

## **Ukraine. Literature and Politics.**

November-December 2023

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This is a 1-point seminar (grades: R or P/F).

### **Course format and description.**

The course will consider the relationship between politics and literature in Ukraine, focusing on the late Soviet period up to the present, but also covering the tragic pages of the history of Ukrainian literature in the 1920s-1930s, when Ukrainian creatives loyal to the Soviet regime were seemingly granted freedom of expression only to be brutally suppressed.

We will trace the emergence of new post-Soviet literature and consider texts which were written in reaction to "dead Soviet literature". We will analyze why the first post-soviet generation of young Ukrainian authors was consciously apolitical and how this generation matured, experienced some dramatic events in Ukrainian politics and society, and formed their own political views. We will analyze how these views are reflected in the writers' texts.

We will consider the extent to which literature influenced Ukrainian society immediately after 1991, in the late 1990s, and up to the present day. What has been the role of the writer in Ukrainian society through this 30-year period?

Separately, we will consider and try to model the near future of Russian-language and Crimean-Tatar literature in the context of Ukrainian literature and politics.

The course will be given in English.

### **Course assignments:**

Class participation (50%): Active participation in class discussions is crucial for the success of the course. Final Short essay (50%): Each student will be responsible for a short text on the topics of the course including personal approach.

### **Accommodations through the Office of Disability Services:**

If you are a student with a disability and have an ODS-certified 'Accommodation Letter' please come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu).

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

### **Session One**

From loud cultural revolution of 1920s to conformism of 1950-1970s and to the quiet resistance of 1980s. The Executed Renaissance. The Late Soviet Period: Collaborators, Escapists, and Dissidents: Oles Honchar, Pavlo Zahrebelny, Vasyl Stus, Oles Berdnyk.

The Chernobyl disaster and freedom of expression.

Required reading:

Executed Renaissance: The Erasure of Ukrainian Cultural Heritage in the Times of the Soviet Union

<https://retrospectjournal.com/2020/11/22/executed-renaissance-the-erasure-of-ukrainian-cultural-heritage-in-the-times-of-the-soviet-union/>

What is Ukrainian literature?

<https://ukrainer.net/what-is-ukrainian-literature/>

On the Ukrainian Poets Who Lived and Died Under Soviet Suppression

Myroslav Laiuk Revisits an Empire That Executed Its Artists <https://lithub.com/on-the-ukrainian-poets-who-lived-and-died-under-soviet-suppression/>

Mykola Khvylovy – “My Self (Romantica)” (pp 31-55); Mykola Khvylovy – “A Sentimental Tale” (pp 56-125); (3) Mykola Khvylovy – “The Inspector General” (pp 126-159); (4) Mykola Khvylovy – “Ivan Ivanovych” (pp 160-214). From Khvylovy, Mykola. *Stories From The Ukraine*. Translated with and Introduction by Geore S.N. Luckyj. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960.

## Session Two

Early Ukrainian Independence – Away from Moscow, but where to? Cabaret instead of ideology. “BU-BA-BU” group and cabaret-theater “Ne Zhurys” (Don’t Worry). First books to shape identity. A lack of interest in literature in general leaves writers whispering into the desert – Yuri Andrukhovych, Yurko Vynnychuk, Oksana Zabuzhko, Viktor Neborak.

“Ukrainian literature at the end of the millennium”. Vitaly Chernetsky. (World Literature today. Spring 2002)

«Carnival as Ukraine’s Postmodern Condition» (from *The Canon Reversed* by Tamara Hundorova. Pp 260-264

Viktor Neborak “From Genesis of Flying Head” (*The White Chalk of Days*)

Yurko Vynnychuk, “The Flowerbed in the Kilim, Malva-Landa Part 1” (*The White Chalk of Days*)

Yurko Vynnychuk, “Fantastic Worlds of Yurko Vynnychuk” (*Glagoslav*, pp 7 – 32)

Oxana Zabuzhko. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*. Review from East/West, Journal of Ukrainian Studies, n.1 2014

[https://ewjus.com/index.php/ewjus/article/view/Romanets/pdf\\_6](https://ewjus.com/index.php/ewjus/article/view/Romanets/pdf_6)

Irena Karpa *Love in the Times of War* [https://www.penopp.org/articles/love-time-war?language\\_content\\_entity=en&fbclid=IwAR3CMVdW1Ii9rHwYoeCWhB3H7UUj4zCuFtuDyz3-2l-mbuxr\\_eG1Uog3YHI](https://www.penopp.org/articles/love-time-war?language_content_entity=en&fbclid=IwAR3CMVdW1Ii9rHwYoeCWhB3H7UUj4zCuFtuDyz3-2l-mbuxr_eG1Uog3YHI)

Irena Karpa excerpt from the novel *Good News from Aral Sea* (pdf, pp 1-36)

### Session Three

“Sex, drugs and rock-n-roll” – a new generation of young Ukrainian writers, consciously distancing themselves from social and political issues in the country. Serhiy Zhadan, Svitlana Povoliaeva, Liubko Deresh, Svitlana Pyrkalo, Irena Karpa.

