

SPRING 2012 HEYMAN CENTER FRIENDS COLLOQUIUM

Anton Chekhov and the Short Story

Cathy Popkin

Tuesdays, 5:30-7:30

Course Description

This colloquium will be led by Cathy Popkin, Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities, former Chair of both Literature Humanities and the Department of Slavic Languages, and editor of the forthcoming Norton Critical Edition of *Anton Chekhov's Selected Stories*. While Chekhov is best known in the west as a dramatist, it may be his stories that the Russians cherish above all. As boldly innovative as his plays, Chekhov's stories virtually redefined the genre, sparking the development of what we now know as the modern short story; even today, more writers cite Chekhov as their principal influence and source of inspiration than any other author. Indeed, Chekhov's stories make for remarkably enjoyable—even easy—reading. And yet things are not as simple as they seem, and interesting things emerge when you pay extremely close attention. Since the best possible understanding—and the greatest pleasure—comes of reading Chekhov's stories both in *detail* and in *plural*, we will read a great many of them for a sense of the whole tapestry and how artfully each element illuminates the others, but we will focus closely on selected individual stories, not only for an appreciation of how they work, but for what they have to tell us about living deeply and well.

Readings are drawn from the following sources (identified by translators' initials):

Chekhov: The Comic Stories, trans. **Harvey Pitcher** (Ivan Dee) [HP]

Anton Chekhov, *Selected Stories*, trans. **Ann Dunnigan** (Penguin) [AD]

Anton Chekhov, *Stories*, trans. **Richard Pevear** and **Larissa Volokhonsky** (Bantam) [PV]

Anton Chekhov, *About Love and Other Stories*, trans. **Rosamund Bartlett** (Oxford World Classics) [RB]

Anton Chekhov, *The Steppe and Other Stories*, trans. **Ronald Hingley** (Oxford World Classics) [RH]

Supplemented by *201 Stories by Anton Chekhov*, trans. **Constance Garnett**, on line at:

<http://www.eldritchpress.org/ac/jr/index.htm> [CG]

January 24: “*I have the ability to speak briefly on long topics*”

Elements Most often Encountered in Novels, Novellas, etc. (1880)	copy
Questions Posed by a Mad Mathematician (1882)	copy
Rapture (1883)	HP
An Incident at Law (1883)	HP
Death of a Clerk (1883)	PV
The Daughter of Albion (1883)	HP
Fat and Thin (1883)	HP
At Sea: A Sailor's Story (1883)	AD
Small Fry (1885)	PV
The Huntsman (1885)	RB
Misery (1886)	CG
The Requiem (1886)	PV
Aniuta (1886)	PV
Agafya (1886)	AD
Grisha (1886)	HP
Vanka (1886)	PV
A Drama (1887)	HP

72 pp.

February 7: “*Between ‘God exists’ and ‘There is no God’ lies an enormous field, one that the true wise man*

traverses with great difficulty. A Russian knows one or the other of these two extremes, but is not interested in the middle ground."

On Easter Eve (1886)	PV
On the Road (1886)	RB
Enemies (1887)	CG
Fortune [Happiness] (1887)	RB
Uprooted [The Tumbweed] (1887)	CG
The Kiss (1887)	AD
Kashtanka (1887)	HP
No Comment [Without a Title] (1888)	HP

106 pp.

February 21: *"You are confusing two concepts: answering the questions and formulating them correctly. Only the latter is required of an author."*

Sleepy (1888)	PV
The Beauties (1888)	RH
The Party [The Name-Day Party] (1888)	CG
A Nervous Breakdown [An Attack of Nerves] (1889)	CG
Gusev (1890)	RH
Peasant Women (1891)	RH

95 pp.

March 6: *"I don't hate anyone; that's my ideology."*

In Exile (1892)	PV
Ward No. 6 (1892)	PV
Rothschild's Fiddle (1894)	PV
The Student (1894)	PV
The Teacher of Literature (1889-1894)	CG
The House with a Mezzanine (1896)	PV

118 pp.

March 27: *"Medicine is my lawful wedded wife, and literature my mistress. When one gets on my nerves I spend the night with the other."*

Ariadna (1895)	CG
Anna on the Neck (1895)	PV
In the Cart (1897)	RB
Man in a Case (1898)	RB
Gooseberries (1898)	RB
About Love (1898)	RB
A Medical Case [A Doctor's Visit] (1898)	PV
On Official Business (1899)	PV

115 pp.

April 10: *"You ask: what is life? That's like asking: what is a carrot? A carrot is a carrot, and that's all there is to know."*

The Darling (1899)	PV
Lady with the Little Dog (1899)	PV
In the Ravine (1900)	PV
At Christmastime (1900)	PV
The Bishop (1902)	PV
The Betrothed (1903)	PV

111 pp.

April 24: Make-up meeting, if required