

Professor Steven Shankman

**Honors College Colloquium 421H/Inside-Out, Fall 2015**  
**“Literature and Ethics: Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Books 1-8”**

In our time of seemingly endless wars, we will read one of the world’s greatest war novels, Tolstoy’s massive *War and Peace*. We will read *War and Peace* in light of the thought of two of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century’s greatest philosophers, Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) and Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995). Tolstoy, who was himself a soldier and a nobleman, ended his life as a pacifist and a radical egalitarian. *War and Peace* is a meditation, based on Tolstoy’s own personal experience, on the Napoleonic wars, including Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, and on war in general.

Alongside *War and Peace*, during fall quarter we will read Rosenzweig’s *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, which the philosopher wrote as a guide to his great and very challenging book *The Star of Redemption*. Rosenzweig composed *The Star* as a series of postcards to his mother from the trenches in which he fought in the first World War (the so-called “Great War”). As an introduction to Rosenzweig, we will begin with Emmanuel Levinas’s essay “The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig.”

Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption* views World War I as a culmination of the history of Western philosophy that finds its expression in Hegel’s book *The Phenomenology of Spirit/Mind*. The thought of Levinas, which was deeply influenced by Rosenzweig, is a response to the horrors of World War II. Levinas’s reading of Russian literature as a young man, including his reading of Tolstoy, had a profound impact on the development his philosophical thought. During winter quarter, we will focus on Levinas’s book *Totality and Infinity*, and particularly on Levinas’s distinction between ethics and politics. Levinas is here drawing on the thought of Rosenzweig, who is acutely aware, as is Tolstoy, of the difference between the political and the ethical self, of the difference between the human being viewed as a role-player in the unfolding of an impersonal world historical drama or narrative, on the one hand, and the human being seen as absolutely unique and irreplaceable, on the other. If ethics is peace, is war perhaps the inevitable result of pursuing politics at the expense of ethics?

The topic of this two-quarter colloquium is central to the concerns of the UNESCO Chair in Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace at the University of Oregon.

The class will meet on Thursday evenings from 6-8:50 in OSCI (the Oregon State Correctional Institution) during fall quarter 2015 and winter quarter 2016.

Texts for Fall Quarter:

Emmanuel Levinas, Foreword, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* by Stéphane Mosès (1982), 13-22 [hand-out]

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, the Maude translation, ed. and revised by George Gibian, *Norton Critical Edition*, Second Edition (Norton, 1996)

Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, trans. Nahum Glatzer (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Week 1

**Outside students meet on Tuesday, September 29th from 5-7:50 p.m. in 193 Anstett (ANS) Hall; inside students meet on Thursday, October 1st from 6-9:50 p.m. at OSCI;** introductions; review of Inside-Out principles; Levinas, Foreword to *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (hand-out)

Week 2

October 8: Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book One (pp. 3-94); Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, pp. 35-46 (“Preface to the Reader,” “Preface to the Expert,” Chapters 1 and 2); response paper due.

Week 3

October 15: Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Book Two (95-173); Rosenzweig, *USH* 47-53 (Chapter 3); response paper due.

Week 4

October 22: *W&P*, Book Three (175-253); Rosenzweig, *USH* 55-58 (Chapter 4); response paper due.

Week 5

October 29: Outside students arrive early at OSCI at 1:30 for prison tour. *W&P*, Book Four (257-301); Rosenzweig, *USH* 59-63 (Chapter 5); mid-term essay due (3-5pp.)

Week 6

Nov. 5: *W&P*, Book Five (303-365); Rosenzweig, *USH* 65-74 (Chapter 6); response paper due.

Week 7

Nov. 12: *W&P*, Book Six (367-429); Rosenzweig, *USH* 75-83 (Chapter 7); response paper due.

Week 8

Nov. 19: *W&P*, Book Seven (431-474); Rosenzweig, *USH* 85-93 (Chapter 8); response paper due.

Week 9

Nov. 26: Thanksgiving: NO CLASS

Week 10

December 3: *W&P*, Book Eight (475-534); Rosenzweig, *USH* 95-107 (Chapters 9 and 10, epilogues to the expert and to the reader); **final papers due** (5-7 pp.)

Your grades will be based on the following criteria:

Class participation: 20%; mid-term paper (3-5 pp.): 30%;  
final paper (5-7 pp.): 50%