

Fall 2020

RUSS 322-900

Masterworks of Russian Literature

*Russian Lyric Poetry of the 19th Century
Pushkin, Lermontov, Tyutchev, and Fet*

Brett Cooke

TR 9:45-11:00 104 HALB

This variant of our masterworks course covers the greatest yet least translatable of Russia's arts, its lyric poetry. As such, this course offers a substantial survey of the Romantic poets Pushkin, Lermontov, Tyutchev, and Fet. Particular attention is paid to Pushkin, the greatest Russian, who is largely unknowable outside of his native language. The emphasis is very much on what is understood as Russia's popular philosophy, written in the best Russian ever.

The entire course is conducted in Russian. This includes the readings, with the exception of poetic reference materials provided in the course packet available as of August 15th: est. \$24 plus tax and shipping, (order “**RUSS 322 Cooke**” from squareup.com/store/notes-n-quotes). The reading assignments are minimal, but students are expected to know the poems very well. Generally, each class period will be devoted to a precise discussion of a single lyric poem, usually between 8 and 20 lines in length. Given that each poem is thoroughly discussed in Russian, it provides truly extensive practice in objective conversation, all supplemented by ample reinforcement on PowerPoint slides. Oral reports on aspects of the assigned poem (rhythm, genre, imagery, etc.) will be assigned during the prior meeting—these generally require only a few comments—and subsequently will be submitted in writing for daily evaluation. Since we pay close attention to the details of each lyric, class sessions give students much opportunity for reviewing and reinforcing their grammar, as well as developing nuance in choice of verbal aspect and grammatical cases. With their regular rhythm and rhyme, lyric poems reinforce proper pronunciation. *In toto*, the course provides students ample training in the study of communication, Russian and non-Russian, as well as advanced reading skills, such as irony and “reading between the lines.” Principles of versification are only studied to give students some cognitive tools for discussion, thus making this a course in technical Russian. With its limited, but high quality, reading requirements, this is the most accessible of our third-year courses.

Regular oral reports on features of the assigned poem in class will help prepare students for writing two papers on other poems to be found in the course packet, which constitutes a select anthology for these poets. Papers may be resubmitted if substantially revised and accompanied with the original submission. There will be two exams, one conducted during the period designated for final examinations. In all cases, the same question will be posed: how does the form of a poem affect its meaning?

This course is appropriate for students who have passed RUSS 201, the prerequisite, especially if simultaneously enrolled in RUSS 202. It readily substitutes for RUSS 301 or 302; thus, it helps fulfill requirements for the MODL major and the minor. This is also a W writing course. Students who took the prose variant of 322 can also receive credit for this course. Questions should be directed to Prof. Brett Cooke, brett-cooke@tamu.edu