In the Department of German and Russian

Chair, Professor Raffeal Scheck (History)
Assistant Professors Elena Monastireva-Ansdell and Luke Parker; Language Assistant Ekaterina Nikiforova

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 museums. Theater and concert performances are included. Residence is with a Russian family. Conducted in English; no knowledge of Russian required. Nongraded. Required meetings on campus in the fall. Early registration required. Contingent on adequate enrollment. Cost is $3,300 plus $300 visa application fee. An optional weekend trip to Moscow costs $350. 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. Students are invited to participate in a planned trip to Moscow during Spring Break 2018 Four credit hours. PARKER
RU125J 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. Students are invited to participate in a planned trip to Moscow during Spring Break 2018. 

RU126s Elementary Russian II Continuation of first-year introductory course enables students to acquire a high degree of competence in elementary Russian. Students are invited to participate in a planned trip to Moscow during Spring Break 2018. 

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. 

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. 

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.

RU231f Spectacle of Modernity: Russian Fiction before Cinema (in English) Russian literature is a viewing machine, shaping how readers perceive the modern world. We read Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and the Symbolists, alongside critical discussions of visual culture and modernity. Focused on the Europeanized imperial capital St. Petersburg, our readings from the 1700s to 1917 explore how Russian writers reacted to the new technologies of the railroad, photography, and the cinematograph. Students learn to close read literary texts, analyze historical contexts, and critique visual materials. Includes hands-on projects at the Museum and guest lectures. All readings in English; no knowledge of Russian required. First-years and non-majors encouraged.

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.

RU233 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.

RU242s Ethnic Wars and Peace in (Post-)Soviet Cinema (in English) The impassioned relations Russia and other post-Soviet states share today, be it at war (Ukraine) or in peaceful alliance (Eurasian Union), originated in Soviet constructions of ethnicity. From Lenin's post-revolutionary cultivation of ethnic identities, we will proceed to Stalin's hierarchy of depoliticized "symbolic ethnicities," through non-Russian artists' interrogation of Russians' cultural dominance and celebration of political independence. Students will collaboratively map cinematic representations of such major policies as "friendship of the peoples," "national in form, socialist in content," "backward" and "enemy" nations, and "first among equals"; and cook a "friendship-of-the-peoples" meal. Conducted in English.

RU325f Conversation and Composition: Culture and Politics How do politics inform cultural production in contemporary Russia? How do some filmmakers use their artistic medium to bring visibility to the issues that "have no place to be seen" in society? We will combine our
Investigation of culture and politics with grammar review and continued practice in oral and written expression. Conducted in Russian. 
Prerequisite: Russian 128 or equivalent. Four credit hours. L. MONASTIREVA-ANSDELL

RU326s Conversation and Composition Reading and analysis of literary and historical texts. Topics change each year. Spring 2018: Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita. 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. 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. NIKIFOROVA

[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 Culture and Politics How do politics inform cultural production in contemporary Russia? How do some filmmakers use their artistic medium to bring visibility to the issues that "have no place to be seen" in Putin-era society? We will combine our investigation of culture and politics with 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 2018: Mikhail Bulgakov's 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. 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