

**Dostoevsky, God, and The Devil**  
**English 481/Fall 2009**  
**Clow 19/M-W-F: 10:20-11:20**

**Dr. Duke Pesta**  
210 Radford Hall  
Office Hours: MW: 11:30-1:00; W: 5:00-6:00

Office Phone: 424-7280  
[pestaj@uwosh.edu](mailto:pestaj@uwosh.edu)  
[www.english.uwosh.edu](http://www.english.uwosh.edu)

**Course Objectives**

The capstone course for the English major, English 481 is a seminar offering students an intensive intellectual experience in reading, writing, and research. Our subject—Dostoevsky, God, and The Devil—considers the writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian novelist and philosopher of the human soul, against the backdrop of Western European Intellectualism in the nineteenth century. Specifically, Dostoevsky opposed the Europeanization of Russia, and stood athwart the philosophical imperatives of Rational Liberalism and Marxism, two dominant ideologies of his time that sought to subsume Russian thought and history to the secular humanist aims of European liberal philosophy. Championing a broader Christian and historical understanding of human nature based on the soul, Dostoevsky rejected the thinking of intellectuals like Marx and Nietzsche as hopelessly out of touch with the essential verities of the human condition. Shaped by his own terrifying childhood experiences and a horrific jail term in Siberia, Dostoevsky came to understand that suffering and doubt constitute the necessary precursors to any meaningful faith in God. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky's greatest work, he provides the most compelling reasons ever assembled why God cannot exist, and then demolishes them one by one, offering instead a profound affirmation of God and the human spirit.

**Required Texts**

*The Diary of a Madman*, by Nikolai Gogol (Penguin Classics/Wilks translator)  
*Notes From Underground*, Vintage (Pevear and Volokhonsky, translators)  
*Crime and Punishment*, Vintage Classics (Pevear and Volokhonsky, translators)  
*The Brothers Karamazov*, FSG Publishing (Pevear and Volokhonsky, translators)  
*Liberty and Tyranny*, by Mark Levin (Simon & Schuster/Threshold Editions)

**Note:** We will be reading these works in translation. Due to the subjective nature of translation, it is essential that you have the specific editions listed above.

**Grading**

**20% Quizzes**  
**20% Midterm ID/Essay Exam**  
**20% Final ID/Essay Exam**

**10% Draft of Research Paper**  
**30% Final Research Paper**

### Grading Scale

100-93 A; 92-90 A-; 89-88 B+; 87-83 B; 82-80 B-; 79-78 C+; 77-73 C; 72-70 C-; 69-68 D+; 67-63 D; 62-60 D-; 59-0 F

### Attendance

You need to be here for every class, as I will give daily 10-point reading quizzes. Students may not make up quizzes missed because of unexcused absence or tardiness. These quizzes will make up your attendance/participation grade and will count for 20% of your final grade. Each unexcused absence subtracts 10 points from your overall quiz grade. These quizzes will be straightforward and content oriented, designed to verify that you are reading on schedule. It is essential that you keep up with the reading. Absences and missed quizzes will seriously compromise your chances to do well in this course. If you are at all concerned about your grade, do not skip classes.

### Research Paper and Draft

Your final research project will consist of two parts: an initial draft due on Monday, 23 November, and the final version due Monday, 14 December. Each student will write one critical essay of approximately 15 typed, double-spaced pages on some dimension, problem, or theory found in one or several of the works studied during the semester. All paper topics must be approved by me in advance, and the sooner you begin the process of selecting a topic, the better off you will be. All versions of the essay submitted for consideration shall thoroughly conform to MLA style. While the topic will be of the student's choosing, the instructor will be happy to discuss possible topics or facilitate in any way. A thorough knowledge of the secondary material should be evident in the background of the paper, but secondary material should not take the place of the student's own original, critical thinking.

A preliminary draft of the paper will be submitted on Monday, 23 November. This version will be given a grade based on the originality and cogency of its ideas, its careful reading of the work or works under consideration, the clarity and precision of its expression, and its correct use of secondary sources. It is advisable to consult with the instructor before submitting this draft. This version will be graded and returned the following week. The purpose of this process is to encourage students to write a paper that does more than simply fulfill a class requirement.

### English Major Portfolio

All English majors must complete the English portfolio according to the guidelines prepared by the Department of English, which can be found at the website located at the following address: <http://www.english.uwosh.edu/assess/index.html>. Your portfolio grade will be determined by the completeness of your portfolio and the clarity of your final reflective essay. Your 481 Final Research Paper must be part of

**your portfolio, and the entire portfolio must be turned in on the last day of class. Be advised: Failure to turn in a completed folio will mean failure in English 481. Fifty quiz/attendance points will be added to the final quiz grade of each student who turns in a complete portfolio on time.**

### Note

**Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment, possible failure of the course, and may carry further penalties. I will assume that your writing skills are appropriate for this level course. This means that I expect writing assignments to conform to all the conventions of good writing (this includes spelling!).**

### Disability Policy

**If you have a disability or need special accommodation of any nature whatsoever, I will work with you—in conjunction with the proper university office—to provide reasonable assistance in order to ensure you a fair opportunity to perform in this class. Once you have registered your disability with the proper university office, advise me of the disability and the desired accommodation as soon as possible after the commencement of the semester.**

### Readings

#### September

**W/9 Introduction**

**F/11 Read Gogol's *The Overcoat* pages 140-155. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1-23).**

**M/14 Finish Gogol's *The Overcoat* pages 155-173. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (pages 24-60).**

**W/16 Read Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* pages 3-16. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapters 6 and 7 (pages 61-113).**

**F/18 Read *Notes From Underground* pages 16-41. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapter 8 (pages 114-146).**

**M/21 Read *Notes From Underground* pages 42-82. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapter 9 (pages 147-174).**

**W/23 Read *Notes From Underground* pages 82-130. Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Chapter 10 (pages 175-192).**

**F/25 Read *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*.**

Read also *Liberty and Tyranny* Epilogue (pages 193-205).

M/28 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 3-27.

W/30 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 27-52.

### October

F/2 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 52-86.

M/5 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 89-142.

W/7 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 142-193.

F/9 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 197-248.

M/12 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 248-306.

W/14 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 306-358.

F/16 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 361-405.

M/19 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 405-462.

W/21 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 462-520.

F/23 Read *Crime and Punishment* pages 521-551.

M/26 Midterm Exam

W/28 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 3-25.

F/30 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 25-53.

### November

M/2 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 53-91.

W/4 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 92-131.

F/6 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 132-176.

M/9 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 176-222.

W/11 Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 222-246.

**F/13** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 246-264.

**M/16** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 265-282.

**W/18** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 283-324.

**F/20** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 327-379.

**M/23** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 380-444.  
Draft of Final Research Project Due

**W/25** Thanksgiving Break

**F/27** Thanksgiving Break

**M/30** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 445-499.

### **December**

**W/2** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 500-559.

**F/4** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 559-612.

**M/7** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 612-634.

**W/9** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 634-650.

**F/11** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 650-701.

**M/14** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 701-753.  
Final Research Project Due

**W/16** Read *The Brothers Karamazov* pages 757-776.

**F/18** Final Exam