**Course description**

“So great is the worth of Dostoevsky that to have produced him is sufficient justification for the existence of the Russian people in the world.” Nicholas Berdiaev.

This course is an examination of homicide, suicide, patricide, and redemption through a study of the psychological novels of Fyodor Mikhlovich Dostoevsky. Although he is considered the most “Russian” of Russian writers, he finds many enthusiastic readers in the West, and his influence on modern Western culture and civilization has been enormous. Reading his works is one way to understand the many writers and thinkers who learned from him.

The course is a literature course, thus primary attention will be paid narrative style, symbolism, imagery, point of view, structure, themes, allegory, and so on.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

* describe, analyze, and formulate an argument on some aspect of a literary work (narration, character development, themes, et cetera), using critical and technical vocabulary acquired in the course.

* discuss the development of Dostoevsky’s aesthetics from his early to his later work as a novelist; the religious questions he raises as to faith, freedom, choice, suffering, and the responsibilities we bear as Christians; and Dostoevsky’s work as a reflection of his attitude towards the scientific and philosophical issues debated during the author’s time.

In-class discussions will be supplemented by lectures and readings that explore contemporary ideas and trends relevant to Dostoevsky’s creative career.

**Texts**—Available at the IMU Bookstore (translations matter—please use these editions)

- *Notes from Underground*, tr. Larissa Volkhnosky & Richard Pevear
- *Crime and Punishment*, tr. Larissa Volkhnosky & Richard Pevear
- *Demons*, tr. Larissa Volkhnosky & Richard Pevear
- *The Brothers Karamozov*, tr. Larissa Volkhnosky & Richard Pevear
- *A Writer’s Diary*, tr. Kenneth Lantz

**Instructor:** Dr. Craig Cravens  
**Email:** cracrave@indiana.edu  
**Tel:** (812) 855-2359  
**My Office:** BH 512

**Meeting Time:** TTh 4-5:15  
**Place:** BH 219  
**Office Hours:** MTWTh 2:30 – 3:30  
**Departmental Office:** BH 502
Requirements and grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shorter essay (4–5 pages)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper (8–10 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Critique</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Shorter Essay (20%)**
The student will write a literary analysis—on either *Notes from Underground* or *Crime and Punishment*—developing an argument by examining the literary devices, word choices, or writing structures Dostoevsky uses within the work. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate why the author used specific ideas, word choices, or writing structures to convey his or her message. Further guidelines and topics will be discussed during the semester. The shorter essay is worth 20% of the grade.

**Term Paper (30%)**
The term paper (on either *Demons* or *The Brothers Karamazov*) is similar to the shorter essay but broader in scope. I will distribute suggested paper topics, but you are encouraged to write on a topic of your own. No outside reading is required. I will require you to hand in an outline, meet with me at least twice to discuss your paper before it is due. The outline will consist of the thesis and central argument of your paper. Your grade on the term paper will constitute 30% of your final grade. Failure to complete the term paper will result in a failing grade for the course. More details regarding these assignments will be provided during the course of the term.

**Midterm and Final Exams (10% each)**
The exams will consist of short answer questions concerning Dostoevsky’s life and the times in which he lived. Students will also be required to identify passages from Dostoevsky’s works and discuss them within the context of the respective novel.

**Quizzes (10%)**
There will be 5 unannounced (“pop”) quizzes during the semester. These will be brief, factual quizzes about the material to be read for that class day, although I may ask some less-than-factual, more interpretive, questions as a “warm-up” for class discussion (“What do you see as one of the more interesting images in this story and how do you interpret it?”). The purpose behind the quizzes is, yes, to make sure you’re keeping up with the reading and that you’re reading for details, but also to help you process some of the information from your reading. Your three best scores will be factored into your grade, the other two will be discarded.

**Quiz make-up policy:** If you miss class for any reason (excused or unexcused), it will be your responsibility to find out from me what you missed that day. Make-up quizzes
will be granted only if you had an excused absence, but you still must take the quiz within two days of “being back in commission.”

The Weekly Critique (10%)
Each week, optimally by midnight before one of the classes (Monday or Wednesday night) each student submits by e-mail a brief statement on some aspect of the reading. These critiques become prompts for class discussion. They should be chatty; they are not meant to be “response papers” nor to develop arguments in detail, only focus thoughts and isolate trouble spots. But neither should they be scribbled at the last minute. Most importantly, these should be thoughts you can expand during seminar.

You are expected to attend class meetings regularly, participate actively in discussions, do all assigned readings (150–200 pp/week), and prepare written assignments.

CLASS RULES

Attendance at each class is required. The only acceptable excuse for an absence is medical and requires a signed note by a licensed physician. After the first week, coming to class late or leaving class early will count as one-half an unexcused absence.

All assignments are to be typewritten or printed. Everything must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around.

