

**RUTR 3340 Books Behind Bars:**

**Life, Literature, and Leadership**

“To be able to affect others, an artist has to be an explorer, and his work of art has to be a quest. If he has discovered everything, knows everything, and is just preaching or entertaining, he makes no effect. Only if he keeps searching, then the viewer, or listener, or reader fuses with him in his search.”

—from Leo Tolstoy’s diary, December 1900

“He who opens a school door, closes a prison.”

—Anonymous

**COURSE TIMES AND LOCATIONS**

**Tuesdays:**

* For the first few weeks, and during our final week, we meet from 12:30 to 4:00 in New Cabell Hall German Conference Room 236 (except Jan. 27)
* All remaining weeks (including Jan. 27), we meet at 12:30 sharp at the parking lot of The Cavalier Inn, 105 North Emmet St., and travel to Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center, returning by 5:00

**Thursdays:**

* We will meet from 12:30 to 1:45 in Nau Hall Room 241.

**Instructor Contact Information:** Prof. Kaufman may be reached at akaufman@virginia.edu. In case of something urgent, he can be reached by phone at 818-723-2009. Prof. Wolman may be reached by email at rtw4c@virginia.edu. He may also be reached by cell phone at 434-409-7627

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

“Books Behind Bars” has a number of learning objectives. Some focus on tangible knowledge and skills while others are more abstract and of long-lasting benefit. Some of these objectives relate directly to the subject matter—Russian literature—while others are more broadly related to your professional and personal success in life.

Foundational Knowledge: What knowledge can you obtain in this course?

In this course you should learn to:

* Recognize key authors, works, themes, and characters from nineteenth-century Russian literature
* Understand some of the social, economic, and cultural forces, which shape the author’s world view
* Learn enough about classical Russian writers to decide which ones you might like to pursue further
* Effectively apply various forms of literary analysis
* Understand some of the salient issues, and challenges of juvenile delinquency and its treatment in the U.S.

Application: What skills can you acquire in this course?

This course will help you to:

* Analyze a literary text from the point of view of both a reader and discussion leader
* Gain practical professional leadership abilities including skills in diplomacy, planning, organization, and reacting to problems “on-the-spot”
* Build effective working relationships
* Gain an increased ability to interact respectfully, tactfully, and honestly with people from different backgrounds and with different life experiences
* Resolve problems creatively as you confront unforeseen challenges
* Take risks and initiative while working in a relatively unstructured environment
* Learn how becoming a better listener can improve your personal and professional life

Integration: How will this course help you see connections?

This course will help you to:

* Discover connections between your academic study of literature and real-world social issues
* Apply the themes in literature to your own life
* Make connections between the study of literature and other disciplines and areas of interest
* Experience how literature studies can help form connections between people from different walks of life

Human Dimension/Caring: Why should you care about this course?

In this course you will learn to:

* Be more self-reflective and gain a deeper understanding of yourself
* Discover, articulate, and commit to your own values
* Develop increased empathy for the experiences of others
* Gain confidence in your ability to work in a real-world, professional environment
* Discover personal and professional skills and talents that you might not have known you had

Learning How to Learn: How can this course help you be a better learner?

This course should help you to:

* Take more responsibility for your own education now and in the future
* Read literature in a way that is more personally useful and relevant
* Realize your creative potential as you explore teaching and learning from various points of view
* Discover how learning deepens when your job is to teach others as well as to educate yourself

**COURSE STRUCTURE, ACTIVITIES, AND REQUIREMENTS**

To prepare you for this experience, during the first several weeks of the course you will spend ample time gaining knowledge of the literature and of the skills necessary to lead discussions with residents.

First, you will be discussing the literature itself. You will focus on the themes and issues raised by each work, much in the way that you would expect in a traditional literature class. You also will spend time thinking about which characters or issues might resonate with the correctional center residents.

Once a work has been discussed, then you will practice facilitating informal discussions about that work in small groups. You will reflect on what makes for interesting, lively group discussions, and you will practice actually leading some. You will learn how to formulate stimulating questions, how and when to share personal comments, and how to handle practical classroom issues such as what to do if there is silence.

The third and final element of your preparation involves gaining some understanding of the people you will be working with. To that end, you will attend an orientation at Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center, during which you will learn more about the residents and learn about specific issues that might come up during your meetings, such as how to set boundaries and deal with unforeseen circumstances. You also will be asked to submit your fingerprints for a required volunteer background check.

