HISTORY 487R

Literature and Revolution: The European Novelist as Social Critic

This course makes use of a selection of novels and other cultural works from 19th- and 20th-century Europe as sources for the study of the development of a revolutionary tradition in recent European history. Selections include diverse points of view, from moderate to radical, and include “anti-utopian” warnings as well as positive prescriptions for change. By using the novel as source material, we will be able to see the changing content of revolutionary doctrines in different European countries and different time periods, as well as to evaluate the role of art and culture as political mouthpiece: i.e., to see whether the pen may indeed be as mighty as the sword. We will also conduct an in-class mock trial of an intellectual charged with a capital crime for his writings, to see how acts of the pen can even be punished as harshly as those of the sword.

Class assignments include weekly readings (with short oral and written reports on a rotating basis) plus the preparation of a substantial research paper (approximately 15 pages plus notes) on a topic of the student’s choice. Suggested topics include either additional works by an author or group of authors already studied in class, or a new author or group of authors of related works. Papers may alternatively explore more theoretically the problem of using literature or art as “revolutionary” source material, or may explore other types of “literature” (such as the mass media, autobiographies or essays, etc.) or music, film, or the visual arts. The emphasis should be on European topics but may include comparisons to American or Third-World topics or authors where appropriate. Papers can, if acceptable, be used to fulfill a Junior or Senior Writing Requirement for the History Department and/or the College. Students will also report orally on their research projects to the class. There will be no final exam.

As a component of this final project, a preliminary short paper (approximately 5 pages), in the style of an analytical book review, will be due on Feb. 24. This paper is to be based on a work of historical scholarship that is related to the final project and that will be part of the research for that project. A list of suggested readings on European culture and politics will be provided to suggest the possible range of choices for this assignment. A brief oral report will also be expected on the due-date for this paper, so that students can share their ideas with the class.

As part of the college requirement for “writing intensive courses,” final papers will be submitted in two drafts: a first draft on April 6, and a final draft on May 3. Please note that grammar and style will figure in the calculation of all paper grades. The first draft is not a “rough draft” but should be as complete (and grammatically correct) as possible. Revisions for the final draft should include substantive reorganization, additional research, and other reworking (beyond stylistic correction) as appropriate. Students are also urged to consult the Writing Center (Callaway N212) and its webpage (www.writingcenter.emory.edu) for help in improving their writing. Even good writers can become better writers with the Writing Center’s help.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 13  Introductory class

Jan. 20  Emile Zola, *Germinal*

Jan. 27  Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*

AND  Modris Eksteins, “All Quiet on the Western Front and the Fate of a War,” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 1980, pp. 345-65 (online reserve)

Feb. 3  Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Feb. 10 PROJECT STATEMENT FOR FIRST PAPER DUE

AND FILM (in class): “Degenerate Art in Nazi Germany”

Feb. 17  Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*


Feb. 24  FIRST PAPER DUE; BRIEF ORAL REPORTS

Mar. 2  Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Mar. 9  NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK

Mar. 16  Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach*

AND  in-class mock trial

Mar. 23  Alexander Solzhenitzyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*

Mar. 30  Günter Grass, *Local Anesthetic*


Apr. 6  FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE; ORAL REPORTS

Apr. 13  Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Apr. 20  FILM (shown outside of class): “Good-Bye Lenin”

AND  A. Fazekas, ed., *Jokes of the (Not So) Humorous Struggle Against Communism in Hungary* (selections on online reserve)

FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY, MAY 3 (3:00 P.M.)