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University of Oregon

HC 421H/Inside-Out, Spring 2017

Ethics, Religion, and Literature: Tolstoy's *Resurrection*

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) is one of the greatest and most influential masters of the novel. The Russian literary classics of the nineteenth century, including the novels of Tolstoy, made a profound impression on Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), perhaps the greatest philosopher of ethics of our era. We will carefully read Tolstoy's last novel, *Resurrection* (1899), paying special attention to what the novel has to say about the relation between ethics, religion, and literature. In this novel, Tolstoy breaks with a notion of art that, he had come to believe, was too narrowly addressed - like his great earlier novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* - to members of his own elite social class. Alongside *Resurrection*, we will read Levinas's challenging late essay "God and Philosophy" which, like Tolstoy's novel, radically reimagines the relation between ethics and religion by "thinking God," as Levinas puts it, on the basis of - or starting out from - ethical obligation (*penser Dieu à partir de l'éthique*).

This is an Inside-Out class: half the students ("inside" students) will be incarcerated men and the other half University of Oregon students ("outside" students) making the trip from Eugene up to Salem and back once a week. The class meets on Thursday evenings from 6-8:50 in the Oregon State Correctional Institution (OSCI) in Salem. Transportation will be provided.

Students can take HC 421H a maximum of four times for credit (16 hours *in toto*). Inside students wishing to take this class who have already received 16 hours of credit for HC 421H may register under a different rubric: they may register for English 479 (Major Authors), for example, or English 405 (Reading and Conference), both of which are repeatable, with no restriction on how many times these courses may be repeated.

Texts:

Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, trans. Jane Kentish, Penguin Books (Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England and New York, 1987)

Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, trans. Louise Maude, with an introduction and notes by Richard F. Gustafson, Oxford World Classics Series, Oxford UP (Oxford, New York, 2009)

Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. B. Bergo, Stanford UP (Stanford, CA., 1998)

I. Outside students meet on Tuesday, April 4th from 6-8:50 p.m. in 248 PLC; inside students meet on Thursday, April 6th at 6:00 p.m. at OSCI; introductions; review of Inside-Out principles; review of prison rules; Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, Chapter 7 ("The Face"), 85-92; (xeroxed hand-out)

II. April 13: Tolstoy, *A Confession* (19-80); *Ethics and Infinity*, Chap. 8 ("Responsibility for the Other"), 95-101; response paper due. **Outside students to leave campus early today (3:20) for a half-hour meeting with superintendent Christine Popoff of OSCI at 5:30 before our class begins at 6.**

III. April 20: Tolstoy, *Resurrection* 5-74; Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” *Of God Who Comes to Mind* 55-57 (The Priority of Philosophical Discourse, and Ontology); response paper due

IV. April 27: Outside students arrive early at OSCI for prison tour. Tolstoy, *Resurrection* 75-143; Levinas, “God and Philosophy” 57-62 (The Priority of Ontology and Immanence); response paper due

V. May 4: *Resurrection* 144-215; mid-term essay due (3-5pp.)

VI. May 11: *Resurrection* 216-286; Levinas, “God and Philosophy” 62-65 (The Idea of the Infinite); response paper due

VII. May 18: *Resurrection* 286-358; Levinas, “God and Philosophy” 65-70 (Divine Comedy); response paper due.

VIII. May 25: *Resurrection* 358-426; Levinas, “God and Philosophy” 70-75 (Phenomenology and Transcendence); response paper due

IX. June 1: *Resurrection* 426-483; Levinas, “God and Philosophy” 75-78 (Prophetic Signification); *What is Art?* (selections); response paper due

X. June 8: Graduation and Closing Ceremony. *Final papers are due at the start of the closing ceremony, June 8, 2017, 6:00 p.m.*

Separate debriefings with Outside students (Friday, June 9, noon in Café Marché) and with Inside students the following week (Thursday, June 15, 6 p.m.)

Group Project: Students will compile and publish a selection of their weekly responses. They will also be invited to publish a selection of their own creative writing that reflects on their experience in the class.

Your grades will be based on the following criteria: Class participation (including projects): 20%; mid-term paper (3-5 pp.): 30%; final paper (7-10 pp.): 50%