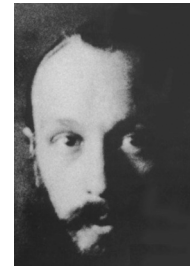
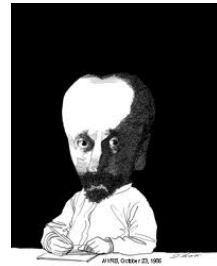


Department of Communication Studies  
CMST 7946: Theory and Performance of Narrative Discourse  
Topic: Bakhtin  
Fall 2015, Monday, 3:30-6:20 PM, 153 Coates  
Patricia A. Suchy  
Office: 129 Coates  
Office hours: WF 2:30-3:30 PM or by appointment  
e-mail: psuchy@lsu.edu



### Course Texts

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* (U of Texas P). I will provide passages, no need to buy.

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (U of Texas P).

\*\*\*E-text available free from LSU Libraries: Access is available from this direct link:

<http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780292792739/> or from the e-textbook webpage: [www.lib.lsu.edu/ebooks](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/ebooks).

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (U of Minnesota P)

Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (U of Texas P)

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana U P)

M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (U of Texas P)

Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford U P)

### Recommended

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Notes from Underground* (any translation will do)

This list will be supplemented with materials distributed in class or via Moodle.

### Course Description

In this course we will study the major works of the Russian literary and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). Despite a publication and translation history about as tortured as it gets, the influence of Bakhtin's works on narrative discourse, Rabelasian carnival, the history of novels, and the philosophy of language and authorship has spread to a remarkable degree to the West and into various disciplines. Through their use and adaptation of his ideas, many scholars in communication studies have identified Bakhtin as a key theorist.

While the seminar will often be inflected toward communication and performance studies, other disciplinary and inter-disciplinary applications and adaptations are welcome, depending upon the backgrounds and interests of the seminar participants. Our intent will be to grasp Bakhtin's ideas, but also to think *with* Bakhtin—to work in the mode of what he called “creative understanding” to see if his ideas can help us to solve problems or illuminate issues in our own research. Alongside this, we may discover how Bakhtin's ideas ask us to rethink some of our most fundamental ideas about art, unity, language, ethics, authorship, and communication. Whatever your interests are, you should emerge from this seminar with a sophisticated understanding of one of the major thinkers of the twentieth century.

### Format

Seminar course, discussion and presentation format, all readings in English. We will ground close readings of selected passages of the primary sources with the Morson and Emerson text and follow fairly closely their organizational scheme (three “global concepts” and four major periods of intellectual development).

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Participation

By virtue of your participation in this seminar, you will be a member of the Bakhtinski circle, after the original Bakhtin circle.<sup>1</sup> You are expected to be a good seminar citizen: to attend regularly and arrive on time, to come prepared with reading and writing assignments, and to engage fully in our discussions. In the tradition of the Bakhtin circle, the class has its own samovar, and the consumption of tea will be a regular feature.

### Policies pertaining to written work

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, and conform to the style conventional in your discipline—for most this will be MLA or APA (choose one and stick with that). Put your name and the heading in the upper left corner of the first page, 10-12 point Times or similar font, and 1" margins all around. Do not use title pages. Each essay should be carefully proofread and written in a clear, readable, style.

Whatever style you use, when referring to Bakhtin's works, you should use the widely accepted abbreviations for the titles of his essays (see Morson and Emerson xvii-xx, but use the English abbreviations, not the Russian titles). In view of the strange publication and translation history of Bakhtin's works, citing Bakhtin's writings by date is confusing, so use the abbreviations, even if that is not standard for your style.

All reading and writing assignments must be completed on time, and written work is due at the beginning of the class meeting. Late work will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but in general is highly discouraged. Plagiarism, the act of using the words or ideas of others inaccurately or without giving them proper and full credit, is a serious offense.

### The Americans with Disabilities Act and The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me during the first two weeks of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

### Evaluation

- Expected—Good Citizenship: regular, prompt attendance, intellectual curiosity, lively civil participation in discussion, and timely preparation of the required readings, presentations, and written work. While this isn't a graded assignment per se, your citizenship will affect your performance, and thus your grade.
- Six short "probes" (see below), about 2 pages each (30%)
- One 15-minute performative presentation ("performation") inspired by your reading of a selected text at midsemester, selected for relevance to seminar paper (20%)
- One short (2-3 pages) response to one of your peers' midsemester presentations (10%)
- Proposal: A 2-3 page proposal for your term paper (5%)
- One final seminar paper, 15-20 pages, to be submitted at the end of the semester. Topics will be worked out with the instructor on an individual basis. You will present this paper to the seminar at our gathering on the final exam date. (35%)

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<sup>1</sup> There is a brief but informative biography of the Bakhtin circle written by Craig Brandist of the Bakhtin Centre at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/bakhtin/>. It helps to put the Bakhtin circle in historical perspective, also to understand that Bakhtin worked at first in a group, in *dialogue*. Also see Deborah Haynes, *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge UP 2008, Chapter 2.

