RUSSIAN

In the Department of German and Russian

Chair, Assistant Professor Alicia E. Ellis (English)
Assistant Professors Elena Monastireva-Ansdell and Luke Parker; Visiting Assistant Professor Anna Karpsheva; Language Assistant Kuzma Smirnov

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 or Russian teas, the Russian Poetry Evening, the annual Colby-Bowdoin-Bates 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.

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 (usually 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 (usually 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

[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 functions, grammar and vocabulary through substantial engagement in creative communication and role playing, reinforced by listening, readings, writing, and speaking assignments outside of the classroom. Cultural practices of Russians are studied through language. Four credit hours. KARPUSHEVA

RU125Jj Elementary Russian I Intensive introductory course equivalent to RU125f. Upon successful completion of the course, students may proceed to Elementary Russian II, RU126s. Enables students to acquire a high degree of competence 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. Three credit hours. KARPUSHEVA
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.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

RU127f  Intermediate Russian I  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. 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 II  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. Essay assignments increase writing skills, and oral tests allow students to develop fluence in speaking. Prerequisite:  Russian 127.  Four credit hours.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

[RU222]  Revolutionary Performances: Theater and the Energy of the Unspoken (in English)  Explores revolutionary developments in Eastern European performance, focusing on the theoretical and practical contributions of directors, actors, and playwrights to now-canonical practices and theories of performance art. The course approaches Eastern European theater as a revolutionary series of dynamic breakthroughs, whose avant-garde theatrical craft existed in a protracted tension between the catalytic possibilities of an embodied medium and the exhausted Soviet body politic. Taking advantage of the Lab format and the instructor's own professional actor training in Russia, we will pair viewings, primary documents and production histories with hands-on exercises. In English. Energy/Exhaustion Humanities Lab  Four credit hours.  L.

RU231s  Paint to Pen: Russian Art and Literature  Although the literary and visual arts, often referred to as the “sister arts” have been in close dialogue for centuries, this course focuses specifically on the literature-art symbiosis in Russia between 1800 and 1933. This course will cover a variety of artistic and literary movements including Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Futurism, Cubo-Futurism, Suprematism, and end with the establishment of Socialist Realism. Throughout the course, we will look at the work of Russian writers, painters, and filmmakers from each movement, noting the similarities and differences in their content and style. We will scrutinize the process of cross-fertilization between Russian literature and Russian art in the 19th-early 20th century.  Four credit hours.  L.

RU232s  All That is Solid Melts into Air: Modern Russian Literature  War, revolution, exile, terror. Creativity, fantasy, imagination, freedom. Despite enormous suffering, both in the Soviet Union and in Europe, Russian writers contrived to invent stories that parodied, questioned, undermined, and demythologized the violent workings of history and the state. We read some of the richest fiction of late-Tsarist, Soviet, and émigré literature, which continued the artistic traditions of the 19th century. Includes masterpieces by writers such as Bely, Zamyatin, Olesha, Bulgakov, Nabokov, and Solzhenitsyn. All readings in English.  Four credit hours.  L.

[RU237]  Devils and Inquisitors: Narrative and Self in the Russian Empire  Privileged and pampered, deprived and oppressed, insulted and injured. Only one is a real Dostoevsky novel; but 19th-century Russian authors really did agonize and revel in equal measure. They took advantage of the hand they had been dealt; renounced their wealth; reviled their fate; or contemplated suicide. Some did all four. From the Caucasus to the Steppes, from enchanted forests to somber bogs, educated Russians sought the self in encounters with the Other. We read the most pungent explorations of the individual: Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov. Warning: Contains duels, seduction, murder, betrayal, madness, and some drinking. Readings in English.  Four credit hours.  L.

RU242f  Make Russia Great Again: Post-Communist Cinema (in English)  In this study of films from the last three decades, we will attend to Russian directors’ focus on the past as a guide to the present and the future. We will proceed from these artists’ rigorous interrogation of the Soviet past in the 1990s to the increased revival and reintegration of Soviet-era policies, practices, and values in the 21st century. We will examine a variety of genres, including drama, the war film, comedy, fantasy, criminal thriller, historical epic, and the musical, as well as a range of social issues and changing representations of social structures, ethnic relations, and gender roles.  Four credit hours.  A, I.

RU325f  Conversation and Composition: Russian Literary and Folkloric Texts  Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts from the 19th-20th centuries. Topics change each year. Fall 2020: We will combine our investigation of Russian folkloric and literary texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries with grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian.
Prerequisite: Russian 128 or equivalent.  Four credit hours.  L.  KARPUSHEVA

RU326s  Conversation and Composition: Personal ID in 20th-Century Literature  Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts. Topics change each year. Spring 2021: The Search for Personal Identity in 20th-Century Russian Literature. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 325.  Four credit hours.  L.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

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.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

[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  Russian Literary and Folkloric Texts: An Exploration  Close reading and discussion of folkloric and literary texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries in their historical and cultural contexts. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 325/326 or consent of instructor  Four credit hours.  L.  KARPUSHEVA

[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.

RU427s  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 twentieth-century history: from Late Tsarism, through the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinism, and to the post-Soviet era. Authors include Chekhov, Babel, Zoshchenko, Shalamov, and Petrushevskaya. Grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian. Prerequisite: Russian 325 or 326.  Four credit hours.  L.  MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

[RU428]  The 20th-Century Russian Novel  A seminar that analyzes one major 20th-century Russian novel. In spring 2020: 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.

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