

Philosophy 210: Philosophical Themes in Literature  
God and Man in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature

**Sample Course Summary:**

This course introduces students to major figures in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature—Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Solov'ev—and analyzes their work with special attention to how philosophical questions and ideas contribute to both their style and meaning. In particular, it considers the problem of evil, the existence and nature of God, human nature, morality.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completing this course students will be able to:

1. Analyze works of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature with regard to style, period, and composition.
2. Discuss 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature with regard to history, development, and major practitioners.
3. Read and interpret both classic and contemporary works in philosophy.
4. Understand and construct philosophical arguments.
5. Identify philosophical claims, questions, and arguments in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature and analyze their contribution to the style and meaning of literary works.

**Sample Required Texts:**

Gibian, George, *The Portable 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Reader*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).  
Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On The Genealogy of Morality*  
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *Crime and Punishment*  
Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

**Sample Course Requirements:**

*Quizzes (10%):*

Students will be given discussion questions to answer each week as they do both the philosophical and literary readings. Students should come to class prepared to discuss their answers with the class. Each week a quiz will be given. It will consist of three questions to which students who prepared answers to the discussion questions will be prepared to answer.

Because the readings introduce students to the history of Russian literature, the literature itself, and the philosophical themes and arguments discussed, the discussion questions and quizzes contribute to all five learning outcomes.

*Short Papers (45%):*

Students will write three short papers. Each paper should be 3 pages long and consist of three parts: 1.) The student will choose some aspect of the literary work that has philosophical relevance. This can be a particular scene, character, theme, etc. The student must explain how this aspect of the work contributes to the whole. 2.) The student must explain the philosophical

theme present in this portion of the work with reference to the philosophical texts discussed (the student may use other philosophical texts only with the instructor's permission). 3.) The student will explain the author's treatment of the philosophical issue and how this particular perspective contributes to the student's interpretation of this aspect of the literary work and the work as a whole.

Parts one and three of these papers require that the student analyze literary works with regard to style, meaning, and composition (LO 1). Insofar as it requires acquaintance with the various authors' work, literary styles, at treatment of philosophical ideas, it also contributes to learning outcome #2 and #5. Part 2 of this work requires comprehension of the philosophical arguments found in the philosophical works covered (LO 3, 4)

*Mid-Term and Final (30%):*

Two exams will be given to test the student's knowledge of the major authors in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature, the major styles represented, and the philosophical ideas found in them (LO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

*Attendance/Participation (15%):*

This is a discussion-oriented course. Students are expected to come to class each day having critically engaged the readings and prepared to discuss them with their instructor and classmates. Students are expected to make a relevant contribution to class discussion at least once a week. Failure to do so will reduce the student's participation grade (LO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

**Sample Grading Scheme and Weights:**

A = 100-90%

B+ = 89-87%

B = 86-80%

C+ = 79-77%

C = 76-70%

D+ = 69-67%

D = 66-60%

59 and below = F

**Sample Class Procedures and Conduct**

1. All mobile phones must be turned OFF for lectures and class sections.
2. You are not permitted to sleep, text, browse the internet or gossip with a friend during class.
3. We expect all of you to take responsibility for the preparation of your papers and for their end results. We will not tolerate unprofessional behavior.
4. You may find some of the readings for this course difficult; please come to discuss difficulties early and often.

