In the Department of German and Russian

Chair, Associate Professor Arne Koch (German)
Professor Julie de Sherbinin, Assistant Professor Elena Monastireva-Ansdell; Visiting Assistant Professor Amanda Murphy; Language Assistant Polina Shilova

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, 427, 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 museums. Theater and concert performances are included. Residence is with a Russian family. Conducted in English; no knowledge of Russian required. Nongraded. Cost in 2017: $3,300, not including visa application (approximately $300) and optional weekend trip to Moscow ($350). Required meetings on campus in the fall. Early registration required. Contingent on adequate enrollment. Three credit hours. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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 I 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. Four credit hours. MURPHY
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.

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.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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.  SHILOVA

RU198s  The Russian Novel: Doctor Zhivago (in English)  Weekly meetings to analyze Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, an epic novel that treats historical events from 1905 through the 1920s and addresses topics of literary and cultural interest. Develops close reading and analytical skills. Readings and discussion in English. Nongraded.  One credit hour.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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.

RU232  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  Revolutionary Desire and Deed (in English)  Beginning with the Decembrist Uprising of 1825, Russian intellectuals, writers, and political activists became obsessed with the theory and practice of revolutionary resistance to serfdom, outdated social structures, and an unremitting monarchy. We trace the course of liberal dreams and intellectual ferment through radical dogmas, terrorist deeds, popular dissent, and the euphoric destruction of the "old" in favor of the "new" delivered by the October 1917 Russian Revolution. Texts include short stories, narrative poems, novels, memoirs, pamphlets, pageantry, and early Soviet film by authors from Dostoevsky to Figner to Lenin. First-year students welcome. Conducted in English. Revolutions theme course.  Four credit hours.  L.  MURPHY

RU242s  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, Stalinist "easterns" and propaganda musicals of the 1930s and '40s, the post-Stalinist cinematic revival of the 1950s and '60s, and the post-Soviet search for new aesthetics, themes, and heroes. Topics include issues of gender, class, and ethnicity; the theory and aesthetics of Soviet and Russian filmmakers; the development of the Russian and
RU297j  Destiny and Chance: The Cinema of Kieslowski (in English)  The renowned Polish auteur Krzysztof Kieslowski is best known in the West for his compassionate inquiries into modern society's spiritual and moral dilemmas in his award-winning French films Blue, White, Red, and The Double Life of Veronique. One of the central questions in Kieslowski's ouevre is that of providence. Is there a God who intervenes? Or are the events caused by blind chance? Examines the evolution of Kieslowski's views and art as he moves from realistic esthetics of documentary filmmaking to progressively more philosophical explorations of the inner life, developing a unique style and visual poetics to express issues of transcendence. Conducted in English.  Three credit hours.  A. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

RU325f  Conversation and Composition: Identity in 20th-Century Literature  Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts focusing on the quest for moral values and personal identity in Russia's turbulent 20th-century history: from Late Tsarism, through the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinism, to the post-Soviet era. Authors include Chekhov, Babel, Zoshchenko, Shalamov, and Petrushevskaia. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian.  Prerequisite: Russian 325 or equivalent.  Four credit hours.  L. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

RU335fs  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.  SHILOVA

RU346  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.

RU425f  Personal Identity in 20th-Century Russian Literature  Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts focusing on the quest for moral values and personal identity in Russia's turbulent 20th-century history: from Late Tsarism, through the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinism, to the post-Soviet era. Authors include Chekhov, Babel, Zoshchenko, Shalamov, and Petrushevskaia. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian. May be repeated once for additional credit.  Prerequisite: Russian 325.  Four credit hours.  L. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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 2017: Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, an epic novel that treats historical events from 1905 through the 1920s and addresses topics of literary and cultural interest. 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. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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