Madman-Turned-Saint,” *Slavica*, 2011 (online)

А.М. Панченко, «Смех как зрелище» в книге Д.С. Лихачев, А.М. Панченко, и Н.В. Поньрко *Смех в древней Руси* (Blackboard)

Film: *The Island* (Lungin, 2006)

Tuesday, 9/4 – Yurodstvo: “Foolishness in Christ”

Readings: Pushkin, “Boris Godunov”; Selections from Kurbsky-Grozny correspondence

Chester Dunning, “Rethinking the Canonical Text of Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov*” (JSTOR)

I. Serman, “Paradoxes of the Popular Mind in Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov*” (JSTOR)

M. Cherniavsky, “Ivan the Terrible as Renaissance Prince” (JSTOR)

P. Hunt, “Ivan IV’s Personal Mythology of Kingship” (JSTOR)

K. Platt, “Ivan the Terrible Under Stalin” (JSTOR)

Film: *Tsar* (Lungin, 2009)

Thursday, 9/6 – Power and Madness in Medieval Rus’

Readings: Pushkin, “The Bronze Horseman,” “The Queen of Spades”; Poems: *Не дай мне Бог сойти с ума; Пророк; Поэт*

G. Rosenshield, «Choosing the Right Card: Madness, Gambling and the Imagination in Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades*». (JSTOR)

R. Gregg, «The Nature of Nature and the Nature of Eugene in The Bronze Horseman» (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 9/11 – Pushkin (Tales and poems)

Readings: Gogol, “Portrait” and “Nevsky Prospect”; Odoevsky, “Sylphide”

S. Karlinsky, "Hollow Shape: The Philosophical Tales of Prince Vladimir Odoevsky" (JSTOR)
S. Davydov, "Gogol's Petersburg" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 9/13 – Romantic Madness – The Influence of E.T.A. Hoffmann

Readings: Gogol, "Diary of a Madman", "Overcoat", "Nose"

Yermakov, "The Nose" (Blackboard)
Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's Overcoat is Made" (Blackboard)
Chizhevsky, "About Gogol's 'Overcoat'" (Blackboard)
Gustafson, "The Suffering Usurper: Gogol's Diary of a Madman" (JSTOR)
Gregg, "Gogol's Diary of a Madman: The Fallible Scribe and the Sinister Bulge" (JSTOR)
Altschuler, "One of the Oldest Cases of Schizophrenia in Gogol's Diary of a Madman" (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 9/18 – Gogol – Madness and the Absurd

Readings: Dostoevsky, *The Double*

C. Sherry, "Folie a Deux: Gogol and Dostoevsky" (JSTOR)
D. Chizhevsky, "The Double in Dostoevsky" (Blackboard)
J. Rice, "Dostoevsky's Medical History: Diagnosis and Dialectic" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 9/20 – Young Dostoevsky and the Influence of Hoffmann

Readings: Dostoevsky, *The Double*; "White Nights"; "A Faint Heart"

W.J. Leatherbarrow, "The Rag with Ambition: The Problem of Self-Will in Dostoevsky's 'Bednye Lyudi' and 'Dvoynik.'" (JSTOR)
W.J. Leatherbarrow, "Dostoevsky's Treatment of the Theme of Romantic Dreaming in 'Khozyayka' and 'Belye Nochi'" (JSTOR)
V. Terras, "Problems of Human Existence in the Works of the Young Dostoevsky" (JSTOR)
G. Rosenshield, "Point of View and the Imagination in Dostoevskij's 'White Nights'" (JSTOR)
K. Strelsky, "Dostoevsky's Early Tale, 'A Faint Heart'" (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 9/25 – Young Dostoevsky and Romanticism

Readings: Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*

R.L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature* (Blackboard)

J. Scanlan, "The Case against Rational Egoism in Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground" (JSTOR)

G. Rosenshield, "The Fate of Dostoevskij's Underground Man: The Case for an Open Ending" (JSTOR)

J. Lethcoe, "Self-Deception in Dostoevskij's *Notes from the Underground*" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 9/27 – Dostoevsky (*Notes from the Underground*)

Readings: Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*; "Dream of a Ridiculous Man"

O. Stuchebrukhov, "Ridiculous dream versus social contract: Dostoevskij, Rousseau, and the problem of ideal society" (JSTOR)

E. Naiman, "Of Crime, Utopia, and Repressive Complements: The Further Adventures of the Ridiculous Man" (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 10/2 – Dostoevsky (*Notes from the Underground*, *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*)

Readings: Leskov, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

R. Aizlewood, "Leskov's *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*: Composition and Symbolic Framework" (JSTOR)

F. Wigzell, "Folk Stylization in Leskov's *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 10/4 – Madness of Passion: Leskov (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*)

Readings: Ostrovsky, *The Storm*; Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (review)

Zohrab, "Re-assessing A.N. Ostrovsky's *Groza*: From the Classical Tradition to Contemporary Critical Approaches" (JSTOR)

