

Fall 2020

**RUT 3442: Reading Dante in Stalin's Russia**  
**General Education Course (H, N)**

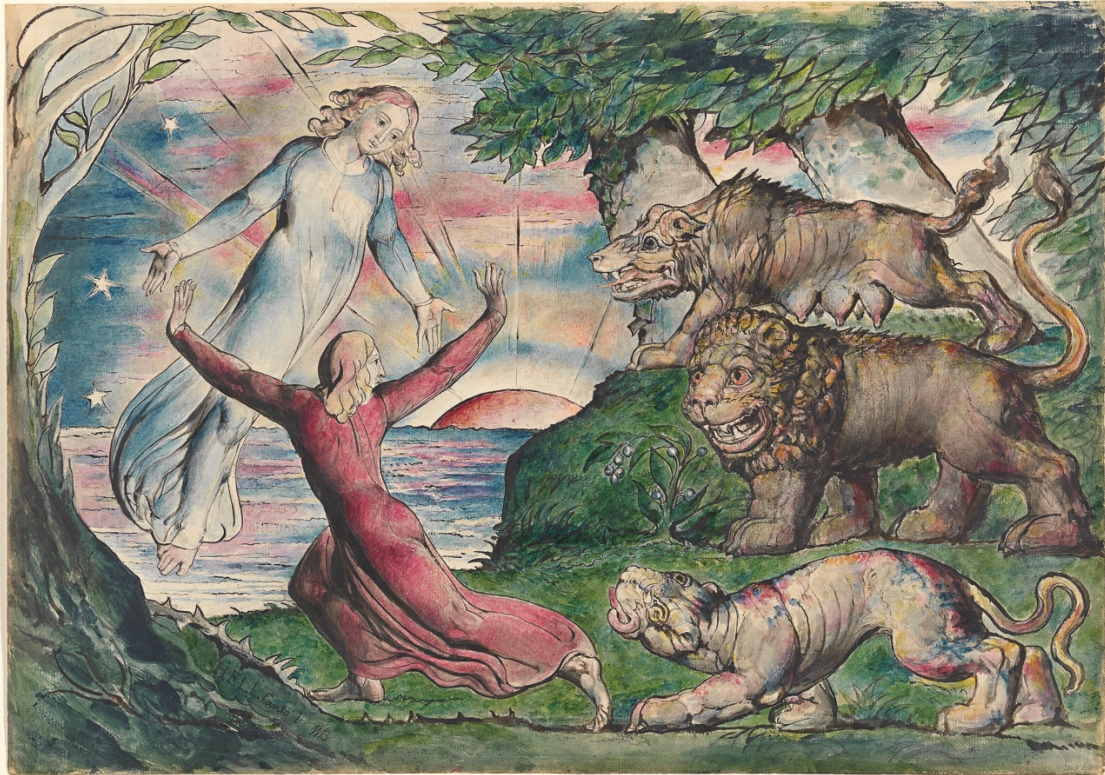
Class number: 26135, section RUT2; M,W, F: 7<sup>th</sup> period, 1:55p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**Cross-listed with Honors (IDH 3931, class number: 27063, section RUT3)**

**Cross-listed with CES (EUS 3930, class number: 28163, section 12GR)**

Instructor: Dr./Professor Galina Rylkova

*office hours:* Thursdays, 3-5 p.m., and by appointment, via ZOOM



**Course description:** This course invites students to explore how Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) legacy was appropriated by Russian writers and the public at large in the course of the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century. Italy has always been one of the major sources of spiritual and cultural developments in Imperial Russia. With the advent of the Bolsheviki in 1917, followed by wars, Stalin's purges, and major restructuring of familiar institutions, responsible for social stability, people once again turned to art and literature to guide them through bewildering upheavals. Reading and interpreting Dante's *Divine Comedy* became one of the sources of sustainability for many Soviet people. It is interesting to find why. The course will be divided into two interconnected parts. Part I (weeks 1-5) will be devoted to Dante, his life and works, and his status as the world's most famous refugee and many artists' eternal companion. Part II (weeks 6-15) will be devoted to the reception of Dante in Russia/Russian emigration and to the ways his legacy has been adopted to meet its readers' different needs and agendas. We will discuss such diverse writers (and their texts) as Anna Akhmatova (poems), Osip Mandelstam (essays, poems), Andrei Platonov (*The Foundation Pit*), Mikhail Bulgakov (*The Master and Margarita*), and Vladimir Nabokov (*Lolita*). **Format:** Classes will combine lectures, discussions, and student-centered activities. No knowledge of any language (besides English) required.

