

Revised syllabus:

RUSS 374: Shakespeare in Russian Culture

cross-listed as ENG 389

cross listed as CPLT 389

cross listed as IDS 385

4 credits

Russ 374: Shakespeare in Russian Culture will introduce the major problems of the environment, ecology and sustainability issues by means of a discussion of the political world of Shakespeare's plays. In order to prepare myself more carefully for the class in question I have entered into correspondence with the participants of the International seminar, "Shakespeare and Ecology", organized by the British Shakespeare Association at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 1-4 September 2005 . This Seminar, 'Shakespeare and Ecology', is led by Gabriel Egan (Loughborough University) and Kevin De Ornellas (Queen's University of Belfast). I am presently also examining the following works of Gabriel Egan (the chief organizer of the Conference in question):

Egan, Gabriel. 2003k. 'Babbling of Green Fields: Shakespearian Ecopolitics in Theory': Paper for the Seminar 'Shakespeare, Theory and Spirituality' on 31 August at the Inaugural British Shakespeare Association Conference at De Montfort University, Leicester, 29-31 August

Egan, Gabriel. 2004d. "Shakespeare and Eco-criticism: The Unexpected Return of the Elizabethan World Picture." Literature Compass. vol. 1.

Internet <http://www.literature-compass.com>

I am particularly interested in Egan's assertion that the Elizabethan world picture has unexpected and direct implications for the contemporary world as well as his insistence that there is an urgent need to review the overall direction of Shakespearean Studies in the context of contemporary ecological challenges. Here I quote:

"The most pressing social and political problem of our time, ecological degradation, has had virtually no impact upon Shakespeare studies to date.. In fact, arguments about how to define the natural in contradistinction from the human, about the proper relations of these two spheres, and the ideological and political purposes to which arguments about nature might be put have long been apparent in literature and drama, as work on the Romantics has shown" (cf.

<http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Renaissance/0127.html>)

My own class, however, takes the theme of the ecological insight of Shakespeare's world through the prism of Russian culture (19 and 20th centuries). Russian 374 centers around Shakespeare's formidable impact upon Russian culture, a transformative, intertextual impact that has touched so many aspects of ordinary and not so ordinary Russian life, from Tchaikovsky to Bakhtin, Chekhov and Pasternak. One of the central dramatic problems in Shakespeare's plays is the constant tension and interchange between the "green world" and the politico-technocratic world of the city and the court. I propose to explore and highlight this tension:

a) as it becomes transposed in Russian thought in the mid 20th century at a time when Soviet power was a matter of ruthless policy exerting a disastrous effect on the environment and exploiting resources in a potentially fatal way for every country in its power and, of course, far beyond the boundaries of Eastern Europe; and

b) as a means of a self-critical examination in a larger key, first, of the Post-Soviet legacy as a global problem and second, as a way of addressing a problem on the more local Russian scene more effectively by means of the well-known Russian love for Shakespeare than by other more prosaic methods- or at least together with other more conventional approaches. Ironically, Shakespeare's awareness of the endangering of the green world in a situation of autocracy can be viewed in its transposition into Russian literature as an awareness of a global problem before it ever became global or even a "problem". Shakespeare's themes become diagnostic tools in this new atmosphere and can be an effective method of

helping, in however modest a way, to raise a modern people's awareness of the need for care, responsibility, and action in terms of our own environmental predicament.

This class will also examine several paradigms for understanding Shakespeare's formidable influence in Russian culture: from Bloom's anxiety of influence, to Eliot's claim that Shakespeare cannot be a poetic influence, to Pasternak's conception of the battle entailed in the transmission of tradition, and then to Mandelstam's vision of influence as a forceful impulse to speech or even a mating call.

In this context of the multiple versions of inter-textual influence, we shall concentrate on writing, critical theory and performance in Russia of the XIXth–XXth centuries surrounding five Shakespearean plays:

Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth. The plays in question will be carefully discussed in order to understand which of the themes have the strongest impact and new life in a Russian culture and which are overlooked and downplayed.

In addition to the above-mentioned plays of Shakespeare, the following Russian works will be studied:

Bakhtin's notion of the Carnavalesque (excerpts from Rabelais and His World) Tchaikovsky, Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture Prokofiev, Romeo and Juliet (ballet) Turgenev's essay, 'Hamlet and Don Quixote'

Leskov, 'Lady Macbeth of Mstensk'

Shostakovich, Lady Macbeth of Mstensk (opera) Turgenev, 'King Lear of the Steppes'

Tolstoy vs. Shakespeare and Lear

Chekhov, The Seagull

Pasternak, Doctor Zhivago and 'Translating Shakespeare'

Kozintsev, King Lear (film, 1971)

Grigorii Kozinstev, King Lear: The Space of Tragedy, The Diary of a Film Director

In-class texts:

Egan, Gabriel. 2004d. "Shakespeare and Eco-criticism: The Unexpected Return of the Elizabethan World Picture." *Literature Compass*. vol. 1.

Internet <http://www.literature-compass.com>

Shakespeare, William, *Twelfth Night*, Mass Market Paperback:
Publisher: Washington Square Press; ISBN: 0671722948

Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet*, Mass Market Paperback:
Publisher: Washington Square Press: ISBN: 0671722859

Shakespeare, William, *King Lear*, Paperback, Publisher: Penguin USA (Paper); ISBN: 0140714766 Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*,
Publisher: Penguin USA (Paper); New edition, ISBN: 0140714782

Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet* Publisher: Penguin USA (Paper);
(November 2001); ISBN: 0140714545

Leskov, Nikolai, *The Enchanted Wanderer*, trans. David
Magarshak, Paperback, Publisher: Modern Library; ISBN:
0812966961

Chekhov, Anton, *Five Plays: Ivanov, the Seagull, Uncle Vanya,
Three Sisters, and the Cherry Orchard* (Oxford World's
Classics), Paperback,
Publisher: Oxford University Press; (June 1998), ISBN: 0192834126

Pasternak, Boris. *Doctor Zhivago*, Paperback, Publisher: Pantheon
Books;
ISBN: 0679774386

Kozintsev, Grigorii. *King Lear: The Space of Tragedy, The Diary
of a Film Director*. Publisher: University of California Press; ASIN:
0520033922. This one is out of print. See what you can do!!!!

There will be a \$10.00 charge for a booklet with additional
readings.

