

LLSL 3060 A
Slavic Science Fiction
Fall 2010

MW 4:00-5:40
65 W. 11th Street, Room B260

Office Hours:
T 1:30-2:30
W 12-1:00
Or by appointment

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All fiction allows authors to create their own worlds; science fiction (SF) brings this element of the creative process to the forefront. In this course, we will look at science fiction as a literary genre, examining its rules and the way in which these rules are broken. Focusing on Slavic science fiction raises particular questions: how does the relative lack of popular genres in late Imperial, Soviet, and Eastern Bloc cultures affect the status and form of science fiction? Why are utopia, dystopia, and the apocalypse so important to Slavic science fiction traditions? What are the literary roots and the defining characteristics of Slavic SF, and how does it differ from Western SF? What has been the impact of the specific historical experiences of Eastern Europe in the 20th-century on the development of Slavic SF?

While the bulk of our reading and viewing will focus on Russia and the Soviet Union, attention will also be paid to Poland (Lem, Dukaj) and (the former) Czechoslovakia (Capek and Nesvadba). And since Slavic science fiction did not develop in a vacuum, we will look at four significant Anglo-American interventions in the development, history, and reception of Slavic SF: a novel by H.G. Wells, whose influence on Russian and East European SF is far more profound than on the Anglo-American traditions; Nick Abadzis' graphic novel *Laika*, a British fictional account of Russia's space program; American director Steven Soderbergh's remake of *Solaris*; and, finally, British writer and SF scholar Adam Roberts' *Yellow Blue Tibia*, an English-language science fiction novel about Soviet science fiction. We will also be exploring the connections between Russian science fiction and the world of video games.

Blackboard and the Internet. Blackboard is an important part of the course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, Blackboard uses your New School email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your New School account.

Class attendance is a required and graded part of the course. More than 2 absences may result in a student's grade being lowered: more than 4 absences may result in a failing grade. Students are responsible for work covered in missed classes.

Plagiarism: The New School adheres to a Zero Tolerance Policy regarding Plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course. Students should read the University policy on plagiarism in the Student Handbook. For information on correct citation format, students should consult *A Writer's Guide* by Diana Hacker.

Course Requirements: Students should come to class having read the assigned materials and ready to discuss them. Class participation is a required and graded part of the class: most classes will start with short in-class written brainstorming sessions. Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for one oral report (10-15 minutes), two short analytical papers (3- 5 pages), and one final paper.

No knowledge of any foreign language is expected, as all works will be read and discussed in English. It is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments and come to class prepared either to make observations or ask questions. Attendance is, of course, mandatory.

Grading:	Class Participation	25%
	Two 3-5 page essays	30%
	Oral report	15 %
	Final research paper	30%

Writing Assignments: There will be three short papers, a midterm paper (5-7 pages), and a final paper (8-10).

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *three* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed. That is, if you want to write a short paper about "The Fatal Eggs," you must turn this paper in no later than **October 6**. If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the short paper at the beginning of that class. No late short papers will be accepted under any circumstances.

You may not wait until December to turn in three short papers. The semester has been divided into two parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these two deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **October 4**, your second is due no later than **November 8**, and the third must be submitted by **December 20**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first segment of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your *midterm paper* and *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on two-page papers, as long as you are not tapping the same paper for both longer works.

The midterm paper is due on **October 25** and the final must be turned by **December 22**.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date..

Electronic submission of written assignments. You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Words Assignment" or "Gogol Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Dostoevsky the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Dostoevsky).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Karel Capek then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Capek).doc". A final paper on Tatyana Tolstaya by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Tolstaya).doc".

Finally, please note that I have multiple email accounts. Please do not send email to all accounts at once ("cc"); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message. Any of the three accounts will do.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Two-page papers:	30%
Midterm paper:	20%
Final paper:	30%

Class participation. Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the short papers.

Active and constructive class participation can significantly improve your final grade. Frequent absences will have a negative effect on your final grade (see below).

