

UKRAINIAN HISTORY THROUGH UKRAINIAN LITERATURE (IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

LIT 3400/EUS3930

T4 (10.40-11.30) and R 4-5 (10.40-12.35)

LEI (Leigh Hall) 0104

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In July 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin published “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” in which he proclaimed that Ukraine has no culture, language, or history separate from Russia – and is, in fact, not a nation. As scholars as Yale historian Timothy Snyder have observed, however, Putin’s essay is an exercise in self-contradiction: that is, by so emphatically denying Ukraine’s existence, it ultimately emphasizes it. More to the point, however, one has only to survey more than two centuries of Ukrainian literature to perceive the richness of the country’s distinct culture and to see how Ukraine existed as a modern nation even before it was recognized as a sovereign nation-state in 1991.

The purpose of this class, then, is to trace Ukraine’s history through its literature in English translation. Although any nation’s literature cannot directly reflect its history, it can nevertheless provide insights into the desires, anxieties, and conflicts that shaped its formation. Moreover, as post-colonial scholars have long argued, the study of literature produced by people living under, or emerging from, imperial rule offers insight into fraught and complex struggles of self-definition and self-expression.

Although this course cannot possibly cover the history of Ukraine and its literature within one semester, it is nevertheless designed to give students an introductory framework through which they can continue to expand and develop their knowledge of Ukraine and Eastern Europe in general. Each week will involve readings and lectures on key periods of Ukrainian history (e.g., the rise of the Cossacks, the birth of a modern national idea, and Ukraine’s colonial rule by the

Tsarist Russian and Soviet empires) as well as discussions of selections from major literary works produced in those periods.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (GRADE BREAKDOWN)

Attendance/participation: 10%

Reading quizzes: 10%

Weekly reading responses: 45%

Midterm exam: 25%

Final exam: 10%

Attendance/Participation:10%

- Since this is a hybrid lecture/discussion course, it depends on your active participation.
- I'll hold regular roll-calls to ensure your presence, and I'll also ask you questions and invite you to share your own.
- Please note that attendance involves not only bodily presence but active engagement.
 - I realize that people have different learning methods and needs, so there are also different ways of remaining engaged without (always) speaking.
- Students may be excused for such reasons as illness, religious holidays, and participation in athletic/scholarly/professional events.
 - If you anticipate needing to miss a class, please let me know a week in advance.
 - Students who are absent must nevertheless make up the work they missed.
 - Please see the official university attendance policy: [Attendance Policies < University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](#)
- I recognize that students have different learning styles and needs, and will make necessary arrangements with students registered with the Disability Resource Center [Disability Resource Center - Disability \(ufl.edu\)](#)

Weekly Reading Quizzes: 10%

- Each week, I'll give quizzes on historical material we've already reviewed and/or the literary texts we're scheduled to discuss.
- These quizzes will address basic matters designed to keep you on track of the reading schedule. They will also help me assess general class progress.
 - E.g. "Identify one (1) factor that influenced the Orange Revolution of 2004"

- E.g. “Identify one mythological creature in Lesya Ukrainka’s *The Forest Song* with which you’re already acquainted in previous lectures/discussions of Ukrainian folklore”

Weekly Reading Responses: 45%

- In advance of *each course period*, I will upload a set of reading questions on Canvas.
 - These questions will be designed to help you attend to major points in the assigned readings that we’ll discuss in class.
- I will post questions for both Tuesday and Thursday sessions no later than the previous Friday, if not before.
 - Of course, you can always read ahead! Thus, once you receive the reading questions, you’ll be better prepared to answer them and reread key passages as necessary.
- You will be **required to respond to one (1) set of reading questions per week.**
 - That is, you must respond to questions for either a Tuesday or Thursday course period – your choice.
- Each reading response will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10 points.
 - Responses need not use formal academic language or citations – this is not an essay assignment – and there is no word requirement.
 - Responses that earn a full 10 points are those that offer concise, coherent, and intelligent/intelligible replies to the assigned questions that demonstrate active reading.
- You must upload your responses **no later than 10pm on the day before we discuss the assigned texts.**
 - For example, if you choose to respond to questions about readings assigned for a Tuesday session, you must upload your responses by 10pm on Monday – and if you respond to questions to readings assigned for a Thursday session, you must respond by 10pm on the immediately preceding Wednesday.
- **You may not submit a reading response after the session in which the assigned texts are covered**
 - I am willing to assign a make-up question so long as you contact me in advance with a legitimate excuse.
 - See Attendance/Participation Section

