In the Department of German and Russian

Chair, Associate Professor Arne Koch (German)
Professor Julie de Sherbinin; Visiting Assistant Professor Amanda Murphy; Language Assistant Ekaterina Nasonkina

The major emphasizes Russian language, literature, history, and film in order that students develop a broad understanding of Russian culture in the past and the present. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities on campus, including guest lectures, film screenings, weekly Russian-table dinners or Russian teas, the Russian Poetry Slam, the annual Russian Student Research Symposium, and a program of cultural events.

Students majoring in Russian language and culture are expected to study in Russia for at least one semester. Instructors advise beginning students carefully about January, summer, and semester programs. The Colby in St. Petersburg program offers students highly individualized study of Russian language, literature, and history, a full cultural program, and residence with Russian families.

Requirements for the Major in Russian Language and Culture

1. A minimum of seven courses (three or four credits) numbered above Russian 127 in the Department of German and Russian, including Russian 426 or 428, and at least one course each in 19th- and 20th-century Russian literature or film in English translation (chosen from 231, 232, 237, 242).
2. One course in pre-20th-century Russian history and one course in 20th-century Russian history (usually History 227 and 228).
3. A seminar in Russian literature, conducted entirely in Russian (Russian 426, 428).

The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses offered toward the major. No requirements for the major may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Requirements for the Minor in Russian Language and Literature

1. Four introductory Russian language courses: Russian 125, 126, 127, 128.
2. Two courses in Russian culture in English translation: one course in 19th-century literature and one course in 20th-century literature or film (chosen from Russian 231, 232, 237, 242).
3. One course studying Russian cultural texts in the original (chosen from Russian 325, 326, 425, 426, 428).

Note: In special circumstances, course substitutions for major and minor requirements may be made after documented consultation with Russian program staff.

Russian majors and minors who are unable to study in Russia for a semester are strongly encouraged to attend a summer language program or spend a Jan Plan in Russia.

Russian majors and minors should broaden their study through courses related to Russian in other departments, particularly courses in history and government.

Course Offerings

RU113j  The Literature and Art of St. Petersburg  In St. Petersburg, Russia. Students read Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and other major St. Petersburg writers, and learn about the city's art, architecture, and history in classroom lectures and museum. Theater and concert performances are included. Residence is with a Russian family. Conducted in English; no knowledge of Russian required. Nongraded. Cost in 2016: $3,300. Required meetings on campus in the fall. Early registration required. Contingent on adequate enrollment.  Three credit hours.  DE SHERBININ

[RU120]  Russia in Film and Myth (in English)  A writing-intensive examination of the mechanisms and dynamics of subverting, dismantling, and recycling Soviet mythical structures as a part of new national myth-building that accompanies the dramatic social, economic, ideological, and demographic changes in post-Communist Russia. Students will combine intellectual inquiry into changing representations of social structures, ethnic relations, and gender roles in Russia with the development of the analytical skills and vocabulary necessary to think and write critically about film.  Four credit hours.  A, W1.

RU125f  Elementary Russian  Introductory course enables students to acquire a high degree of competence in elementary Russian through communicative learning and interaction. Acquisition of grammar and vocabulary through substantial engagement in repetition, memorization, role playing, and creative communication, reinforced by listening, readings, writing, and speaking assignments outside of the classroom. Cultural practices of Russians are studied through language.  Prerequisite: Russian 125 is prerequisite for 126.  Four credit hours.  DE SHERBININ
RU125J Elementary Russian I  The equivalent of first-semester Russian (125), can be taken as a Jan Plan in St. Petersburg, Russia. See Russian 113 for fee and details. Returning students may enroll in Russian 126.  Three credit hours.  DE SHERBININ

RU126s Elementary Russian II  Continuation of first-year introductory course enables students to acquire a high degree of competence in elementary Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 125.  Four credit hours.  MURPHY

RU127f Intermediate Russian  The second-year language sequence in Russian builds on the communicative abilities mastered in elementary Russian by active classroom engagement in conversation and vocabulary-building. Study of Russian culture through brief biographies of writers, watching film and Internet clips, and reading short fiction and poetry. The final stages of Russian grammar are introduced, practiced, and tested. Biweekly essay assignments increase writing skills, and oral tests allow students to develop fluency in speaking. Prerequisite: Russian 126.  Four credit hours.  MURPHY

RU128s Intermediate Russian  The second semester of second-year Russian aims to solidify knowledge of foundational grammar—cases, verbal conjugation and aspect, negation, participles, and gerunds—through classroom review and textbook assignments outside of class. Conversation in class focuses on vocabulary building based on readings of short fiction and cultural texts, and watching films and film clips. Five short written essays. Weekly quizzes, regular testing, and four oral exams help to develop fluency in speaking. Prerequisite: Russian 127.  Four credit hours.  MURPHY

RU135fs Conversation Group  An informal, weekly, small-group meeting appropriate for second-year students concurrently enrolled in Russian 126, 127, or 128. Topics for discussion include autobiography, education, leisure-time activities, travel, stores, and films. Conducted entirely in Russian. May be repeated for credit. Nongraded.  One credit hour.  NASONKINA

[RU174] Chekhov and the Short Story (in English)  Study of the American and British short story as it was influenced by the Russian master of the short story, Anton Chekhov, as well as short texts that engage questions raised by these writers regarding issues of social identity, ethnicity, and inclusion. Emphasizes intensive development of writing skills with a focus on how to craft and support a strong argument in a variety of informal genres and expository essay assignments. Authors include Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Sherwood Anderson, Eudora Welty, Bernard Malamud, Richard Wright, Alice Munro, and Raymond Carver.  Four credit hours.  L, W1.