Once these preparations are complete you will begin a series of ten weekly literature discussion meetings with the residents, travelling to Beaumont on Tuesday afternoons. The meetings last approximately one hour and fifteen minutes, and it takes about an hour and ten minutes to travel there each way. No student is expected to lead a discussion by him or herself. You will be paired with a facilitation partner for the duration of the course and the two of you will meet with the same group of 2-4 ­­residents each week. The class will continue to meet on Thursdays at UVa to debrief and explore additional course material.

In addition to periodic response papers and regular group discussions, you will keep a reflective journal. This is the place for you to explore your thoughts and feelings about the readings and other experiences during this class. You will be asked to reflect frequently and explicitly on your interactions with the correctional center residents, as well as on what you are learning. Before each encounter, you will be given the opportunity to talk and/or write about your assumptions, expectations, and apprehensions. Afterwards, you will explore how your discussion facilitation experience affected your ideas, not only about literature, but about juvenile offenders, yourself, and what it means to read and study literature in a community context.

At the end of the semester, you will produce a Learning Portfolio and a Reflective Essay. The portfolio represents your intellectual and personal evolution in this course. The reflective essay explains what this experience has meant to you and how your portfolio reflects your journey through the world of Russian literature and juvenile delinquency. You will address changes in your thinking about literature, life, your education as a whole, you as a learner and as a person, the way you understand yourself and others, etc.. In other words, you and your learning experience are the subject of this essay.

As part your experience and ongoing self-assessment and reflection, you may be recording your interactions with the residents, and with one another. From time to time you may be asked to listen and comment on these recordings.

During the semester we will have guest speakers who will talk to us about various aspects of this learning experience. For instance, Professor Edith (Wynx) Lawrence, founder of the Young Women Leaders Program (which is cosponsored by the Curry School and the University Women’s Center), has agreed to give a workshop on how to be a good listener. We also hope to have a representative from the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice speak to us about salient issues in the treatment of juvenile delinquency, and how the Books Behind Bars program fits into those efforts.

**READINGS**

In this class you’re going to have a luxury you rarely get in literature courses: You’ll read slowly, carefully, and deeply. We’ll be reading only ten short works (a portion of a short novel, short stories, and poems). These carefully chosen readings are among the acknowledged classics of Russian literature. Past experience has shown that the residents find them interesting and accessible.

From the bizarre to the beautiful, the gritty to the godly, these works, and the characters that inhabit them, should inspire, challenge, and enlighten both UVa students and residents at Beaumont. The works have at least three features in common:

1. They are entertaining, powerfully written, provocative and have stood the test of time. They are classics.
2. They are short and thus you and the residents will be able to delve into them deeply.
3. They radiate with a moral-spiritual intensity and emotional boldness, and they encourage readers to ponder timeless human questions:

* What makes for a successful life?
* What is happiness?
* Is spiritual wealth more valuable than material wealth?
* Is selfless love possible?
* What does it mean to be a hero?
* How can I be true to myself?
* How much should I care what society thinks about me?
* What is my responsibility to others?
* Does evil exist?
* Given that I am going to die, how should I live?

**Primary Works of Fiction**

All of these readings are available in Collab under Resources/Literature: Primary Works:

Anton Chekhov, “Ward No. 6” (1892)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, “An Honest Thief” (1848)

Mikhail Lermontov, “Native Land/Motherland” (1841)

Mikhail Lermontov, “Princess Mary” from *A Hero of Our Time* (1840)

Nadezhda Mandelshtam, “Last Letter” from *Hope Abandoned* (1974)

Karolina Pavlova, A selection from *A Double Life* (1848)

Alexander Pushkin, “To a Poet” (1830)

Varlam Shalamov, “Handwriting” from *Kolyma Tales* (1970-76)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s Home” (1963)

Leo Tolstoy, “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” (1885)

Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”(1886)

**Secondary Literature**

You will also be assigned to read short selections from *A History of Russian Literature* (D.S. Mirsky) and *Handbook of Russian Literature* (Victor Terras, ed.), as well as some background material from other sources. These readings will be available in Collab under Resources.

**Other readings**  
In addition to the primary literature and secondary literature, there also will be some short readings about teaching, education, and juvenile delinquency. All of these readings will be available in collab under Resources.

**COURSE JOURNAL**

In this class you are required to keep a journal. It should be separate from your class notes. This will be a primary venue for regular writing exercises. At various times during the semester, you will be asked to hand in your entries.

Given that writing longhand is more tactile, and perhaps stimulates different senses than composing on a computer, in the past we have asked students to purchase a notebook and to write their entries by hand. This year we want to experiment with an electronic journal option, whereby you would make your entries into a Word document. It is your choice; you may do either. Let us know your preference at the first meeting. We are interested in hearing your feedback.