Midterm Exam: 25%

- On Thursday, 7 March, you will sit for an in-class written exam. I will provide the exam “blue books” in which you will write responses to the exam.
- The exam will involve two parts:
 - First, short-answer questions regarding major terms, concepts, and map identifications.

- The responses to these questions should be brief, concise, and precise; they should demonstrate your critical understanding of key topics we've discussed in class.
 - Second, a short essay question that examines your ability to synthesize and think critically about the material we have covered thus far in class.
 - It should involve a clear thesis statement and convincing supporting arguments.
- You will have the entire two-hour Thursday session to complete this exam.
 - You may – and indeed should – take a break between the two parts of the exam.
 - After you take a break after the first part, I'll give you the question(s) and separate exam booklet for the second part.
- Only students who are registered with the DRC are exempt from taking this exam during this course period.
 - I will accommodate your needs on a case-by-case basis, with the guidance and oversight of the DRC.
- Those students who are not registered with the DRC but may need to miss the exam *for legitimate reasons* should contact me in advance.
 - See Attendance/Participation Section.
 - You will write the exam in my office at a mutually scheduled time.

Final Exam: 10%:

- The final exam for this class will involve an in-class essay written during the final course period of the semester (23 April).
- During this exam, you will write a response to a question that demonstrates your ability to synthesize and think critically about assigned texts, especially those read and discussed after the midterm period.
- Only students registered with the DRC are exempt from writing this exam in class. Just as with the midterm, I'll make arrangements on a case-by-case basis, with guidance and oversight by DRC.
- As with the midterm exam, those students who are not registered with the DRC but may need to miss the exam *for legitimate reasons* should contact me in advance.
 - See Attendance/Participation Section.
 - You *must* write the exam in my office at a mutually scheduled time – and your exam questions will be different from those given on the assigned exam period.

COURSE READINGS

Available for Purchase at UF Bookstore

- Serhii Plokyh, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. New York: Basic, 2015.

- *The Complete Kobzar: The Poetry of Taras Shevchenko*. Trans. Peter Fedynsky. London: Glagoslav Publications, 2013.
- Nikolai Gogol. *The Complete Works of Nikolai Gogol* Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky.. New York: Random House, 1999.
- Lesia Ukrainka. *The Song of the Forest* Trans. Patrick John Corness. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2022.
- Issac Babel. *Odessa Stories*. Trans. Boris Dralyuk. Pushkin P, 2019.
- Lysenko, Adrian and Ivanka Theodosia Galadza. *Five Stalks of Grain* U of Calgary P, 2022.
- Oksana Zabushko. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*. Trans. Halyna Hryn. Amazon Crossing, 2011.
- Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv. *How War Changed Rondo*. Trans. Oksana Lushchevska. Enchanted Lion P, 2021.