Plagiarism Policy Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29. Eugene Lang College’s full Policy on Academic Honesty details the procedures for allegations of plagiarism and for penalties and can be found in the Lang catalog at <http://www.newschool.edu/lang/subpage.aspx?id=374>

Disabilities. In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student requesting accommodations must first meet with Student Disability Services. Jason Luchs or a designee from that office will meet with students requesting accommodations and related services, and if appropriate, provide an Academic Adjustment Notice for the student to provide to his or her instructors. The instructor is required to review the letter with the student and discuss the accommodations, provided the student brings the letter to the attention of the instructor. This letter is necessary in order for classroom accommodations to be provided. Student Disability Services is located at 79 Fifth Avenue - 5th Floor. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <http://www.newschool.edu/studentaffairs/disability/> and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

Policy on Attendance and Lateness Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.

- More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:
 - an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
 - a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
 - observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework.

For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

Incompletes: A grade of incomplete may be assigned by the instructor for students unable to complete the final assignment on time. A student who has received a grade of incomplete has a maximum of 4 weeks after the last day of classes to complete and submit to the instructor the final assignment. An incomplete becomes an “Unofficial Withdrawal and Failure” (WF) if the work is not submitted in the allotted time.

**Required Texts, Part One
(At the Barnes & Noble Bookstore)**

- Abadzis, Nick. *Laika*. New York and London: First Second, 2007.
- Lem, Stanislaw. *Solaris*. Translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox. New York: Mariner Books, 2002. [Polish original: 1961]
- Levitsky, Alexander (editor and co-translator). *Worlds Apart An Anthology of Russian Fantasy and Science Fiction: An Anthology of Russian Science Fiction and Fantasy*. New York: Overlook Press, 2008.
- Pelevin, Victor. *Omon-Ra*. Translated by Andrew Bromfeld. New York: New Directions, 1998. [Russian original: 1991]
- Roberts, Adam. *Yellow Blue Tibia*. London: Gollancz, 2007
- Tolstaya, Tatyana. *The Slynx*. Translated by Jamey Gambrell. New York: NYRB Classics, 2007. {Russian original: 2000}
- Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*. New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1995. [Originally published: 1895]
- Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. Translated by Clarence Brown. New York and London: Peguin 1993. [Russian original completed in 1921] Please note: there are at least four translations of this novel, and several editions in print. However, Clarence Brown’s translation is *much* better than all the others. Please use only this one. At the very least, avoid Zilboorg's.

Required Texts , Part Two (On Blackboard)

The rest of the readings for this class will be available in two formats on Blackboard: Rich Text Format (.rtf), which can be read and printed using virtually any word processing program on any platform, and .pdf, which treats the articles as images rather than texts. Occasionally, the files are in .html format rather than .rtf.

Please also note that the first two readings on Blackboard are not assigned for specific days; rather, they are ancillary materials designed to help you perform well in the class. I expect you to familiar yourself with them before you turn in any written assignment.

Finally, please note that you must **bring the texts with you to class.**

A-1 Advice for Student Writers.

A-2 Citation

Capek, Karel. *The War with the Newts*. Translated by David Wyllie. ebooks@Adelaide, 2010. [Czech original: 1936] Available on the web at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/capek/karel/newts/>

Dukaj, Jacek. "Golden Galley." Translated by Wiesiek Powaga. Powaga, Wiesiek (ed. and trans.) *The Deadalus Book of Polish Fantasy*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1996. 337-362. [Polish original: 1989]

Fyodorov, N.F. Parts I, II, and IV of *The Philosophy of the Common Task* (33-64, 89-104); "The daughter of humanity as reconciler" (178-179); "Parents and resurrectors" (191-194); "On the unity of the meteorological and cosmic processes" (195) in *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Selected works translated from the Russian and abridged by Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto. Lausanne: Honeyglen Publishing, 1990. [From the first posthumous Russian edition: 1906]

Glukhovsky, Dmitry. *Metro 2033*. Translated by Natasha Randall. London: Gollancz, 2010. [Russian Original: 2002]

