**Fall 2018**

IDH 2930 (239053)

**Reading Chekhov’s *The Seagull***

Instructor Dr. Galina Rylkova (grylkova@ufl.edu)

Thursday, 8th period, Little 117

**Course description**: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to one of the greatest plays of all time – Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull* (1896). Chekhov is the second most popular playwright after Shakespeare, and *The Seagull* is one of his most popular plays. The last American cinematographic adaptation was released in 2018. During my recent trip to Moscow, Russia I saw seven different productions of *The Seagull*, with one of them being the most popular theater event of the season (2/3 of the audience were people in their 20s, some of whom claimed to have seen this specific production 3-4 times). **UF School of Dance and Theatre presented their version of The Seagull in the fall of 2017 (all tickets were sold out in advance).** This is not surprising. *The Seagull* is one of the key texts that deal with issues of creativity and success and, more specifically, with what it takes to realize one’s talent. The characters of the play fall into several categories: accomplished actors and writers, people who contemplate writing and acting careers, and people who want to offer their lives to writers so that they would describe them in their works. The questions of what and how to write and how to pace oneself in order to become an accomplished writer were not merely speculative for Chekhov. For most of his creative life he was the sole breadwinner for his large family and was also sick with tuberculosis, which forced him to make hard choices about his priorities. Apart from the play, we will read and discuss various literary sources of *The Seagull*, including *Hamlet*, Schopenhauer’s *Essays and Aphorisms*, and Maupassant’s *Afloat*. We will also discuss the state of Russian/European theatre at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. We will explore the phenomenon of Chekhov’s extraordinary popularity with writers, composers, painters, and film and theatre directors and discuss various stage and film adaptations of *The Seagull* (including operas, musicals and ballets). The course should appeal to anyone interested in drama in general and in Chekhov in particular.

**Format**: The class will be a combination of lectures and discussion. No knowledge or Russian is required.

**Required text:** Anton Chekhov, *The Essential Plays* (**in Michael Heim's translation**), Modern Library Paperback edition (August 12, 2003). Translation is extremely important, so please, make sure to get a copy in Michael Heims’ translation. Please, make sure to have a **hard** copy of this book for every class. (Books should be available at UF Bookstore or, please, order it through amazon.com asap, used copies are very inexpensive!).

**GRADING (100%)**

* Weekly assignments and participation in discussion: 50%
* Response Papers: 30%
* Presentations: 20%

***1. Attendance & Participation (50%)***

**Attendance**: There will be no final exam, so attendance and participation will be taken very seriously. Attendance is mandatory and will be assessed by class roll or sign-up sheet. Students will lose 1% from their final grade for every unexcused absence. 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>). 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. In addition, I will also send you some prompts or discussion questions that you should keep in mind while reading the assigned portions of the text/s. Discussion questions will be posted in advance on e-learning on the Canvas website. **There will be occasional pass/fail creative assignments that will also contribute to this portion of the final grade**.

**2. *Three short response papers* (3 X 10%=30%),** please, see syllabus for the exact dates.

These will be written every three weeks on the topics suggested by the instructor (**350 words**).

**3. *Oral presentations*** **(20%)**: Each student will be responsible for a presentation about one character from the play (**5-7 minutes**). S/he will have to find out everything about this character, imagine how s/he speaks, walks, what her/his background was, what clothes s/he wears, what food s/he might eat, etc. The student will explain what function this character performs in *The Seagull* and how s/he motivates the development of the plot. Several students can be responsible for presentations on the same character.

**Course Policies**

Please, come to class on time.

Cell phones and gadgets: Please turn your cell phone off during class as a courtesy to us all. If your cell phone does happen to disturb the class, you are required to treat the class to cookies as reparation for the interruption. Please keep all other gadgets out of sight and sound as well: they are a distraction!

Please do not hesitate to contact me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else’s work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable. Please review the University’s honesty policy at [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/).

**The following scale will be used in grading your assignments and in calculating the overall grade for the course:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A = 95 – 100% (4 points)** | **B - = 75-79%** **(2.67 points)** | **D + = 55-59%** **(1.33 points)** |
| **A - = 90 – 94% (3.67 points)** | **C+ = 70 – 74%** **(2.33 points)** | **D = 50 – 54%** **(1.0 point)** |
| **B+ = 85 – 89% (3.33 points)** | **C = 65 – 69%** **(2.0 points)** | **D - = 45 – 49% (0.67 points)** |
| **B = 80 – 84% (3.0 points)** | **C - = 60-64%** **(1.67 points)** | **E = 40 – 44%** **(0 – Failure)** |

**If you have questions, please, consult:** [**http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html**](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html)

**Course Calendar**

Please note:

• This schedule of readings is preliminary and may undergo modifications as the semester progresses. Discussion questions and assignments will be distributed via e-mail.

• Please, bring your hard copy of *The Essential Plays* to every class.

**Week 1**: **August 23**

Introduction (students are encouraged to start reading *The Seagull*)

We will move very slowly and our discussion of the play will be very focused, but you all need to have read *The Seagull* in its entirety by Week II, so that you will all know what is going to happen next and you will be able to discuss how this or that scene functions within the structure of the entire play. Please, use this time to read the play.

**Week 2: August 30**

*Seagull*, Act I (adaptations, clips)

**Week 3**: **September 6**

*Seagull*, Act I (adaptations, clips)

Shakespeare, *Hamlet (a clip)*

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (online): <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/full.html>

**Week 4**: **September 13**

*Seagull*, Act II, (adaptations, clips)

Maupassant, *Afloat* (excerpt, a PDF file from the instructor)

**FIRST RESPONSE PAPER IS DUE**

**Week 5**: **September 20**

Seagull, Act II (adaptations, clips)

Maupassant, *Afloat* (excerpt, a PDF file from the instructor)

Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (online)

**Week 6**: **September 27**

*Seagull*, Act III

Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (online)

**Week 7**: **October 4**

*Seagull*, Act III (adaptations, clips)

Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (online)

Adam Philips, “Judas’ Gift”, (a PDF file from the instructor)

**SECOND RESPONSE PAPER IS DUE**

**Week 8**: **October 11**

*Seagull*, Act IV (adaptations, clips)

Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms (online)*

**Week 9**: **October 18**

*Seagull*, Act IV

Otto Rank, *Art and Artist* (excerpt, a PDF file)

***Let me know by the beginning of Week 10 which character you would like to discuss in class and when.***

**Week 10**: **October 25**

Boris Akunin, *Seagull-2*, Act I: **URL:** [http://gateway.proquest.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/openurl/openurl?ctx\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\_ver=0.2&r  es\_id=xri:lion-us&rft\_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R03864782](http://gateway.proquest.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R03864782)

**Week 11**: **November 1**

Boris Akunin, *Seagull-2* , Act II: **URL:** [http://gateway.proquest.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/openurl/openurl?ctx\_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res\_ver=0.2&r  es\_id=xri:lion-us&rft\_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R03864782](http://gateway.proquest.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R03864782)

**THIRD RESPONSE PAPER IS DUE**

**Week 12**: **November 8**

Konstantin Stanislavsky, *“Creating the Physical Life of a Role*” (excerpt, a PDF file from the instructor)

Galina Rylkova, “Reading Chekhov through Meyerhold’s Eyes” (a PDF file from the instructor)

Students’ presentations

Discussion

**Week 13**: **November 15**

Students’ presentations

Discussion

**Week 14: November 22: No class, Thanksgiving**

**Week 15**: **November 29**

Students’ presentations

Discussion

**No final exam**