The journal is your opportunity to respond to suggested discussion questions, to reflect, to analyze, to integrate, to explore, and to test the boundaries of your thoughts and feelings related to the contents of the class. For some of the entries, you will be asked to respond to specific, prompted questions, or do short creative writing exercises (e.g., a personal letter to an author, an alternate ending to a story). And for some of the entries you’ll have the flexibility to write about whatever you wish.

You should aim for at least one entry per week, around 250-300 words per entry. Some weeks might you might write a little less, others weeks a little more depending on your level of inspiration and time availability. But try for somewhere in that range, which usually comes out to at least a page or more of prose per week. By the end of the semester you should have at least 14 entries total.

Finally, please remember to *date* each entry. This will help you when you prepare your Learning Portfolio and Personal Reflection Essay at the end of the semester. Also, although it’s not required, I encourage you to come up with a *title or theme* for each entry you’ve written. Past students find this to be an enjoyable creative exercise, as well as a useful tool for grasping the bigger picture, the patterns, and the overarching thrust of your thoughts.

**COLLAB RESPONSES**

We will frequently ask you to prepare short written assignments that you will post in Collab, **no later than 9 am on on the day of Tuesday’s class** or **9 am on the day of Thursday’s class**. Note that these Collab responses are separate from your weekly journal entries.

**MIDTERM SELF-ASSESSMENT ESSAY (3-5 pages)**

Before Spring Break you will be asked to submit an essay in which you assess your own learning up to that point in the class. In what areas do you think you’ve grown most up to this point in the class? What’s the most important thing you’ve learned? In which area/s would you still like to improve? What can you do to help make that happen? You will receive more detailed instructions at the time of the assignment.

**LEARNING PORTFOLIO AND PERSONAL REFLECTION ESSAY (5-7 pages)**

For the final paper you will start by creating a portfolio of your (written) work to represent your own intellectual, creative, and emotional evolution in this course. Then you will write a reflective essay explaining what this collection as a whole means to you and how this portfolio reflects your own journey through the world of Russian literature and juvenile justice. You will receive more detailed instructions at the time of the assignment.

Please remember that a good 5-7 page paper starts off as a longer draft that gets honed and rewritten. Give yourself a good week of planning and thinking, writing, rewriting, and polishing.

**RESEARCH PROJECT: “Awakening Youth Through The Humanities”**

As a student in “Books Behind Bars” you will automatically have an opportunity to become a participant in the research project, “Awakening Youth Through the Humanities.” This study, funded by grants from the Office of the Vice President and Provost, the Curry School of Education, and the Center for the Study of Advanced Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and The Jefferson Trust, seeks to better understand the impact the “Books Behind Bars” service learning model is having on student and resident academic, social, and personal development.

In this study you may be asked to fill out some brief surveys. Either a trained research assistant or the course instructor may also interview you, and the interviews will be recorded on videotape.

For this study the interviews and surveys, as well as the materials you produce in the class itself—essays, journal entries, informal writing assignments, creative work, comments made during class discussions, as well as audio or videotaped class discussions, or discussions with the residents—may be used as research data. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Agreement, as well as a Materials Release Form indicating whether we may use your materials for research and publication purposes. Your materials will always be handled confidentially. Your name will never be used if your comments or work are quoted or referred to directly.

**SUMMARY OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**ACADEMIC COMPONENT**

* Class attendance and active participation
* Weekly Journal (minimum of 14 pages total for the semester)
* Collab Responses
* Mid-Term Self-Evaluation Essay (3-5 pages)
* Learning Portfolio and Personal Reflection Essay (5-7 pages)

**SERVICE COMPONENT**

* Regular attendance of meetings at Beaumont, and preparation ahead of time

**ASSESSMENT**

In this class our focus is going to be on learning rather than on grading. Although we are required to assign grades at the end of the semester, we have designed the class in such a way that grades are not the primary motivation for your work. Furthermore, each one of you has been carefully chosen for this class on the basis of a university-wide application process. We already know that you have a strong desire to be here, that you want to learn and work hard, and that you will succeed.

You will take responsibility for your own learning in this class, and you will be actively involved in the assessment of your own work. Self-assessment is a core principle of the Books Behind Bars class.

How will we know that you’re learning? Not because a grade tells us so, but because we can observe growth in facilitation, as well as in your evolving insights into Russian literature, yourselves, the world of juvenile justice—into life itself.