[RU231] The Russian Novel: Interrogations (in English)  From its first mature manifestations in the early 19th century, the Russian novel has done far more than simply reflect Russian life or imitate the European novel. It has radically interrogated the novelistic genre itself, stretching and redefining its shape, and introducing innovative strategies for interrogating sociopolitical and philosophical issues. At once allured by and resisting European hegemony, Russia produced a canon of “greats” that every undergraduate should read, by authors including Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Bulgakov, and Nabokov. Conducted in English. First-year students welcome.  Four credit hours.  L.

RU232s Science Fiction in the Great Utopia (in English)  Bolshevik leaders, the architects of the 1917 Russian Revolution, attempted to implement an ambitious Socialist vision of establishing an earthly paradise through scientific and technological means. We explore the utopian dreams of revolutionaries, activists, and socialist realists—as well as the science fiction of dystopian nightmares— from roots in 19th-century radical political agendas, through the 20th century Soviet experiment, and into the post-Soviet years. Beyond the imaginative intellectual exploration and entertainment value of Western sci-fi, rich and varied East European sci-fi genres have been driven by ideology and linked to political and social realities. Conducted in English.  Four credit hours.  L.

RU237f Gamblers, Madmen, and Murderers (in English)  Selected stories and novels by world-renowned 19th-century Russian writers (Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Leskov, and Chekhov) read with reference to critical theory on narrative, gender construction, authority and subversion, and madness. What is the relationship between protagonists and the Russian state? Emphasizes skills in symbolic reading and the development of cogent arguments in speaking and writing, including work with drafts of papers. First-year students are welcome. Conducted in English; no knowledge of Russian required.  Four credit hours.  L.  DE SHERBININ

[RU242] Russian Cinema from Lenin to Putin (in English)  A survey of major periods, genres, and themes of Russia’s “most important art,” including Soviet Revolutionary montage cinema of the 1920s (Kuleshov, Vertov, Eisenstein, Dovzhenko), Stalinst “easterns” and propaganda musicals of the 1930s and ‘40s (Vasiliev brothers, Aleksandrov), the post-Stalinist cinematic revival of the 1950s and ’60s (Kalatozov, Tarkovsky, Muratova, Askoldov), and the post-Soviet search for new aesthetics, themes, and heroes (Balabanov, Bodrov, Zviagintsev, Sokurov). Topics include issues of gender, class, and ethnicity; the theory and aesthetics of Soviet and Russian filmmakers; the development of the Russian and Soviet film industry; issues of censorship, production, and film distribution. Conducted in English.  Four credit hours.  A, L.

RU325f Conversation and Composition (Russian Fairy Tales)  Topics change each year. Fall 2015: Introduces a range of fairy tales and their aesthetic and social value. Multidisciplinary approach to interpretation incorporates Internet materials, YouTube clips, and films to
supplement readings. Focus on the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, including grammar review. Conducted in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 128 or equivalent. Four credit hours. L. MURPHY

RU326s Conversation and Composition Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts. Topics change each year. Spring 2016: The Russian Revolution and Stalinism. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Internet materials, YouTube clips, and films supplement the readings. Conducted in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 325. Four credit hours. DE SHERBININ

RU335s Conversation Group An informal, weekly, small-group meeting for intermediate/advanced conversation practice in Russian. Topics accommodate student interests. Conducted in Russian. May be repeated for credit. Nongraded. Prerequisite: Russian 127 or equivalent. One credit hour. NASONKINA

RU346s Russian Poetry Weekly meetings focus on poems by one of the major 20th-century Russian poets, including Blok, Esenin, Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva, Pasternak, Mandelshtam, and Brodsky. Readings in Russian; discussion in English. May be repeated for credit. Prerequisite: Russian 127. One or two credit hours. DE SHERBININ

RU425f Folk Motifs: Art, Music, and Film Studies the deep and persistent cultural presence of folk motifs (fairy tale, legend, spells, iconography, lubok) in orchestral music, opera, ballet, visual artwork, cartoons, film, and literature. Short lectures convey varied scholarly approaches to interpretation of folk motifs, from structuralism to psychoanalysis and feminism. Comparative study of European and American counterparts. Advanced grammar and continued practice in oral and written expression. Internet, film, and audio materials supplement literary and visual texts. Conducted in Russian. May be repeated for additional credit. Prerequisite: Russian 325. Four credit hours. L. MURPHY

[RU426] The 19th-Century Russian Novel A seminar that analyzes one major 19th-century Russian novel, such as Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Conducted entirely in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 425 or 427. Four credit hours. L.

RU428s The 20th-Century Russian Novel A seminar that analyzes one major 20th-century Russian novel. In spring 2016: Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita, an imaginative novel that rewrites the Stalinist epoch through satire, black magic, and the Christ-Pilate narrative. Students present seminar papers in Russian at the Colby Bates Bowdoin Russian Research Symposium. Conducted entirely in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 425 or 427. Four credit hours. L. DE SHERBININ

RU491f, 492s Independent Study Individual projects in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work. Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor. One to four credit hours. FACULTY

RU497f Russia Today: Politics and Society This advanced, spoken Russian course is designed for senior majors or heritage learners ready to master lexicon and discourses of the social sciences—politics, sociology, economics, and contemporary hot-button issues—to move from an intermediate to intermediate-advanced ACTR (American Council of Teachers of Russian) rating. Emphasis is on vocabulary expansion, Internet research for position papers, and argumentation in verbal and written modes. Weekly sessions with Russian language assistant. Prerequisite: Russian 425. Two credit hours. NASONKINA, DE SHERBININ