R.A. Peace, "A.N. Ostrovsky's 'The Thunderstorm': The Dramatization of Conceptual Ambivalence" (JSTOR)

A. Basom, "Anna Karenina and Opiate Addiction" (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 10/9 – Madness of Passion: Ostrovsky *The Storm* (with Reference to *AK*)

Readings: Tolstoy, "Kreutzer Sonata"

D. Herman, "Stricken by Infection: Art and Adultery in *Anna Karenina* and *Kreutzer Sonata*" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 10/11 – Madness of Passion: Tolstoy (*Kreutzer Sonata*)

Tuesday, 10/16 – Midterm Presentations

Thursday, 10/18 – Midterm Presentations

Readings: Garshin, "Red Flower" and Chekhov "Ward No. 6"

H. Weber, "Mithra and St. George: Sources of 'Krasnyi tsvetok'" (JSTOR)

T. Winner, "Chekhov's *Ward No. 6* and Tolstoyan Ethics" (JSTOR)

Film: *Ward No. 6* (Shakhnazarov, 2009)

Tuesday, 10/23 – Russia as Insane Asylum: Garshin (*Red Flower*); Chekhov (*Ward # 6*)

MIDTERM PAPER DUE

Readings: Chekhov, "Black Monk" and "Attack of Nerves"

C. Whitehead, "Anton Chekhov's 'The Black Monk': An Example of the Fantastic?" (JSTOR)

P. Rossbacher, "The Function of Insanity in Chekhov's 'The Black Monk' and Gogol's 'Notes of a Madman'" (JSTOR)

C. Flath, "Chekhov's Underground Man: 'An Attack of Nerves'" (JSTOR)

Thursday, 10/25 – Dr. Chekhov and Clinical Insanity

Readings: Sologub, *Petty Demon*, Chs. 1-16

S. Rabinowitz, "Fedor Sologub's Literary Children: The Special Case of *Melkii Bes*" (JSTOR)

J. Mills, "Expanding Critical Contexts: Sologub's *Petty Demon*" (JSTOR)

G.J. Thurston, "Sologub's *Melkiy Bes*" (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 10/30 – Decadent Madness: Sologub (*Petty Demon*)

Readings: Sologub, *Petty Demon*, Chs. 17-32

Thursday, 11/1 – Decadent Madness: Sologub (*Petty Demon*)

Readings: Finish Sologub (if not yet done)

Andreyev, “The Thought” and “Life of Father Vasilii”; Bunin, “The Mad Artist”

Tuesday, 11/6 – Decadent Madness: Andreyev and Bunin

Readings: Nabokov, *Despair*

G. Patterson, “Nabokov’s Use of Dostoevskii: Developing Goliadkin ‘Symptoms’ in Hermann as a Sign of the Artist’s End” (JSTOR)

J. Connolly, “The Function of Literary Allusion in Nabokov’s *Despair*” (JSTOR)

D. Bethea, “Sologub, Nabokov, and the Limits of Decadent Aesthetics” (JSTOR)

Thursday, 11/8 – Literary Madness: Nabokov’s *Despair*

Readings: Nabokov, *Despair*

J. Trzeciak, “Viennese Waltz: Freud in Nabokov’s *Despair*” (JSTOR)

Tuesday, 11/13 – Literary Madness: Nabokov’s *Despair*

Readings: Pelevin, *Buddha’s Little Finger* (*Чанаев и Ичмомо*)

Brintlinger, «The Hero in the Madhouse: The Post-Soviet Novel Confronts the Soviet Past» (JSTOR)

J. Mozur, «Viktor Pelevin: Post-Sovism, Buddhism, and Pulp Fiction» (JSTOR)

Thursday, 11/15– No Class

Readings: Continue reading Pelevin’s *Buddha’s Little Finger*

Tuesday, 11/20– Soviet and Post-Soviet Madness: Pelevin

Readings: Finish Pelevin; Erofeev, “Life with an Idiot”; Begin reading S. Vasilenko, *Durochka* (*Little Fool*)

Thursday, 11/22 – NO CLASS –Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, 11/27 – Soviet and Post-Soviet Madness: Pelevin

Readings: Finish reading S. Vasilenko’s “Little Fool”

S. Kobets, "From Fool to Mother to Savior: The Poetics of Russian Orthodox Christianity and Folklore in Vasilenko's Novel-Vita "Little Fool" (JSTOR)

Film: *House of Fools* (Konchalovsky, 2002)

Thursday, 11/29 – Yurodivyi returns – Vasilenko's "Little Fool"

Tuesday, 12/4 – Final Presentations

Thursday, 12/6 – Final Presentations

FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY 12/11!

Grading:

1. Midterm presentation (10%)
2. Midterm paper – 10 pages (20%)
3. Final presentation (10%)
4. Final paper – 15 pages (40%)
5. Attendance and participation (20%)