Did you notice something about the literature, about yourself, about life, that you hadn’t noticed before? Have any of the expectations or paradigms you held before been disrupted? Did you have an experience in class, while reading, while writing in your journals, while meeting with the residents that stimulated, excited, or provoked you? And did you process that experience in your journal and/or in class discussion in such a way that you gained some insight from it? If so, then learning has taken place.

You will know that you’re learning, because you did a better job facilitating a discussion at Beaumont than you did in previous weeks, and you can articulate the reasons why. And if you weren’t as successful, then what did you learn from that failure that you will use next time? Whether the result was positive or negative, what did the experience teach you, and how will you apply those lessons to the next discussion? Reflecting thoughtfully about such questions is the essence of experiential learning in this class.

You’ll know you’ve learned, because your final essay contains ideas and insights that you didn’t have or couldn’t have articulated sixteen weeks earlier. And perhaps, as many students of the course have reported, you will know because you have been permanently changed in ways you did not foresee.

**Grading Principles**

Although our focus will be on learning rather grading, we nevertheless are required to assign a grade to your work at the end of the semester. There will be a few general principles guiding this decision:

* We will look to see whether you have completed all of the course requirements, as described in the “Summary of Course Requirements” above.
* Growth and improvement over the course of the semester are more important than your performance on any single assignment. This ensures that you feel comfortable taking risks, trying out new things, and even failing, without the fear that these failures will negatively affect my assessment of your work.
* Your Final Learning Portfolio and Essay will provide an excellent opportunity for you to pull together the many different strands of your experience in this class and demonstrate all that you have learned by the end of semester.
* The totality of your work in this class will be taken into consideration, not just your written work or your discussion facilitation. Because of the multi-faceted nature of the class, there will be many opportunities for you to demonstrate your learning.
* Far more important than whether you “succeed” or “fail” during the facilitation of a discussion is whether you reflect honestly and clearly on those successes and failures, and then incorporate those reflections into your future meetings.
* Although there are a number of course objectives, as described above, not all of them will be equally applicable to every one of you. Each of you brings a unique set of skills, passions, and perspectives to this class, which will be reflected in your unique learning outcomes. There is no single profile of the “successful” Books Behind Bars student.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

The schedule below is tentative. In a course such as this, we attempt to tailor the experience to the needs of the students, and so we may make mid-course changes. Also, unexpected things sometimes occur that require adjustments to the schedule. By the end of each week, you will receive a detailed email with the assignments for the following week so you should have ample opportunity to prepare. We will also inform you of any schedule changes in class, if possible.

The assignments are divided into four sections: Reading, Journal, Writing, and Thinking.

Week 1

**Tuesday, January 13 - Class 1: Introduction**

* Introduction to Books Behind Bars
  + Assignment/Exercise: A Work that had an Impact on Me
* Russian literature and the “Accursed Questions” of life
  + Assignment/Exercise: Accursed Questions
* Anticipations and Apprehensions
* Syllabus
* Some Core Principles of Books Behind Bars
* Pushkin/ “To a Poet”
  + Questions exercise for “To a Poet”

**Thursday, January 15 – Class 2: What is Success?**

* Leo Tolstoy, “How Much Land Does a Man Need?”
* Exercise: Questioning practice
* Facilitation: Creating Good Questions
  + Exercise: Question Rewrite

Week 2

**Tuesday, January 20 – Class 3: Given That I’m going to die, how should I live?**

* Student-led discussions “The Death of Ivan Ilych”
  + Discussion debrief
  + Written Feedback to facilitators from group
* Facilitation – “Follow Ups”
* Lecture/Discussion: Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”
* Literary Analysis Mini Workshop: Core ideas in Literature

**Thursday, Jan 22 – Class 4:**

* Lecture/Discussion: Fyodor Dostoevsky, “An Honest Thief”
* Introducing Intriguing Activities
* Facilitation practice

Week 3

**Tuesday, Jan 27 – Beaumont Orientation**

* Student orientation at Beaumont Correctional Facility (Meet at Cavalier Inn parking lot at 12:30 sharp)

**Thursday, Jan 29 – Class 5: Juvenile Justice and the Arts**

* Orientation debrief
* Readings and discussion: Issues in juvenile justice and the arts
* Facilitation considerations
* Intriguing activities sharing

Week 4

**Tuesday, Feb 3 – Class 6: Is authentic love possible?**

* Workshop: The Art of Listening – Professor Winx Lawrence
* Reflecting on the Reflective Journal (tentative)
* Student-led discussions: “Princess Mary” from *A Hero of Our Time*:
* Literary analysis workshop: to be determined
* Announcement of partners
* Introducing the lesson plan

**Thursday, Feb 5 – Class 7: Final Preparations for Meeting at Beaumont**

* Discussion: Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*
* Final preparations for the first meeting with the residents
* Introducing the Post-meeting Evaluation.
* Intriguing activities sharing

Week 5

**Tuesday, Feb 10 – Meeting 1**

* Meeting 1 at Beaumont: Leo Tolstoy, “How Much Land Does a Man Need?”