Everything you hand in must be proofread for spelling as well as obvious errors in usage and mechanics. Failure to do this will result in a lowered grade on the assignment. Do not rely solely on the computer’s Spell-Check function to proof your spelling since what is a misspelling of the word you want to use often ends up being the correct spelling of some other word, and the Spell-Check, being completely dumb, will not catch it. Handwritten corrections on typed work (stuff crossed out, added, words respelled are not only accepted but encouraged, since they’re usually signs of sedulous proofreading. Better right than neat (as long as it’s readable).

You are required to keep a copy of all your work (including email assignments), so that if the original gets lost or eaten by my dog somehow, I can immediately get the copy from you. This means that any assignment I don’t get or “lose” somehow becomes your responsibility to replace on demand.

You are required to bring your copy of the text under discussion, a notebook, and a pen or pencil to each class. Laptop computers and misnomered “smart phones” will not be used during class.

CLASS RULES ON PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Anybody gets to ask any question about any fiction-related issues he or she wants. No question about literature is stupid. You are forbidden to keep yourself from asking a
question or making a comment because you fear it will sound obvious or unsophisticated or lame or stupid. Because critical reading and prose fiction are such hard, weird things to try to study, a stupid-seeming comment or question can end up being valuable or profound. I am deadly serious about creating a classroom environment where everyone feels free to ask or speak about anything he or she wishes. Any student who groans, smirks, mimes, snarks, shortles, eye-rolls, or in any way ridicules some other student’s in-class comment will be warned once in private and on the second offence will be kicked out of class and flunked, no matter what week it is.

This does not mean we all have to sit around smiling sweetly at one another for three hours a week. No truths about the form, content, structure, symbolism, theme, or overall artistic quality of any piece of fiction are etched in stone or beyond dispute. In class, you are invited (more like urged) to disagree with one another and with me – and I get to disagree with you – provided we are all respectful of one another and not snide, savage, or abusive. This class, in other words, is not just a Find-Out-What-The-Teacher-Thinks-And-Regurgitate-It-All-Back-At-Him course. It’s not like math or physics – there are no right or wrong answers (though there are interesting versus dull, fertile versus barren, plausible versus whack answers)

**Grading scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>100% +</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-99%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-87%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>78-79%</td>
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<td>73-77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-72%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>68-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-67%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>0-64%</td>
<td>F</td>
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For the college-wide policy on withdrawals, and about grades like FX, Extended “X” and FN, see [http://www.indiana.edu/~college/ado/policies.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~college/ado/policies.shtml). The policy as defined there will be followed in this course.

**STANDARD DISCLAIMER**

All information in this syllabus, including course requirements and tentative schedules for the test, papers, etc., is subject to change and should not be considered a substitute for attending class or for any information that is provided to you by your instructor in class.

**Reading and Writing Assignments**

**Week 1**  
**Dostoevsky and his Times**  
T  No Reading  
Th  Read *Notes From Underground*, part 1.

**Week 2**  
**Murder**  
T  *Notes from Underground* to end  
Th  *Crime and Punishment*, Part 1

**Week 3**  
**Murder**  
T  *Crime and Punishment*, Part 2
Th  C&P, Part 3

**Week 4  Murder**
T  C&P, Part 4
Th  C&P, Part 5

**Week 5  Murder**
T  C&P, Part 6 and Epilogue
Th  Midterm Exam

**Week 6  Demons and Terrorism**
T  Read: Demons, pp. 7–124
Th  Read: Demons, pp. 125–206

**Week 7  Demons and Terrorism**
T  Read: Demons, pp. 209–317
Th  Read: Demons, pp. 318–412

**Week 8  Demons and Terrorism**
T  Shorter Essay Due, Read Demons, pp. 413–540
Th  Read Demons, pp. 343–413

**Week 9  Demons and Terrorism**
T  Read: Demons, pp. 541–665
Th  Read: Demons, pp. 666–end (including "At Tikhon’s")

**Week 10  Diary of a Writer**
T  Read: Diary of a Writer
Th  Read: Diary of a Writer

**Week 11  Parricide and Redemption**
T  Read: The Brothers Karamazov, Part I, Books 1 & 2
Th  Read: BK, Part I, Book 3

**Week 12  Parricide and Redemption**
T  Read: BK, Part II, Books 4 & 5
Th  Read: BK, Part II, Book 6

**Week 13  Parricide and Redemption**
T  Read: BK, Part III, Book 7
Th  Read: BK, Part III, Book 8

**Week 14  Parricide and Redemption**
T  Read: BK, Part III, Book 9
Th  Read: BK, Part IV, Book 10
Week 15  Parricide and Redemption

T  Outline of Final Paper Due, Read: BK, Part IV, Book 11
Th  Read: BK, Part IV, Book 12 & Epilogue

THE FINAL PAPER IS DUE MONDAY, MAY 5, 2014
THE FINAL EXAM IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, MAY, 2014, FROM 2:45 TO 4:45 PM.