Kzhizhankovsky, Sigizmund. "Quadraturin." *Seven Stories*. Translated by Joanne Turnbull. London: Glas, 2006. 114-28. [Russian original: 1926]

Nesvadba, Josef. "The Trial Nobody Ever Heard of." *The Lost Face: Best Science Fiction from Czechoslovakia*. Translated by Iris Urwin. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1970. 85-93 [Czech original: 1964]

Pelevin, Victor. "Prince of Gosplan." *A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia*. Translated by Andrew Bromfeld. New York: New Directions, 1998. 159-213. [Russian original: 1991]

Petrushevskaya, Ludmila. "Hygiene." *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales*. Selected and translated by Keith Gessen and Anna Summers. New York: Penguin, 2009

Petrushevskaya, Ludmila. "The New Robinson Crusoes: A Chronicle of the End of the Twentieth Century." *There Once Lived a Woman Who Tried to Kill Her Neighbor's Baby: Scary Fairy Tales*. Selected and translated by Keith Gessen and Anna Summers. New York: Penguin, 2009

- Russ, Joanna. "Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction." *To Write like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. 15-25.
- Russ, Joanna. "Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction." *To Write like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. 3-14.
- Strugatsky, Arkady and Boris. *Roadside Picnic*. (1972) Translated from the Russian by Antonina W. Bouis. (1977)
- Tertz, Abram [Andrei Sinyavsky]. "Pkhentz." Translated by Clarence Brown. Brown, Clarence (ed.) *The Portable 20th Century Russian Reader*. New York: Vintage, 1985. 485-506. [Russian original: 1966]

Required Texts (Lewitsky)

These are the specific readings we will be doing from Levitsky's *Worlds Apart* (available at Barnes and Noble):

- Bogdanov, Alexander Alexandrovich. "From *The Red Star*." Translated by Leland Fetzer. 540-554. [Russian original: 1908]
- Briusov, Valery Iakovlevich. "The Republic of the Southern Cross." Translated by Leland Fetzer). 303-317. [Russian original: 1918]
- Bulgakov, Mikhail Afanasievich. "The Fatal Eggs." Translated by Carl Proffer. 471-529. [Russian original: 1925]
- Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Gavrilovich. "From *What is to be Done*: 'Vera Pavlovna's Fourth Dream.'" Translated by Leland Fetzer. 248-258. [Russian original: 1863]
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich. "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man." Translated by Constance Granett, edited by Alexander Levitsy and Martha T. Kitchen. 276-290. [Russian original: 1877]
- Odoevsky, Vladimir Fyodorovich. "From *The Year 4338. Letters from St. Petersburg*." 237-247. Translated by Leland Fetzer. [Russian original: 1835/1840]
- Platonov, Andrei Platonovich. "From *The Sun, the Moon, and the Ether Channel*." Translated by Elliott Urday and Alexander Levitsky. 584-615. [Russian original: early 1920s]
- Tolstoy, Alexei Nikolaevich. "From *Aelita*." Translated by Leland Fetzer. 555-583. [Russian original: 1923]

Films

In Class:

Aelita: Queen of Mars. Dir. Yakov Protazanov (1924)

Cosmic Voyage. Dir. Vasily Zhuravlev (1936)

First on the Moon. Dir. Aleksei Fedorchenko (2005)

As homework

(available on Netflix instant download)

Solaris. Dir. Andrei Tarkovsky (1972)

Solaris. Dir. Steven Soderbergh (2002)

Stalker. Dir. Andrei Tarkovsky (1979)

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 30 (M) Introduction

September 1 (W) Tsarist Utopias

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Odoevsky (Levitsky 237-247)
 - ✦ Read Briusov (Levitsky 303-317)

September 6 (M) LABOR DAY

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ NO CLASS

September 8 (W) ROSH HASHANAH

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ NO CLASS

September 13 (M) Russian SF's Absentee Father

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Wells, *The Time Machine*
 - ✦ Read Russ, "Towards an Aesthetics of Science Fiction"

September 15 (W) Crystal Palaces

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Chernyshevsky (Levitsky 248-258)
 - ✦ Read Dostoevsky (Levitsky 276-290)

