## Summer 2016 International Master Jack Peters

Class number 60212 Slavic Dept. THH 261

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:50 PM Phone: 213-740-2735

### Chess and Critical Thinking

Slavic Languages and Literature 199 (2 units)

##### Course Objectives:

Chess is an intellectual activity that develops skills of critical thinking useful in many contexts. Chess occupies a unique position in the history of human endeavor at the convergence of art, sport and science. Since chess is governed by a well-defined set of rules, it is possible to make definite objective observations on the chessboard. Thus, chess provides an ideal reflection of many aspects of a society’s culture. This is particularly true of Russia and the former Soviet Union, where chess was not only a national pastime but also a vehicle for government propaganda. By analyzing significant games, this course will demonstrate how chess can be used 1) as a metaphor for other cultural activities and 2) to help us understand a particular culture more generally. We will explore different ways of thinking about chess with special attention to the Russian experience, before, during, and after the Soviet period. At the same time students will learn to play a stronger, more rewarding game of chess.

Requirements:

This class is graded CREDIT or NO CREDIT, without letter grades, based on the following:

Class participation, 20% Quizzes and tactical problems, 20%

Midterm examination, 30% Final examination, 30%

Course Materials:

Course reader

Students must have a tournament chess set with traditional Staunton design pieces

# Academic Policies:

Class participation is an important aspect of this course. Students are expected to attend all classes, and more than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. You are advised to follow the University's policy on academic integrity as articulated in SCampus.

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences.  Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>.  Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.  You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety of the whole USC community.  Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.  *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

## Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html> provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/>will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Chess and Critical Thinking – SLL 199**

All classes meet in **WPH 203.** Office hours are 1:00 p.m. to 1:50 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays in **THH 261.**

## June 30: Introduction to Chess

Explanation of rules and chess notation. Basic chess strategy and tactics. The benefits of studying chess, beyond the chessboard. Chess as a cultural activity. How the chess world is organized. Chess titles. The role of professional chess players. What students should expect from this course.

Illustrative games: Anderssen – Lange, 1851; Morphy – Consultants, 1858.

Read before next class: Algebraic Notation; Chess Symbols; Chess Tactics; The Value of the Pieces; Chess Terms.

Tactical problems, due July 5: X-Rays #3.

## July 5: Chess as a Science

Discovery and evolution of chess principles. The Romantic, Classical, Hypermodern, and Dynamic eras in chess. The contributions of Morphy, Steinitz, Tarrasch, Nimzovich and Alekhine.

Illustrative games: Trap in Three Knights Game; Tarrasch – Taubenhaus, 1903; Biyiasas – Dzindzichashvili, 1980; Tarrasch – Marco, 1898; Steinitz – Chigorin, 1894.

Read before next class: The Four Elements; World Champions; The Evolution of Chess Principles.

Tactical problems, due July 7: X-Rays #4.

## July 7: Chess as an Art Form

Defining beauty in chess. Brilliancy and best game prizes.

Illustrative games: Fleissig – Schlechter, 1895; Ed. Lasker – Thomas, 1912.

Read before next class: The Thinking Routine; Chess and Techniques of Problem Solving.

Tactical problems, due July 12: Pins #4.

## July 12: Chess and Techniques of Problem Solving

Efficiency in chess. Point count methods. Simple criteria for calculating positional advantages. Setting priorities. Juggling short range and long range goals. Splitting a problem into smaller units. Asking helpful questions.

Illustrative games: Vasiukov – Speelman, 1978; Augustin – Nunn, 1977; Adams – Torre, 1920; J. Lakdawala – Peters, 1984.

Read before next class: Chess and Intuition; Physiological Changes During Tournament Chess; Alekhine Blindfold; The Blindfold Game; Observation Point – What is Your Chess IQ?

Tactical problems, due July 14: Pin #5.

**July 14: The Psychology of Chess**

Ingredients of chess talent. Chess prodigies. “Chunks” of knowledge. Use of intuition. Surprise moves and sacrificial shock. Modern training methods for chess as a sport. Coping with tension and uncertainty.

Illustrative games: Lasker – Capablanca, 1914; Kasparov – Karpov, 1987.

Read before next class: How Chess Computers Work; A Computer World Champion? - interview of Botvinnik.

Tactical problems, due July 19: Discoveries #5.

**July 19: Chess Computers and Artificial Intelligence**

How machines play chess differently than humans. How masters use computers. The future of chess programs.

Illustrative games: Deep Thought – Kasparov, 1989; Kasparov – Deep Blue, 1996; Kramnik – Deep Junior 2000; Kramnik – Deep Fritz, 2002.

Tactical problems, due July 21: Discoveries #6.

**July 21: Midterm Examination Game**

All students will play the instructor in a simultaneous exhibition. Each student will write answers to questions about his game, with some guidance from the instructor. Completed exams are due July 26.

**July 26: Review of Midterm Games**

Midterm exams due! The class will review the most interesting midterm

games, trying to figure out what went right and what went wrong.

Tactical problems, due July 28: Double Attacks #5.

**July 28: Chess and Politics in Russia and the Soviet Union**

Origin of chess in Russia. Government support for chess. Using chess as propaganda. Soviet era training methods. The role of chess in the Cold War and Bobby Fischer’s impact. How the dissolution of the Soviet Union affected the chess world. Contemporary Russian professionals.

Illustrative games: Hoffman – Petrov, 1844; Boleslavsky – Ufimtsev, 1944; Smyslov – Reshevsky, 1946; Botvinnik – Portisch, 1968.

Read before next class: The Morals of Chess.

Tactical problems, due August 2: Double Attacks #6.

**August 2: History of chess in the United States**

Significant figures in American chess, from Benjamin Franklin to Hikaru Nakamura. The birth of the Swiss system and weekend tournaments. The U.S. Chess Federation and state chess organizations.

Illustrative games: Donald Byrne – Fischer, 1956; Marshall – Burn, 1905; Fischer – Petrosian, 1970; Fischer – Fine, 1963; Seirawan – Karpov, 1982.

Read before next class: Cooks, Forks, and Waiters; A Great Chess Movie.

Tactical problems, due August 4: Find the Best Capture #1.

**August 4: Final Examination Game**

All students will play the instructor in a simultaneous exhibition. Before August 9, each student will write answers to questions about his game, paying attention to the chess principles learned during this course.

## August 9: The Changing Image of Chess

Final exams due!

Portrayals of chess and chess players in literature, in movies, and on television. The influence of Morphy, Capablanca, Fischer, Kasparov, and the Polgar sisters. Current trends and predictions of their lasting effect.

Illustrative games: Capablanca – Fonaroff, 1918; Steinitz – Bardeleben, 1895; Serpik – Fritchle, 1999.