5. Assignments will be collected at the **beginning** of class on their due dates.
  1. Late Papers 10% deduction for every 24 hours late. An assignment is considered 'late' after 5 min of section time has passed.
  2. You may only make up an exam if you have a **documented** good reason for your absence. A documented good reason includes, but is not limited to death, planned job interviews, sickness with a doctor's excuse, dangerous weather conditions, car accidents and varsity sporting events in which you are a member of the team.
6. This is the University's policy on absences from final exams. Your failure to turn in your final project on time will be treated as if you were absent from a final exam: Students who are absent from any final examination will be given the grade of F on the course if they have not offered an excuse acceptable to the instructor. Re-examinations for the purpose of removing an F or raising a grade are not permitted. If the absence is excused, students will be assigned a grade of I, and may complete the course under the conditions specified by the instructor in the "Assignment of Incomplete Grade" form. A student with excused absence from a final examination in one semester may take the deferred examination at the next regular examination period provided the examination is taken at the convenience of the professor. The examination must be taken within one calendar year from the time the absence was incurred. Deferred examinations will be granted only in case of absence certified as unavoidable because of documented illness or other cause, rendering attendance at final examinations impossible.
7. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email [sasds@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sasds@mailbox.sc.edu), or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.
8. Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else's work, will result in a 0 for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.
9. Amendments and changes to the syllabus, including evaluation and grading mechanisms, are possible. The instructor must initiate any changes. Changes to the grading and evaluation scheme must be voted on by the entire class and approved only with unanimous vote of all students present in class on the day the issue is decided. The lecture schedule and reading assignments (daily schedule) will not require a vote and may be altered at the instructor's discretion. Grading changes that unilaterally and equitably improve all students' grades will not require a vote. Once approved, amendments will be distributed in writing to all students via Blackboard.

## Course Schedule:

Contribution to AIU Learning Outcomes	Class #	Topic	Reading/Assignments
Gives students an overview of the history, development, practitioners and styles of 19 <sup>th</sup> century Russian philosophy (1 and 2)	1	Introduction to 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature and its Philosophical Themes	
<b>Man: Human Nature, Life, and Death</b>			
Introduces Gogol as the first of the great Russian author's and discusses the relationship between literature and philosophy in Russia (1, 2, 5)	2	Out from Under Gogol's <i>Overcoat</i>	Gibion, Introduction and 199-213
Introduces students to key concepts and terminology in Russian literature (1, 2)	3	Gogol's Realism; Gogol's Satire; Gogol's Absurdity	214-232
	4	Master Morality; Slave Morality	GM
	5	The Dark Workshop	GM
Introduces students to Dostoyevsky's style, which focuses more on the inner psychological life of the characters and contrasts it with Gogol and Tolstoy's Realism (1, 2)	6	Introduction to Dostoevsky	Gibian 410-413; CP Ch. 1.1-1.4
Compares Raskolnikov's moral outlook to Nietzsche's ubermensch (1, 5)	7	Dostoevsky	CP Ch. 1.5-2.1
	8	Dostoevsky	CP Ch. 2.2-2.5
	9	Dostoevsky	CP 2.6-3.1
	10	Dostoevsky	CP 3.2-3.4
	11	Dostoevsky	CP 3.5-4.2
	12	Dostoevsky	CP 4.3-4.6 <b>Paper #1</b>

			<b>Due</b>
	13	Dostoevsky	CP 5.1-5.4
	14	Dostoevsky	CP 5.5-6.5
Discusses Raskonnikov's ultimate rejection of Nihilism (1, 5)	15	Dostoevsky	CP 6.6-E.2
	16	Mid-Term Exam	
	17	Epicurus on Death	Letter to Menoeceus (Blackboard)
Presents and asks students find indications of Tolstoy's veneration of the common serf in his writing (1, 2)	18	Tolstoy on the Genuine Human Life	Gibian 437-447
	19	Tolstoy on Death	Gibian 447-466
	20	Tolstoy on Death	Gibian 466-489
<b>God: Existence, Nature, and the Problem of Evil</b>			
	21	Hume: The Problem of Evil	DCNR Parts V-X; <b>Paper #2 Due</b>
	22	Solutions to The Problem of Evil	DCNR Parts XI-XII;
Introduces Students to Dostoyevsky's Religious vision and. Asks whether or not Dostoyevsky thinks the problem of evil can be resolved (2, 5)	23	Dostoyevsky's Response to the Problem of Evil	Grand Inquisitor
	25	Dostoyevsky's Lack of Solution	Grand Inquisitor
	26	Plotinus: The One, The Intelligence, and the Soul	Three Primal Hypostases (on Blackboard)
Introduces students to Russian philosophical prose and compares it to fiction (1, 2)	27	Solov'ev: The One, Divine Sophia, and the Soul	Lectures on Godmanhood
Compares Solov'ev's use of Divine Sophia to Lady Philosophy in Boethius's Consolation of philosophy (1)	28	Solov'ev: Divine Sophia and Lady Philosophy	Select Poems; <b>Paper #3 Due</b>
		Final Exam	