On Canvas

- Vladimir Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” “ [Article by Vladimir Putin “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” • President of Russia \(kremlin.ru\)](#)
- Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator” *Illuminations* Trans. Harry Zohn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2019. 11-25
- Selections from Ukrainian folklore
- Nikolai Gogol, selection from *Taras Bulba* Trans. Peter Constantine. Modern Library Classics, 2003.
- Ivan Kotliarevsky, “Eneida” (1798) *The Ukrainian Poets: 1189-1962* Ed./Trans. C.H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell Toronto: U of Toronto P, 36-47. [Eneida.pdf \(utoronto.ca\)](#)
- Benedict Anderson. “Introduction” and “Chapter 2: Cultural Roots” *Imagined Communities* London: Verso, 1983. Pgs. 1-7, 9-36.
- George Grabowicz. Selection from *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko* Cambridge, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies, 1982.
- Yulia Ilchuk, “Introduction” and “Chapter 1: The Negotiation of Ukrainian Identities in the Russian Empire” *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2021. 3-18, 19-41.
- Ivan Franko, *Lys Mykyta/Fox Mykyta*. Trans. Bohdan Melnyk. Illus. William Kurelek Tundra, 1978.
- Efraim Sicher, “Isaak Babel’s ‘Odesa Tales’: Inventing Lost Time and the Search for Cultural Identity” *The Russian Review* 77: 1 (2018) 65-87.
- Mykola Kulish, *Sonata Pathétique* Trans. George S.N. Luckyj and Moira Luckyj Libraries Unlimited, 1975. 3-24.
- Mayhill Fowler, “Introduction.” *Beau Monde on Empire’s Edge: State and Stage in Soviet Ukraine* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2023.

- Timothy Snyder. “Chapter 1: The Soviet Famines” *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* New York: Basic Books, 2010. 21-58.
- Oksana Zychayna, “The Market At Myrhorod” (1953) *A Hunger Most Cruel* Ed. Sonia Morris Trans. Roma Franko Language Lanterns Publications, 2002. 211-252.

Lectures/Documentaries

[Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 1: Ukrainian Questions Posed by Russian Invasion - YouTube](#)

[\(684\) Lesia Ukrainka: A Lecture by Janice Kulyk Keefer, Part 1 - YouTube](#)

[\(768\) Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 8. Early Jews of Modern Ukraine - YouTube](#)

[\(1067\) Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 23. the Colonial, the Post-Colonial, the Global - YouTube](#)

[\(881\) 20 Days in Mariupol \(full documentary\) | FRONTLINE and The Associated Press - YouTube](#)

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

PRELIMINARY NOTES:

- This schedule is tentative and subject to change contingent on the instructor’s professional commitments as well as the students’ interests and reading progress.
- Even so, the dates for in-class midterm exams (7 March) and the in-class final essay exam (23 April) are **Locked In and Final**
 - All students are expected to write their exams in class on these dates
 - Exemptions will only be given to students who have registered with the Disabilities Office or who have contacted me in advance with a legitimate excuse.
 - See Attendance/Participation Section
- The reading list below demarcates sources available on Canvas with (***)
 - Otherwise, books are available for purchase at the UF Bookstore

WEEK ONE: What is Ukraine?

9 January: Course Introduction

11 January: “Introduction” Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*

***Vladimir Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” [Article by Vladimir Putin “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” • President of Russia \(kremlin.ru\)](#)

***Timothy Snyder, “The Making of Modern Ukraine: Class 1 – Ukrainian Questions Posed by Russian Invasion” [Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 1: Ukrainian Questions Posed by Russian Invasion - YouTube](#)

***Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”

WEEK TWO: Early Ukrainian History and Folklore

16 January: Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe* “Part One: On the Pontic Frontier”

(Chapters 1-6)

18 January: ***“The Seven Rook Brothers and Their Sister”

***“The Lad Who Gave the Sun, Moon, and Stars Back to the People”

***“Kyrylo Kozhumiaka”

*** “The Mitten”

WEEK THREE: The Rise of Cossacks in History and Legend

23 January: Plokhy, “Part II: East Meets West” (Chapters 7-12)

25 January: *** “The Cossack Mamariha”

*** Gogol, *Taras Bulba* (chapter 3)

WEEK FOUR: The Rise of Ukrainian National Identity and Literature

30 January: Phokhy, Chapters 13-14 (“The New Frontier” and “The Books of Genesis”)

*** Benedict Anderson, “Introduction” *Imagined Communities*

1 February: *** Ivan Kotliarevsky, *Enieda*

WEEK FIVE: Ukraine's National Poet: Taras Shevchenko, *The Kobzar*

6 February: Taras Shevchenko, from *The Complete Kobzar* : “The Princess”
“The Mad Maiden”

8 February: “Kateryna”

“Haidemaks”