### Learning Outcomes:

Students will gain a working knowledge of Dante's literary legacy and understand the ways in which the figure of Dante informed the art and rhetoric used to oppose the ideology of Stalinism. Students will understand the paradigm for salvation and transcendence that the *Commedia* provides for victims of tyranny. Students will acquire knowledge of the values, attitudes and norms that shape the cultural differences of peoples who live in countries other than the United States.

By the conclusion of the course it is expected that students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the content of specific literary works and the structures and conventions of different literary genres.
- Critically assess the variety of roles that literature has played historically and continues to play in the human life.
- Draw connections between literary texts and their biographical, historical, and cultural contexts of authorship and reading.



### GENERAL EDUCATION INFORMATION:

RUT 3442 counts for three (3) hours of the University of Florida's General Education Requirement in the **Humanities (H)** area by providing instruction in the key themes, principles and terminology of a humanities discipline. **Course with the Humanities (H) designation** reflect the following objectives: Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

RUT 3442 also counts for three (3) hours of the University of Florida's General Education Requirement in the **International (N)** area by addressing values, attitudes and norms of a non-US culture. **Course with the International (N) designation reflect the following objectives:** International courses provide instruction in the values, attitudes and norms that constitute the contemporary cultures of countries outside the United States. These courses lead students to understand how geographic location and socioeconomic factors affect these cultures and the lives of citizens in other countries. Through analysis and evaluation of the students' own cultural norms and values in relation to those held by the citizens of other countries, they will develop a cross-cultural understanding of the rest of the contemporary world.

See: <http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/subject-area-objectives.aspx> (Links to an external site.)  
[Links to an external site.](#)

**A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.**

**Required texts** (these texts are really required and should be purchased from amazon.com in advance). All other texts will be provided by the Instructor.

1. *The Portable Dante*, edited, translated by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 2003.) (ISBN: 9780142437544)
2. Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*, trans. by Burgin and O'Connor (ISBN: 0679760806)
3. Andrtei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, translated by Elizabeth and Robert Chandler (ISBN: 1590173058).
4. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, edited and annotated by Alfred Appel (ISBN: 0679727299)

*Web resources:*

<http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/>

<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/wwwlinks.html>

[http://www.worldofdante.org/maps\\_main.html](http://www.worldofdante.org/maps_main.html)

## **GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

- **Attendance and Participation: 20%**
- **Quizzes: 20%**
- **Take-home mid-term exam: 30%**
- **Take-home final exam: 30%**



## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

1. *Attendance & Participation (20%)*

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and will be assessed by class roll call at the beginning of each class. Students are permitted **two** unexcused absences, beyond which **each additional** unexcused absence will result in a lowering of the final grade by one full letter. Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligation, and the twelve-day rule (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (Links to an external site.)). Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class.

**Participation:** Students are expected to read and review the assigned readings before class. Each class will begin with a series of basic questions on the contents of the assigned readings. If students are unable to answer these questions, it will be assumed that they have not prepared the homework and will lose 0.5%. In addition, I will also post some prompts or discussion questions that you should keep in mind while reading the assigned portions of the text/s. Consistent participation in class discussions, demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will also contribute to this portion of the final grade. There will be occasional creative assignments that will be graded as “complete”/“incomplete.”

