

Summer 2009  
“Literary St. Petersburg in Its Historical Context”  
Profs. Gerald Pirog and Jochen Helbeck

St. Petersburg was home to many of Russia’s most important writers—Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Blok, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Majakovsky, among many others—and has many literary museums devoted to their work and lives. It was also the site of momentous and sometimes calamitous events in Russian history that were often the subject of literary works. That Russia’s public sphere often operated through the medium of literature will be an important aspect of this course.

Excursions to literary museums and important historical sites will complement the lectures and reading assignments. Traditionally, experts in literature, often with advanced degrees, staff these museums so the level of the excursions will be very high.

Course Requirements:

1. regular attendance
2. preparation for all classes
3. attendance at all excursions
4. participation in discussions

Evaluation:

1. two 3-5 page essays submitted in August after the program ends

Texts:

1. Elaine Blair, *Literary St. Petersburg: A Guide to the City and Its Writers*, NY: The Little Bookroom. 2006.
2. Anna Lisa Crone and Jennifer Day, *My Petersburg/Myself: Mental, Architectural, and Imaginative Space in Modern Russian Letters*. Bloomington, IN: Indian UP. 2004.
3. Bruce W. Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia* (New York, 2000)
4. James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Cambridge, Mass: 2003)
5. Lidiya Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary* (London, 1995)

Recommended:

1. Laurence Kelly, *St. Petersburg: a Travellers’ Companion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, 2003)
2. Lisa Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (New York, 2006)
3. Julie Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg*. Princeton: Princeton UP. 2005

Syllabus

The first series of lectures (3 weeks), by Prof. Helbeck, will give a broad outline of the history and cultural significance of St. Petersburg and provide a context in which to

understand the literary texts that the students will be reading. Excursions to important historical sites will complement these lectures.

#### Lectures and excursions (Weeks 1 through 3)

- 1) Peter the Great and the founding of the city. Peter's cultural revolution
- 2) Excursion I: Noble residences in Petersburg. Remaking the Nobility.
- 3) Catherine the Great. Scenarios of monarchic power. Bronze Horseman sculpture.
- 4) Excursion II: to Tsarist residences. Reading imperial gardens and parks
- 5) The Imperial cityscape (G. Kaganov). St. Petersburg around 1800. St. Petersburg and Moscow as cultural symbols. Lotman on the semiotics of behavior.
- 6) Urban History during 19<sup>th</sup> century: Nevsky Prospekt; Dostoevsky's Petersburg, In-migrants from villages
- 7) Petersburg and Revolution. The city as a symbolic space (Nicholas II's failed scenario of power)
- 8) Excursion III to the symbolic spaces of Petersburg during the revolution (selection from following: Peter and Paul Fortress, Putilov factory, Smolnyi, Pl. Vosstaniia)
- 9) Petrograd to Leningrad: early Soviet power, opposition, terror. [Second city. Political opposition. Kirov's murder. 1930s terror. Intelligentsia. Belomorkanal]
- 10) The Blockade
- 11) Excursion IV: Piskarevskoe kladbishche
- 12) Postwar reconstruction. From Leningrad to St. Petersburg

The second series of lectures by Prof. Pirog will be devoted to works of literature in which the city is a protagonist. Excursions to literary museums will complement the lectures and reading assignments. Traditionally, experts in literature, often with advanced degrees, staff these museums so the level of the excursions will be very high.

#### Lectures and Excursions (weeks 4-6)

1. St. Petersburg as literary protagonist
2. Excursion I: The Bronze Horseman and the Pushkin Literary Museum
3. Gogol's "Nevsky Prospekt:" Urban space in a City of Dreams
4. A Most Premeditated City: Dostoevsky's "White Nights" and *Crime and Punishment*
5. *Crime and Punishment*
6. Excursion II: In Raskolnikov's footsteps; Dostoevsky Museum
7. Pre-Revolutionary St. Petersburg: Blok's "Neznakomka;" Mandelshtam's "Admiral'tejstvo"
8. Bely's *Peterburg*: 1905
9. Excursion III: to Blok Museum. Visit the cabaret *Brodjachaja sobaka*."
10. Revolutionary St. Petersburg: Blok's "The Twelve," Majakovsky "Our March"
11. Stalinist St. Petersburg and World War II: Akhmatova's *Requiem*
12. Excursion IV: Living Voices: A visit with the poet Alexander Kushner