

# Theodore Dreiser in International Perspective

## Spring 2016

### Instructor Info:

Name: Ashley Squires, PhD

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Office: NES (Skolkovo) 207,

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Office Hours: M14:00-16:00 (Skolkovo) or by appointment

### Course Info:

Number: ENGL 375

Time/Day: W/F 13:40-15:00

Location:

### Course Description:

In 1927, Theodore Dreiser accepted an invitation to visit the Soviet Union during the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution. As a socialist whose characters fit a certain proletarian mold, Dreiser's books were approved reading material throughout the Soviet period, and he became one of many American artists and cultural figures to visit the great experiment during the regimes of Lenin and Stalin.

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to study a major American writer in-depth but from a somewhat unusual perspective. As we read three of his most famous novels, *Sister Carrie*, *The Financier*, and *An American Tragedy* we will consider two things: 1) How various international currents in philosophy, aesthetics and politics influenced his work, and 2) how that work has been received outside the borders of the United States, with a special focus on the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation today. Throughout the course, you will be contributing to original research on this topic.

### Required Texts:

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier*

Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*

(additional readings provided by the instructor)

### Assessment:

20% - Participation

40% - Short Papers and Translations (4 each)

40% - Final Project

### Attendance:

You are counted absent if you miss more than twenty minutes of any given class period. Regular and timely attendance is essential to doing well in this class. You are allowed 5 "free" absences for the entire semester. Each subsequent absence will result in the deduction of ½ a point from your final grade. If you have an extreme setback that requires you to miss multiple weeks of class and that you can document, you should come discuss it with me as soon as humanly possible.

### Make-up Work:

If a student receives a failing grade in the course, he/she may complete an additional writing project equivalent to the missed or failing assignment. This project must be

completed during the designated make-up period and will be assessed by a three-member panel, including the course instructor.

**Electronics:**

Laptops, tablets, and e-readers are permitted so long as they do not become a disruption. If I suspect that an electronic device is being used inappropriately, I will ask you to turn it off and put it away. Cell phones should be turned off and kept in your bag or pocket.

**Communication:**

Students should check their nes.ru accounts regularly, as important information about the course (emergency cancellations, deadline changes) may be communicated in that way. Email is also the best way to reach me, though you should understand that I generally do not respond to email after 22:00 or before 9:00. If you have a question about an assignment, you should not wait until the night before to ask.

**Schedule (subject to change):**

**Week 1** (*January 13 – 15*)

Introduction

**Week 2** (*January 18 – 22*)

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

W – Chapter 4 from Chilton, *English Studies from Beyond the Center*

F – Heller, “Salesman in Moscow”

**Week 3** (*January 25 – 29*)

Dreiser’s “Russian Diary”

W – First excerpt

F – Second excerpt; Short Paper 1 due

**Week 4** (*February 1 – 5*)

Dreiser’s “Russian Diary”

W – Third excerpt

F – Fourth excerpt; Translation 1 due

**Week 5** (*February 8 – 12*)

*Sister Carrie*

W – Chapters 1-7

F – Chapters 8-10; Short Paper 2 due

**Week 6** (*February 15 – 19*)

*Sister Carrie*

W – Chapters 11-17

F – Chapters 18-22; Translation 2 due

**Week 7** (*February 22 – 26*)

*Sister Carrie*

W – Chapters 23-30

F – Chapters 31-35; Short Paper 3 due

**Week 8 (February 29 – March 4)**

*Sister Carrie*

W – Chapters 36-43

F – Chapters 44-47

**Week 9 (March 7 – 11)**

*The Financier*

W – Chapters 1-7

F – Chapters 8-10; Translation 3 due

**Week 10 (March 14 – 18)**

*The Financier*

W – Chapters 11-17

F – Chapters 18-20; Short Paper 3 due

**Week 11 (March 21 – 25)**

*The Financier*

W – Chapters 21-27

F – Chapters 28-31; Translation 4 due

**Week 12 (March 28 – April 1)**

Consultation Week – no class

Read Chapters 32-45

**Week 13 (April 3 – 8)**

*The Financier*

W – Chapters 46-53

F – Chapters 54-59; Pre-writing reflection for Final Project due

**Week 14 (April 11 – 15)**

*An American Tragedy*

W – Book 1, Chapters 1-8

F – Chapters 9-12; Research Proposal for Final Project due

**Week 15 (April 18 – 22)**

*An American Tragedy*

W – Book 1, Chapters 13-19

F – Book 2, Chapters 1-4

**Week 16 (April 25 – 29)**

W – Book 2, Chapters 5-12

F – Book 2, Chapters 13-17

**Week 17 (May 2 – 6)**

Spring Holiday – no class

Read Book 2, Chapters 18-35

**Week 18 (May 9 – 13)**

*An American Tragedy*

W – Chapters 35-42

F – Chapters 42-47; Rough Draft of Final project due

**Week 19** (*May 16 – 20*)

*An American Tragedy*

W – Book 3, Chapters 1-7

F – Chapters 8-10

**May 27** – Final Projects due