**Participation Rubric:**

Outstanding	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Consistently thorough preparation of readings as evidenced by ability to answer introductory questions</li> <li>· Discussion contributions manifesting mastery of concepts, terminology, methodologies, and intellectual nuances of material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Predominantly thorough preparation of readings as evidenced by ability to answer introductory questions</li> <li>· Discussion contributions manifesting basic though not necessarily sophisticated understanding of concepts, terminology, methodologies, and intellectual nuances of material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Generally incomplete preparation of readings as evidenced by ability to answer introductory questions</li> <li>· Discussion contributions manifesting inaccuracy or confusion in understanding of concepts, terminology, methodologies, and intellectual nuances of material</li> </ul>

**TIPS:** *Interpretive* (or *Critical*) questions are open-ended and are concerned with textual meaning. They ask for opinions on themes, figurative language and symbolism within the narrative. They also ask for judgments regarding the period, history, politics and ethical questions that are relevant to the text. The open-endedness of Interpretive and Critical questions—which often use phrases such as "do you think" or "why do you suppose"— indicates that there may well be neither simply "right" nor simply “wrong" answers; the success of a response is based on the evidence and reasoning students employ to support their analysis and judgment.

2. **Quizzes: 4 (20%),** please, see course calendar for approximate dates.

These will be written on Canvas to check your factual knowledge and understanding of the assigned texts. These will include some of the discussion questions as well.

3. **Mid-term exam: 30%**

4. **Final exam: 30%**

The exams will be written on Canvas. You will have a week or more to complete them. The exams will be comprised of identification, textual analysis, and short essay questions based on

readings, lectures and classroom discussion. They will also include a research portion and a creative assignment.

**Grading Scale (& GPA equivalent):**

A 100-93 (4.0)	A- 92-90 (3.67)	B+ 89-87 (3.33)	B 86-83 (3.0)	B- 82-80 (2.67)	C+ 79-77 (2.33)	C 76-73 (2.0)	C- 72-70 (1.67)	D+ 69-67 (1.33)	D 63-66 (1.0)	D- 62-60 (0.67)	E 59-59 (0)
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**Note:** A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html> (Links to an external site.)

**Academic Honesty:** Students are required to be honest in their coursework and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students, and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course. For University of Florida's honor code, see

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> (Links to an external site.)

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> (Links to an external site.)) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

**Counseling and Mental Health Resources:** Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/> (Links to an external site.)).

**Online Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester (or days, in the case of the summer), but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> (Links to an external site.).

***Mode of Instruction***

"Reading Dante in Stalin's Russia" will be taught entirely online in synchronous mode on the ZOOM/Canvas platform. The only difference from the F2F delivery is that instructor and students won't be in physical proximity but will be interacting in real time online at the designated class meeting times. The instructor will conduct instruction and monitor students' progress via direct interaction in class, by evaluating submitted written assignments, and by two graded exam papers -- a midterm and a final one. **None of our meetings will be recorded.**

## *Zoom Netiquette.*

*Please, read this section very carefully.*



**It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.**

*Do not share your Zoom classroom link or password with others.*

### **When attending a Zoom class or meeting:**

- Arrive/Zoom in on time or a few minutes early if possible. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class session, and tardiness will be marked.
- Set up and mount the webcam video at the level of your eyes to show your full face. If you are using a laptop, you may need to place a book or two under it. Test the audio of your webcam. *For any technical difficulties, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk (352-392-4357). <https://elearning.ufl.edu/media/elearningufl.edu/zoom/How-to-Join-a-Meeting.pdf> (Links to an external site.)*
- During class session, set yourself on mute unless you want to speak or you are called upon.
- If you want to speak, you can raise your hand (click the “raise hand” button at the center bottom of your screen) and wait to be called upon.
- Your webcam must remain on throughout the class hour. We expect students to interact with each other using audio and their webcam whenever possible. **If you have a reason to keep your webcam and audio off, please communicate that reason with me or through the Dean of Students Office.**
- When you are assigned to a breakout room, enable your webcam and microphone so that your partners may hear and see who they are working with.
- Find a quiet indoor space with stable internet connection to attend class. The study space does not need to be a separate room; a chair and desk/table set for school work in a quiet corner should be sufficient. The space should be conducive to work, including pair/group work. Make sure you are uninterrupted by other household members, including pets.

