SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES (SLAV)

* SLAV 243a / RSEE 243a / RUSS 243a, Race, Identity, and Empire: Soviet Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1920-1970  Nariman Shelekpayev

Children's literature—works written for children, teenagers, and young adults—emerged only in the late nineteenth-century, as childhood itself was newly understood as a special developmental stage in human life. Alphabet primers, picture books, and novels attempted to establish a set of moral and behavioral ethics that structured children's perceptions of norms and values for many years ahead. In this course, we examine the political life of children's literature in the Soviet Union. How did Soviet writers initiate their young readers' perception of the racial, political, gendered Self and Other, particularly as the Soviet Union situated itself as a transcontinental empire? We begin in the 1920s, when the Soviet state revolutionized children's literature internationally by commissioning books and poems from first-class writers, like Vladimir Mayakovsky, Osip Mandelstam, and Daniil Kharms. As we move through the twentieth century, we investigate how children's literature responds to the international developments of the Cold War. How is the Soviet ideology of race elaborated in children's literature? How are children readers invited into the project of empire, and initiated as citizens, in the very act of reading or holding a book? We approach these works as adult interpreters, while also imagining ourselves as children readers. We discuss the multimediality of these texts, the interaction between text and image in illustrated books. Together, we explore the collections of Soviet children's literature at the Beinecke Library and Princeton's Cotsen Library. Guest instructors discuss the animal and the human in children's literature, the relationship between books and toys, and the practice of translating children's literature. This is an LxC course.  

* SLAV 313a / LITR 210a / RSEE 313a / RUSS 313a / THST 314a, Art and Resistance in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine  Staff

This interdisciplinary seminar is devoted to the study of protest art as part of the struggle of society against authoritarianism and totalitarianism. It focuses on the example of the Soviet and post-Soviet transformation of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. The period under discussion begins after the death of Stalin in 1953 and ends with the art of protest against the modern post-Soviet dictatorships of Alexander Lukashenka in Belarus and Vladimir Putin in Russia, the protest art of the Ukrainian Maidan and the anti-war movement of artists against the Russian-Ukrainian war. The course begins by looking at the influence of the “Khrushchev Thaw” on literature and cinema, which opened the way for protest art to a wide Soviet audience. We explore different approaches to protest art in conditions of political unfreedom: "nonconformism," "dissidence," "mimicry," "rebellion." The course investigates the existential conflict of artistic freedom and the political machine of authoritarianism. These themes are explored at different levels through specific examples from the works and biographies of artists. Students immerse themselves in works of different genres: films, songs, performances, plays and literary works.  

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