September 20 (M) Red Mars (1)

- ▼ In Class
 - Watch *Aelita*
- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Bogdanov (Levitsky 540-554)

September 22 (W) Red Mars (2)

- ▼ In Class
 - Watch *Aelita*
- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Tolstoy (Levitsky 555-583)
 - ✦ Read Russ, "Speculations"

September 27 (M) Step 1: Abolish Death / Red Mars (3)

- ▼ In Class
 - Watch *Aelita*
- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Fedorov (excerpts)

September 29 (W) Cosmicommunists (1)

- ▼ In Class
 - Watch *Cosmic Voyage*
- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Platonov (Levitsky 584-615)

October 4 (M) Cosmicommunists (2)

- ▼ In Class
 - Watch *Cosmic Voyage*
 - ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Krzhizhanovsky (114-128)
- Final Deadline for Short Paper #1**

October 6 (W) (Anti) Social Experiments

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Bulgakov (Levitsky 471-529)

October 11 (M) Glass Houses (1)

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Zamyatin, *We* (Records 1-25)

October 13 (W) Glass Houses (2)

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Zamyatin, *We* (finish)

October 18 (M) Screwed Pooch

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Abadzis, *Laika*

October 20 (W) When Salamanders Attack (1)

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Nesvadba (85-93)
 - ✦ Read Capek, *War with the Newts* (Chapters 1-7)

October 25 (M) When Salamanders Attack (2)

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Capek, *War with the Newts* (finish)

Mid-semester Paper Due

October 27 (W) Blue Planet (1)

- ▼ For Today:
 - ✦ Read Lem, *Solaris* (Chapters 1-6)

November 1 (M) Blue Planet (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Lem, *Solaris* (finish)

November 3 (W) Blue Planet (3)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Watch Tarkovsky, *Solaris*

November 8 (M) Blue Planet (4)

- ⊛ Watch Soderbergh, *Solaris*
- ⊛ Read Strugatskys, *Roadside Picnic*
(First half--through the
phrase "Show your stuff")

**Final Deadline for Short
Paper #2**

November 10 (W) In the Zone (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Strugatskys, *Roadside Picnic*
(finish)

November 15 (M) In the Zone (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ ⊛ Watch Tarkovsky, *Stalker*

November 17 (W) Dark Side of the Moon (1)

- ▼ In Class
Watch *First on the Moon*
- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Pelevin, *Omon-Ra*
(1-50)

November 22 (M) Dark Side of the Moon (2)

- ▼ In Class
Watch *First on the Moon*
- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Pelevin, *Omon-Ra* (finish)

November 24 (W) THANKSGIVING

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ NO CLASS

November 29 (M) Virtual Russia (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Pelevin, "Prince of Gosplan"

December 1 (W) Plagues and Peoples

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Petrushevskaya, "Hygiene"
- ⊛ Read Petrushevskaya, "The New
Robinsons"
- ⊛ Read Glukhovsky, *Metro-2033*
(excerpt)

**December 6 (M) Virtual Russia (2) /
Jabberwocky (1)**

- ▼ In Class
Russia and video games
(*Stalker*, *Metro-2033*, *Red
Mercury*)
- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Tolstaya, *The Slynx*
(Chapter "Az" through
Chapter "Fert")

December 8 (W) Jabberwocky (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Tolstaya, *The Slynx* (finish)

December 13 (M) Ia tebia tozhe (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Tertz, "Pkhentz"
- ⊛ Read Roberts, *Yellow Blue Tibia*
(Chapters 1-8)

December 15 (W) Ia tebia tozhe (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Dukaj, "Golden Galley"
- ⊛ Read Roberts, *Yellow Blue Tibia*
(through Part Two)

December 20 (M) Ia tebia tozhe (3)

- ▼ For Today:
- ⊛ Read Roberts, *Yellow Blue Tibia*
(finish)

**Final Deadline for Short
Paper#3**

December 22 (W)

- ▼ For Today:
- FINAL PAPER DUE**