## Grading Scale

Letter grades earned are converted using a standard four-point scale: A+ = 4.3; A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.7; C = 2.0; C- = 1.7; D+ = 1.3; D = 1.0; D- = 0.7; F = 0. These numbers are multiplied by the percentages indicated above; the results are added and final grades are calculated according to the same 4-point scale.

## Probes

Each week where noted on the schedule you'll take a statement from our readings or a question that I provide or that you choose and probe it. The probes will serve to focus and stimulate our discussions. They will also allow me to respond to your individual interests, and they should help you to formulate your topic for the seminar paper. Probes should be typewritten, about two pages long, double-spaced. At the top of the page, type your name and the date. Then copy out exactly the statement or question you are probing. Skip a space and begin your probe.

The probe should do what the word "probe" implies: probe the statement or question, test it, evaluate it, think of different ways you might answer if it is a question, grapple with its meaning and/or implications, use it as a springboard to launch your own ideas, etc. The idea is to write about one small issue deeply or provocatively. Resist straying too far from the statement or question that sparks the probe—aim for depth rather than breadth, and specificity rather than generality. You might, for instance, consider the implications of the quoted statement for a particular context or contexts; you might compare or contrast a theoretical construct with another or examine its usefulness for the description or analysis of a performance, etc. You may find yourself asking questions rather than reaching solutions in the probes, and that's fine. Write about what interests you as you encounter the texts. Be prepared to read your probes aloud so that we can discuss them in class.

You each have a probe pass to use at your discretion. In other words, there are a total of 7 probe days, but you only need turn in 6 probes during the semester. Keep all of your probes, and keep them together. I'll read and respond to them as they are turned in, but I may ask to see them all together at the end of the semester too. For this reason, everyone should keep copies, especially the organizationally challenged, or those who are prone, like Bakhtin, to rolling manuscripts into cigarettes (probably apocryphal, but a good story).

I get too much email, so please refrain from sending me probes electronically until we are all sitting together and I ask you to email them to me, right then. You should always bring a hard copy in case of electronic fails and because I strongly prefer to respond to your probes the old-fashioned way. Please don't post assignments to Moodle. I tried that. It sucked.

## Standards for probes

The "A" probe delves into one issue or statement and explores a problem, question, argument, or line of inquiry with care and enthusiasm. Probes are not necessarily thesis-driven, so they do not necessarily reach answers to critical questions nor explain a phenomenon. Your probe should, however, explore the question or phenomenon in some detail and with some degree of concreteness and specificity. The "A" probe is written in a clear, readable, engaging style free from grammatical and other assorted errors and carefully proofread. Paragraphs cohere and the progression from one paragraph to the next is clear.

The "B" probe is generally well written, coherent, and engaging, but it either sacrifices depth for breadth or refers to rather than develops ideas. The line of thinking in it may be fuzzy: it may misread the context of the statement it probes or take unexpected leaps without showing the audience the links. Or, it may be ungrounded in the concrete or specific--in other words, too general.

The "C" probe gives the impression of being put together in haste. The writer may present an intriguing problem or issue and follow the prescribed probe form, but in general, the probe suffers from incoherence. There may be problems in the prose and careless errors to the extent that the writer's

ideas are difficult to discern. The writer may jump from idea to idea with little care in developing each idea and the links between ideas. Paragraphs may contain a mixed bag of ideas.

Generally speaking, graduate students do not write below this level, so the “F” probe means you didn’t do it.

### **Performatation and Response**

At mid-term, each of you will make a 10-15 minute creative presentation (“performatation”) based on or in response to a Bakhtinian text or texts. The text(s) you choose should be one of potential use in your research paper; in other words, please consider this assignment as part of the process of your research project that culminates in the seminar paper. The goal is to employ the Bakhtinian ideas in the text in the design of your presentation such that the ideas you convey take the form of *events*. In other words, your presentation should not only be about the theory, but it should reflexively *enact* it—ergo “performatation.” We’ll reserve the HopKins Black Box for these, and you may use its resources (see me well in advance of the due date if you need orientation or help). Each of you will be assigned a partner to be your “outside eyes” and respondent. The respondent will formulate several discussion questions and comments in preparation for the discussion, as well as submit a short written response to me. As respondent, you’ll need to see rehearsal(s) and work with your partner in advance of the presentation date so you can be prepared.

### **Seminar Paper**

The seminar paper’s topic will be up to you, and you should meet with me at least once to talk about it. To prepare for this meeting you’ll propose your paper to the seminar on one of the dates indicated. Your goal in the seminar paper should be to think *with* Bakhtin—to work in the mode of what he called “creative understanding” to see if his ideas can help you to solve problems or illuminate issues in your own research. The seminar paper should result from reading, thinking, and writing from across the semester, and the performatation at midterm should also pertain. Although you should draw on the course texts and ideas and other scholarship that influences your thinking and/or is pertinent to your topic, the expectation is that your thinking is your own here, and that primarily you will be engaging Bakhtinian theory.

