NABOKOV AND HIS MILIEU

The course is summarized and its aims are set forth:

This course provides an overview of Vladimir Nabokov’s work in both Russian and English. The focus is on his prose fictions, but we will also consider Nabokov as a poet, playwright, critic, translator, and puzzle constructor. In exploring his major literary works—seven novels, a memoir, and a selection of short stories—we will also explore the themes that make him a central figure of twentieth century literature, including: the poetics of exile and nostalgia; translation and transnational culture; literary trickery and deceit; paranoia as a tactic of reading; the relationship between the aesthetic and the sadistic; and art as an image of a higher reality.

Concerning class requirements, to wit:

I will lead you into Nabokov’s literary labyrinths and, along the way, point out some of the most pressing issues in human culture; in return, you will provide me with engaged, thoughtful conversation for two and a half hours a week.

Obviously, in order to discuss the readings, you have to read them. This will typically involve 75-100 pages of enjoyable but diabolically tricky fiction every week. Sometimes I will give you brief parallel texts in order to provide cultural, literary or philosophical background, or to give examples of Nabokov’s work as a critic, poet, and puzzle constructor.

As far as your written work goes, there will be two papers: a brief close reading assignment (3-4 pages) and a longer position paper (8-10 pages) that builds on it. Both papers will go through a draft process and peer review. There will also be a take-home exam, which you will write yourselves. We will discuss these assignments in greater detail as they approach.

On grading, viz.:

Paper one: 10%
Final paper: 30%
Draft and review process: 10%
Take-home final: 25%
Attendance, participation, and discussion: 25%

Required texts and readings:
The following texts are readily available at the IU bookstore (and other fine bookstores). They are also on reserve at Wells Library:

*Mary (Mashen’ka)*
*The Defense (Zashchita Luzhina).*
*The Eye (Sogliadatai).*
*The Gift (Dar).*
*The Short Stories of Vladimir Nabokov.*
*Lolita.*
*Pnin.*
*Pale Fire.*
*Speak, Memory (Drugie berega).*

All other readings will be distributed as photocopies or pdfs.

**Schedule:**

Tuesday, Jan. 11 – “Guides to Berlin.”
Thursday, Jan. 13 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 1-3.

[Jan. 18 – Martin Luther King Day, no class]
Jan. 20 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 4-9.

Feb. 1 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 10-13. Selected poems (in class).

Feb. 8 – *Mary.*
Feb. 10 – *Mary* continued.


**Attention! Paper one due.**

Feb. 29 – *The Eye.*
March 2 – *The Eye* continued; “Recruiting.”

March 7 – Short stories: “Cloud, Castle, Lake,” “The Visit to the Museum,” “Vasiliy Shishkov.”
March 9 – “Ultima Thule,” “Solus Rex.”

**Spring Break**


April 11 – *Pnin* ch. 1-3.
April 13 – *Pnin* ch. 4-5.

April 18 – *Pnin* ch. 6-7
April 20 – Short stories: “Conversation Piece, 1945,” “Signs and Symbols,” “The Vane Sisters.”

*Attention! Paper two due.*

April 25 – *Pale Fire*, foreword and poem.
April 27 – *Pale Fire*, 71-147.

May 2 – *Pale Fire*, 147-225.
May 4 – *Pale Fire*, 226-end.

*Finals week: final exam.*