

LATER LIFE LEARNING TORONTO

NOTE: THIS IS A **FIVE-WEEK** SERIES

SERIES B-366-A: Russian Literary Rebels

Fridays at 10:00 am
January 15 to February 12

Virtually via Online Zoom Webinar



Lecturer Bio:

Dr. Julia Zarankin holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from Princeton University. She enjoys teaching lifelong learners in venues across the GTA, including Curious Minds, LLIR and Learning Unlimited. Julia is also the author of *Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder*, which is a Canadian bestseller, and she regularly gives keynote presentations at birding festivals all over North America. Dr. Zarankin's writing is supported by grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. Julia was recently awarded an Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies,

Course Overview:

Russian writers have always had a tortured relationship with authority. Since the birth of Russian literature, in the late 18th century, writers have been the country's conscience and have rebelled against issues ranging from autocracy to serfdom to freedom of expression, religion and human rights. Using Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Akhmatova, and Stepanova as case studies, we will focus on the need for creativity and truth-telling in times of crisis and turmoil. In short, the greatest Russophone writers were also rebels and we need their courageous voices now more than ever.

Weekly Outline:

Week 1 (Jan. 15): Peculiarities of Russian literature

Why did it take until the late 1700s for Russian Literature to be born?

Week 2 (Jan. 22): Alexander Pushkin & Nikolai Gogol

How Alexander Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman" is a rebellion against autocracy and how Nikolai Gogol's characters in "The Overcoat" expose the horrors that underpin Russia's Imperial bureaucracy.

LATER LIFE LEARNING TORONTO

Week 3 (Jan. 29): Tolstoyevsky

How Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy rebelled—in very different ways—against autocracy, political dogma, social injustice, serfdom, and attempted to arrive at a definition of what it means to be Russian.

Week 4 (Feb. 5): Anton Chekhov

How Anton Chekhov rebelled against all forms of (political, religious, societal) smugness and apathy in his stories and plays, and how his work paved the way for the avant-garde.

Week 5 (Feb. 12): Anna Akhmatova to the Present

How Russia's most famous 20th century poet Anna Akhmatova rebelled against Stalinism and political repression in all of its forms; instead of succumbing to threats from the Soviet regime, in her poetry she fought for the preservation of historical memory. Her fight for creative freedom still resonates strongly today and set the stage for contemporary writers such as Maxim Osipov and Marina Stepanova who have chosen a life of exile as a rebellion against Putin's regime.