NABOKOV

Part One, in which 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, puzzle constructor, and so on. 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.

Part Two, concerning class requirements, to wit:

I will lead you into Nabokov’s literary labyrinths and point out some of the more devious turns along the way; 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 one hundred and fifty pages of enjoyable but diabolically shifty fiction every week. Sometimes I will assign brief parallel texts in order to provide literary or philosophical background or to give examples of Nabokov’s activity as a critic, poet, and puzzle constructor.

As far as your written work goes, there will be three papers: two brief close reading essays (3-5 pages) and a longer position paper (8-10 pages) due at the end of the class. We will discuss these assignments in greater detail as they approach. Of course I am always available to talk about your writing, your reading, your incidental thoughts, or just to play a friendly game of backgammon.

Part Three, on grading, viz.:

Paper one: 15%
Paper two: 20%
Final paper: 40%
Attendance, participation, and discussion: 25%

Part Four, being a list of 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:

*The Defense* (or *The Luzhin Defense*).
*Despair*.
*Invitation to a Beheading*.
*The Eye*.
*The Gift*.
*The Short Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*.
*Lolita*.
*Pale Fire*.
*Speak, Memory*.

Occasional supplementary readings will be distributed as photocopies or pdfs.

**Part Five, which is a schedule:**

Tuesday, Jan. 8 – “Guides to Berlin.”
Thursday, Jan. 10 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 1-3.

Jan. 15 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 4-8.
Jan. 17 – *Speak, Memory* ch. 9-12.


Feb. 5 – *The Eye*.
Feb. 7 – *Despair* ch. 1-3.

Feb. 12 – *Despair* ch. 4-7.
Feb. 14 – *Despair* ch. 8-11.

**Attention! Paper one due.**

Feb. 21 – *Invitation to a Beheading* ch. 7-14.

Feb. 28 – “Spring in Fialta,” “Cloud, Castle, Lake,” “Visit to a Museum.”

March 5 – *The Gift*, ch. 1-2, “Torpid Smoke.”
March 7 – *The Gift*, ch. 3.

**Spring Break**
March 21 – *The Gift*, ch. 5.

March 26 – “Vasili Sishkov,” “Ultima Thule,” “Solus Rex,” from *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*.
March 28 – “Conversation Piece, 1945,” “Signs and Symbols,” “The Vane Sisters.”


**Attention! Paper two due.**

April 15 – *Pale Fire*, foreword and poem.
April 17 – *Pale Fire*, pp. 71-147.

April 23 – *Pale Fire*, pp. 147-225.

**May 2 – Attention! Paper three due.**