- Refrain from eating during the class hour, as you would in a face-to-face course.
- Follow the same rules of respectful interaction as you would in a face-to-face course. This is especially important in a remote situation, where multiple voices attempting to speak at once result in no one being heard.
- Alert your instructor as soon as possible if you experience technical difficulties. A “chat” can be sent at any moment during a Zoom session if, for example, you find that your webcam or microphone are not functioning properly.
- Relax and enjoy class! Remote learning presents some challenges but many rewards as well.

## Course Calendar

### Please note:

- This schedule of readings is preliminary and may undergo modifications as the semester progresses.
- All reading and writing assignments must be completed by the beginning of the class period under which they are listed. Please, have the assigned books/readings close at hand for every zoom meeting.

## Part I: Dante, his life and his works



**August 31:** Introduction

**September 2 :** Dante, *Vita Nuova*

**September 4:**Dante, *Vita Nuova*

**September 7 - no class, Labor Day**

**September 9:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto I

**September 11:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto II

**September 14:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto III

**September 16:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto IV

**September 18:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto V

**September 21:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XIII

**September 23-25:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XV, Canto XXVI

**September 28:** Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XXXIV

**September 30-October 2:** Dante, *Purgatory*, Canto XXX, Canto XXXI

**Quiz 1, due Sunday, October 4**

## **Part II: Stalinist “Purgatory”**

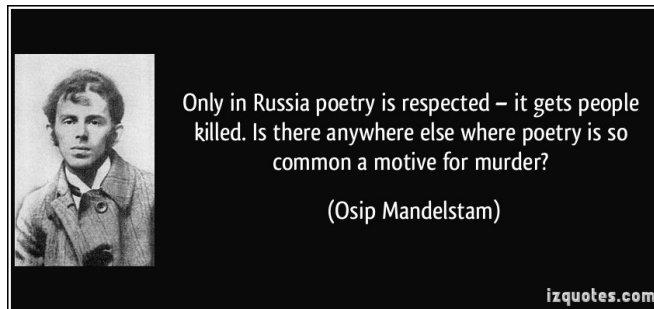


**October 5-7:** Russian/Soviet history; Russian intellectuals; The Soviet New Men

**October 9-14:** Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*

**Quiz 2 due Saturday, October 17**

## **Part III: Dante as a soulmate and fictitious identity**





**October 16-21:** Osip Mandelstam, Selected poems; “Conversation about Dante” (sections 1,2,3, a PDF file)

### **Part IV: The Communal Apartment Inferno**



**October 23-November 6:** Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*

**Quiz 3 (due Sunday, November 8, 11.59 p.m.)**

**Part V: Poet/Writer as the bearer/holder of memory.  
Poet/Writer as the Ultimate Judge:  
Dante shows the ways of recording historical events for posterity.**



**November 11, NO CLASS (Veterans' Day)**

**November 9-13:** Anna Akhmatova, selected poems, "Requiem" (a PDF file)

Galina Rylkova, “No Room of One’s Own” from *The Archaeology of Anxiety* (a PDF file)

Semyon Aranovich, "The Anna Akhmatova File" (clips)

Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz : the witness and the archive, chapter 1 "The Witness" (a PDF file)*

**Midterm take-home exam (due Sunday, November 15, 11.59 p.m. or sooner)**

## **Part VI: Writers' Muses and Sources of Inspiration: Dante's Beatrice**



**November 16-18:** Anna Akhmatova, "Muse," *Poem Without a Hero* (PDF files)

Giovanni Boccaccio, "Dante's Love for Beatrice, and his Marriage" (a PDF file)

Isaiah Berlin, "Anna Akhmatova: A Memoir" (a PDF file)

Lidiia Chukovskaia, *The Anna Akhmatova Journals* (excerpts, a PDF file)

Anatolii Naiman, "Film about Anna Akhmatova" (clips)

**Quiz 4 (due Thursday, November 19, 11.59 p.m.)**

## **Part VII: Dante as an accomplice**

**November 20-23:** Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*

November 25-27: **NO CLASSES**, Thanksgiving

**November 30-December 9:** Nabokov, *Lolita*

**Take-home Final exam, due Friday, December 18, 2020, 11.59 p.m. or earlier**