*** Grabowicz, Chapter 2, “Myth and Metamyth” (from *The Poet As Mythmaker*)

WEEK SIX: Russo-Ukrainian Hybridity in the Works of Nikolai Gogol/Mykola Hohol

13 February: Taras Shevchenko's poem, “To Mykola Hohol” (from *The Complete Kobzar*)

Gogol, “St. John's Eve” from *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*

15 February: Gogol, “Viy,” “The Overcoat”

*** Ilchuk, Introduction and Chapter 2, from *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity* (3-18, 19-41)

WEEK SEVEN: Late Nineteenth Century Ukraine and the Fables of Franko

20 February: Plokyh, chapters 16 and 17 (“On the Move” and “The Unfinished Revolution”)

*** Franko, *From When The Animals Could Talk:*

“The Painted Fox”

“How the Animals Brought the People to Court”

22 February: *** Franko, *Lys Mykyta*

WEEK EIGHT: Lesya Ukrainka, Folklore, and the Making of Modern Ukrainian Literature

27 February: ***Watch “Lesya Ukrainka: A Rage of Fire” [\(684\) Lesia Ukrainka: A Lecture by Janice Kulyk Keefer, Part 1 - YouTube](#)

Lesya Ukrainka, *The Song of the Forest*

29 February: Lesya Ukrainka, *The Song of the Forest*

WEEK NINE: Review and Midterm Exam

5 March: Review/Catch-up Day

7 March: In-class Midterm Exam

12 March: SPRING BREAK

14 March: SPRING BREAK

WEEK TEN: Jewish Literature and the Wild Southwest

19 March: ***Watch Glenn Dynner, guest lecturer for Timothy Snyder “The Making of Modern Ukraine: Class 8 – The Jews of Early Modern Ukraine” [\(768\) Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 8. Early Jews of Modern Ukraine - YouTube](#)

21 March: Isaac Babel, *Odesa Stories*

*** Efraim Sicher, “Isaak Babel’s ‘Odesa Tales’: Inventing Lost Time and the Search for Cultural Identity”

WEEK ELEVEN: Soviet Ukrainian Literature and the Executed Renaissance

26 March: Plokhy, chapters 18-20 (“The Birth of a Nation,” “A Shattered Dream” and “Communism and Nationalism”)

28 March: Mykola Kulish, *Sonata Pathétique*

*** Mayhill Fowler, “The Beau Monde on the Borderlands”

WEEK TWELVE: The Holodomor and Ukraine Under Soviet Totalitarianism

2 April: Plokhy, chapters 21-23 (“Stalin’s Fortress,” “Hitler’s *Lebensraum*,” and “The Victors”)

*** Timothy Snyder, Chapter 1 of *Bloodlands*, “The Soviet Famines”

4 April: *** Oksana Zvychnayna, “The Market at Myrhorod”

Adrian Lysenko and Ivanka Theodosia Galadza, *Five Stalks of Grain*

WEEK THIRTEEN: Post-Soviet/Post-Colonial Ukraine

9 April: Plokhy, chapters 24-26 (“The Second Soviet Republic,” “Good Bye, Lenin!” and “The Independence Square”)

11 April: Oksana Zabushko, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*

WEEK FOURTEEN: Ukraine in the Global Spotlight: Between Europe and Russia

16 April: Plokhy, Chapter 27 (“The Price of Freedom”) and Epilogue (“The Meanings of History”)

Watch Timothy Snyder, “The Making of Modern Ukraine, Class 23: The Colonial, The Post-Colonial, the Global”

[\(1067\) Timothy Snyder: The Making of Modern Ukraine. Class 23. the Colonial, the Post-Colonial, the Global - YouTube](#)

18 April: Watch Frontline documentary, *20 Days in Mariupol* [\(881\) 20 Days in Mariupol \(full documentary\) | FRONTLINE and The Associated Press - YouTube](#)

Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv, *How War Changed Rondo*

WEEK FIFTEEN: Course Conclusion

23 April: Final In-Class Essay Exam