**Thursday, Feb 12 – Class 8: Analyzing Character**

* Debriefing at UVa: Debriefs include reactions, insights, critical moments, self–assessment and next steps
* Lecture/Discussion Alexander Solzhenitsyn: “Matryona’s Home”
* Literary Analysis Workshop: Analyzing Character

Week 6

**Tuesday, Feb 17 – Meeting 2**

* Meeting 2 at Beaumont: Mikhail Lermontov, “Princess Mary” from *A Hero of Our Time*

**Thursday, Feb 19 – Class 9: Author’s biography**

* Debriefing at UVa
* Lecture/Discussion Karolina Pavlova selection from *A Double Life* and biographical sketch: “Karolina Pavlova: The Woman Poet and the Double Life”
* Literary Analysis Workshop: Drawing on the author’s biography
* Hand in course journals

Week 7

**Tuesday, Feb 24 – Meeting 3**

* Meeting 3 at Beaumont: Karolina Pavlova, from *A Double Life*

**Thursday, Feb 26 – Class 10: Chekhov**

* Debriefing at UVa
* Lecture/Discussion: Anton Chekhov, “Ward No. 6” Gary Saul Morson, “Chekhov’s Enlightenment” and Walter G. Moss, Chekhov: A Man for Our Times” (<http://www.laprogressive.com/anton-chekhov-man-times/>)
* Questions about the Mid-Semester Essay

Week 8

**Tuesday, March 3 – Meeting 4**

* Meeting 4 at Beaumont: Anton Chekhov, “Ward No. 6”

**Thursday, March 5 – Class 11: The Virginia Juvenile Justice System**

* Guest speaker from the Va. Dept. of Juvenile Justice (tentative)

**Sunday March 8**

* \*Mid-term Self-Evaluation Due in collab

Week 9

**Tuesday, March 10**

No Class: Spring Break

**Thursday, March 12**

No Class: Spring Break

Week 10

**Tuesday, March 17 – Meeting 5**

* Meeting 5 at Beaumont: Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”

**Thursday, March 19 – Class 12: Poetry**

* Debriefing at UVa
* Lecture/Discussion: Alexander Pushkin, “To a Poet” and Mikhail Lermontov, “Native Land”
* Literary analysis Mini-workshop: Appreciating Poetry
* Reflecting on the mid-semester essay

Week 11

**Tuesday, March 24 – Meeting 6**

* Meeting 6 at Beaumont: Alexander Pushkin, “To a Poet” and Mikhail Lermontov, “Native Land”

**Thursday, March 26 – Class 13**

* Debriefing at UVa
* To be determined

Week 12

**Tuesday, March 31 – Meeting 7**

* Meeting 7 at Beaumont: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s Home”

**Thursday, April 2 – Class 14: Literature as a Reflection of History**

* Debriefing at UVa
* Lecture/Discussion Varlam Shalamov, “Handwriting” (from *Kolyma Tales*) and Nadezhda Mandelshtam, “Last Letter” (from *Hope Abandoned*) and biographical sketches of Shalamov and Mandelshtam
* Literary analysis workshop: Historical context

Week 13

**Tuesday, April 7 – Meeting 8**

* Meeting 8 at Beaumont: Varlam Shalamov, “Handwriting” (from *Kolyma Tales*) and Nadezhda Mandelshtam, “Last Letter” (from *Hope Abandoned*)

**Thursday, April 9 – Class 15**

* Debriefing at UVa
* To be determined

Week 14

**Tuesday, April 14**

* Meeting 9 at Beaumont: Fyodor Dostoevsky, “An Honest Thief”

**Thursday, April 16 – Class 16: Preparations for final meeting with the residents**

* Debriefing at UVa
* Preparation for final meeting at Beaumont

Week 15

**Tuesday, April 21 – Meeting 10**

* Meeting 10 at Beaumont: Final meeting, wrap-up party, and goodbyes

**Thursday, April 23 – Class 17**

* Debriefing at UVa

Week 16

**Tuesday, April 28 – Class 18: Wrap Up**

* Final class at UVa: Making sense of your experience

**Friday, May 8**

* \*Learning Portfolio and Reflection Essay Due
* \* Final Course Journal Due