The little-known war between Russian and Ukrainian science fiction writers. V. Kozhelianko V Lukyanenko.

'A Torba of Cool': Svitlana Pyrkalo on Ukrainian Slang  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/a-torba-of-cool-svitlana-pyrkalo-on-ukrainian-slang/id1088768408?i=1000363879312>

Serhiy Zhadan Short Prose: “Chinese Cooking,” “Hotel Business,” “Children’s Train,” “The Inner Colour of Eyes,” “Alcohol, Contraband, Paprika,” “Owner of the Best Gay Bar,” “The Percentage of suicides among Clowns” (*The White Chalk of Days*)

Liubko Deresh, excerpts from novels *Cult*, *Peacemaker*, *The Last Love*. (pdf, 27 pages)

Irena Karpa, fragments from novels

### Session Four

A return to politics stimulated by events around the Orange Revolution – trends and the transformation of attitudes.

Politicization of Ukrainian literature (since 2004). Militarization of Ukrainian literature since 2014.

From 2014 – after the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in Donbas – the appearance of a parallel literature, written and read by war veterans: Valery Markus, Saigon, Martin Brest. The convergence of veterans’ literature with mainstream Ukrainian literature.

What is happening with Ukrainian Russian language literature? Volodymyr Rafeyenko, Stanislav Aseyev, Alexander Kabanov.

Writers and Ukrainian army.

Writing from the trenches: Artem Chekh, Artem Chapaye, Borys Humeniuk.

Sharing the Ukrainian news with the world: Markiyan Kamysh, Iryna Tsilyk, Victoria Amelina.

Civil society of Ukraine and rise of Ukrainian non-fiction.

Artem Chapaye on defending Ukraine

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/this-week-in-fiction/artem-chapeye-04-04-22>

Artem Chekh “I am Ukrainian Soldier and I’ve accepted my death”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/30/opinion/ukraine-soldier-war.html>

Markyian Kamysh, Review of *The Stalking the Atomic City: Life Among the Decadent and the Depraved of Chornobyl*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/jul/09/stalking-the-atomic-city-markiyan-kamysh-ukrainian-nuclear-chornobyl>

*Words for War: New Poems from Ukraine*, ed. Oksana Maksymchuk & Max Rosochinsky. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017.

*Love in Defiance of Pain: Ukrainian Stories*. Dallas: Deep Vellum, 2022.

Andrey Kurkov, *Diary of an Invasion*. Dallas: Deep Vellum, 2023.

My anthology *Ukraine 22: Ukrainian Writers Respond to War* will be published by Penguin in August 2023 and could also be used as a source of readings for students to choose from.

### **Recommended Books**

Zhadan, Serhiy. *Voroshilovgrad* (Deep Vellum, 2016)

Zabuzhko, Oksana. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex* (Amazon Crossing 2011)

Andrukhovych, Yuri. *The Moscoviad* (Spuyten Duyvil 2008)

Chekh, Artem. *Absolute Zero* (Glagoslav, 2020)

*The White Chalk of Days. The Contemporary Ukrainian Literature Series Anthology* (Academic Studies Press, 2017)

Kamysh, Markiyan. *Stalking the Atomic City: Life Among the Decadent and the Depraved of Chornobyl* (Astra House, 2022)

Yakimchuk, Lyuba. *Apricots of Donbas* (Lost Horse Press, 2021)

Rafeyenko, Volodymyr. *Mondegreen* (Harvard Library of Ukrainian Literature, 2022)

Aseyev, Stanislav. *In Isolation. Dispatches from Occupied Donbas*. (Harvard Library of Ukrainian Literature, 2022)

Kabanov, Alexandr. *The Age of Vengeance. War time verses from Kyiv*. (Amazon, 2023)

Kruk, Halyna. *A Crash Course in Molotov Cocktails. Poems* (Arrowsmith Press 2023)

*Ukraine in Histories and Stories. Essays by Ukrainian intellectuals*. (Ibidem. 2020)

Oleg Sentsov “*Life went off anyway*” Stories. Ukrainian Institute edition.