### **SCHEDULE**

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|------|---|
| 8/24 | <b>Introductions</b> to the seminarians and to Mikhail Bakhtin; discuss "Art and Responsibility," a very short essay we'll read aloud together, along with a Rilke poem   |
| 8/31 | <b>The Shape of a Career and the Global Concepts</b><br>PROBE 1. Reading: MBCP Introduction and Part I (Chapters 1-3, pages 1-119)<br><i>Suggested, on Moodle: Haynes Chapter 2, "Bakhtin's Historical and Intellectual Milieu" (22-44)</i>   |
| 9/7  | Labor Day Holiday; no class   |
| 9/14 | <b>The Act, Eventness, and Architectonics</b><br>PROBE 2. Reading: <i>Toward a Philosophy of the Act</i> ; focus on these sections: vii-xv (Michael Holquist's Foreword); 9-12 (anti-theoritism and the "unity of my answerability"); 40-42 and 46-49 ("non-alibis in Being"); 52-53 (forms of "special answerability"); and the analysis of Pushkin's poem, "Parting," 65-73; Emerson's "Bakhtin at 100" (on Moodle)<br><i>Suggested: first half of Haynes Chapter 3, "Answerability," 47-59, on Moodle.</i> |

- 9/21 **Selfhood I**  
 PROBE 3. Reading: MBCP Chapter 5, "Psychology: Authoring a Self"  
 From "Author and Hero": these sections (on Moodle): 12-17 (defining the author and hero "architecturally"); 22-36 ("excess of seeing" and self-consciousness); 47-52 ("inner" and "outer" bodies); 110-111 (spirit and soul); 126-131 (temporality and selfhood);  
*Suggested: Haynes second half of Chapter 3, "Answerability," 59-70.*
- 9/28 **Selfhood 2**  
 PROBE 4. Reading: "Author and Hero" 69-79 (on acting v. playing--begin with "Consider Oedipus"), on Moodle; Shirley Jackson's short story, "Louisa, Please Come Home"(Moodle); Suchy on selfhood in "Louisa," (Moodle), Emerson's "Keeping the Self Intact During the Culture Wars" (on Moodle)  
 PERFORMENTATION TEXT SELECTIONS DUE
- 10/5 **Polyphonic Authorship**  
 PROBE 5. Reading: MBCP Chapter 6, "Polyphony"; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 47-65 (the hero's subjectivity and self-consciousness in the polyphonic novel); 68-69 (polyphonic v. monologic novels); 78-100 ("The Idea in Dostoevsky")
- 10/12 **Metalinguistics**  
 PROBE 6. Reading: MBCP Chapter 4, "Metalinguistics"; *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 181-237 ("Discourse in Dostoevsky"); Suchy, "Sideshadowing and the Metalinguistics of Theatrical Performance" (Moodle)  
*Suggested: Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground*
- 10/19 **Performentations & Responses**
- 10/26 **Genres and Novelness**  
 Reading: MBCP Chapter 7, "Theory of Genres"  
 We'll split these up: "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" (DI 41-83) or "Epic and Novel" (DI 3-40) or "The *Bildungsroman*" (*Speech Genres* 10-59)  
 PEER RESPONSES DUE
- 11/2 **Novelistic Discourse**  
 PROBE 7. Reading: MBCP Chapter 8, "Prosaics"; Entire "Discourse in the Novel" essay in *The Dialogic Imagination*—Focus on these sections: 270-80 (unitary language v. heteroglossia and the poetic v. the novelistic word); 292-300 (poets v. novelists); 301-08 (heteroglossia in Dickens); 324-331 (heteroglossia and double-voicedness); 331-34 (the speaking person in the novel); 341-48 ("authoritative" v. "internally-persuasive" discourse); 355-366 (hybridization, stylization); 417-22 ("canonization" and "reaccentuation")
- 11/9 **The Chronotope**  
 SEMINAR PAPER PROPOSALS DUE.  
 Reading: MBCP Chapter 9, "The Chronotope"; "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" 84-85 (definitions); skip about in the description of the Greek Romance chronotope: 86-91; 94-95; 99-101; 110 and 158-166 (the fool); 250-58 (closing remarks and the author's chronotope); selections from Gary Saul Morson's *Narrative and Freedom*, (Moodle).

- 11/16      **Carnival**  
 Each of us will take a chapter—or we may do this in pairs (TBA)—of *Rabelais and His World* to summarize and present  
 Reading: MBCP Chapter 10, "Laughter and the Carnavalesque"  
 Suggested: Bruner, "Carnavalesque Protest" (Moodle)
- 11/23      **Speech Genres: Utterances, "Things fraught with the word";  
 znachenie and smysl; the superaddressee**  
 Reading (all in *Speech Genres*): "The Problem of Speech Genres" (60-100); "The Problem of the Text" (103-128); "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences (159-70)
- 11/30      **Great time, creative understanding, and a provocative mess**  
 Reading: "Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff" (*Speech Genres* 1-7); "From Notes Made in 1970-71" (*Speech Genres* 132-55); wrap up.

*This schedule is subject to changes to meet the demands of the class.*

**"...every meaning will have its homecoming festival"**

SEMINAR PAPERS ARE DUE at the scheduled final exam period, Monday, December 7 at 5:30 PM. At that time, you're all invited to a celebration during which you'll present your papers; following this, we might partake of more popular and potent Russian refreshments.