RUSSIAN (Div I)

Chair: Professor Janneke van de Stadt


LANGUAGE STUDY

The department provides language instruction to enable students to acquire all five linguistic skills: understanding, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. Russian 101-W88-102 covers the basics of Russian grammar. Russian 151 through 252 offer additional instruction in grammar and vocabulary acquisition, and provide extensive practice in reading and conversation.

STUDY ABROAD

The department strongly encourages students who want fluency in Russian to spend a semester or year studying in Russia or one of the former Soviet republics. Students generally apply to one of several approved foreign study programs. Russian 152 or the equivalent and junior standing are normally prerequisite for study abroad.

FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

No, generally not until after a student returns and can provide course material for review (e.g. completed work such as exams, portfolios, lab reports and the like).

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

In addition to course title and description, we always have a conversation with our students about the actual work they completed since sometimes syllabi are vague, or not followed with complete thoroughness.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

Yes, four courses.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

No.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?

No, the only candidate for this would be the Senior Seminar, and it has never been an issue.

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

No.

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

None to date.

LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN TRANSLATION

The department regularly offers courses on Russian literature, culture, and politics in English for those students who have little or no knowledge of Russian, but who wish to become acquainted with Russian literary, cultural, and social history.

THE CERTIFICATE IN RUSSIAN

To enhance a student’s educational and professional profiles, the Certificate in Russian offers a useful tool for using the language in a wide variety of disciplines. The sequence of language and culture courses is designed to supplement a student’s major at Williams by enabling the student to expand their knowledge in a related field.

Students who enter Williams with previous training in Russian may substitute more advanced courses for all the 100-level courses; they can also be exempted from up to two of the required courses. Thus, in order to earn a certificate a student must take no fewer than five courses (including three courses in Russian) after enrolling at Williams. The student must achieve proficiency at the level of a B in RUSS 251 or the equivalent.

Required Courses
102
103 or 151
104 or 152
one additional course conducted in Russian

Elective Courses

at least one course on Russian cultural history

at least one course on Russian intellectual, political, or social history, or post-Soviet economics

THE MAJOR

The Russian major offers students an interdisciplinary approach to the intellectual and cultural history of Russia and the former Soviet republics. Students complete the major by combining courses in Russian language and literature with courses in history, political science, music, economics, and art. The major requires a minimum of ten courses of which at least six must be conducted in Russian, at least two must be at the 300-level, and one at the 400-level. In addition, students may take up to four related courses offered by other departments and taught in English.

Examples of appropriate courses in other departments are:

- HIST 140 Fin-de Siècle Russia: Cultural Splendor, Imperial Decay
- HIST 240 Muscovy and the Russian Empire
- HIST 241 The Rise of the Soviet Union
- HIST 438 Religion and Secularism in Modern Europe and Russia

Students selecting the major must typically complete Russian 104 or 152 (or the equivalent) by the end of the junior year. Majors will normally be expected to take the 400-level seminar offered in their senior year, even if they have previously taken another version of it. Russian majors may receive major credit for summer language study (in consultation with the department) and for as many as four courses taken during study abroad.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN RUSSIAN

At the beginning of the second semester of the senior year, students may nominate themselves to candidacy for the degree with honors. By the end of the junior year at the latest, however, they will have established in consultation with the department their qualifications for embarking on the project, the pattern of study to be followed, and the standards of performance.

Students earn a degree with honors by submitting a senior thesis (493-W31-494) of honors quality.

RUSS 102 (S) Elementary Russian II

An introduction to contemporary standard Russian, this course provides opportunities to acquire basic proficiency in all five language skills—listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and culture—through immersion, intensive use of authentic materials, and a strong emphasis on the spoken word in all class activities. Greater emphasis is placed on writing in the second semester. For students who already know some Russian, consultation with the department is required before registering for any Russian language course in the sequence 101 through 252.

Class Format: seminar, the class meets five times a week

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, completion of all assignments, quizzes, tests, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: students expressing an interest in the Russian major or certificate

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: students registered for RUSS 101-102 are required to attend and to pass the sustaining program during the winter study period; credit granted only if both semesters (RUSS 101 and 102) are taken

Distributions: (D1)
RUSS 140  (S) Crime and Punishment in Russian History  (WS)

Cross-listings:  HIST 140  RUSS 140

Secondary Cross-listing

For centuries, people have used crime in Russia and the Russian state's response to crime as lenses through which to examine Russian history and the Russian experience. This tutorial will follow in this tradition, but will adopt a more critical approach to question how or if crime and deviance can speak to the nature of the Russian state and its relationship to Russian society writ large. To answer this question, we will read a combination of original historical sources and recent scholarship that cover the entirety of Russian history: from the creation of the first legal code in Medieval Muscovy to the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago in 1962 and beyond. By semester's end, students will have developed an understanding of both the major historical actors and events in Russian criminal and legal history, and the intellectual debates that they sparked among contemporaries and present day scholars alike.

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: A student either will write and present orally a 3- to 5-page essay on the assigned readings or will be responsible for offering an oral critique of their partner's work

Prerequisites: first-year or sophomore standing; juniors or seniors with permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: First-Year Students, and then Sophomores who have not previously taken a 100-level seminar

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)  (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 140 (D2) RUSS 140 (D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Each student will write five 5-to-7-page papers on which the instructor will provide written feedback regarding grammar, style, and argument. Each student will write five 3-page critiques of their partners' papers. As the final assignment, each student will revise one of their five papers. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia

RUSS 151  (F) Continuing Russian I

This course develops all five skills--listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and culture--for students who have completed at least one year of college-level Russian. Coursework includes a systematic review of Russian grammar, as well as an examination of a variety of authentic materials from Russian and Soviet culture, current events, and daily life. Intermediate students will concentrate on expanding their vocabulary, while more advanced students will focus on reading and writing about unabridged texts in Russian. Students who complete the yearlong sequence of RUSS 151 and RUSS 152 should be well prepared to undertake study abroad in Russia and are encouraged to do so. Each year this course is custom-designed to meet the needs of those students who enroll, so that both intermediate and advanced students can benefit from taking RUSS 151 and/or RUSS 152 more than once, which may be done with the permission of the instructor.

Class Format: seminar; the class meets four hours a week, three with the professor and the fourth with the Russian Teaching Associate (time to be arranged)

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, completion of all assignments, quizzes, and a final exam

Prerequisites: completion of at least one year of college-level Russian (RUSS 101-102) or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 4-6
RUSS 152 (S) Continuing Russian II
This course develops all five skills—listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and culture—for students who have completed at least one year of college-level Russian. Coursework includes a systematic review of Russian grammar, as well as an examination of a variety of authentic materials from Russian and Soviet culture, current events, and daily life. Intermediate students will concentrate on expanding their vocabulary, while more advanced students will focus on reading and writing about unabridged texts in Russian. Students who complete the yearlong sequence of RUSS 151 and RUSS 152 should be well prepared to undertake study abroad in Russia and are encouraged to do so. Each year this course is custom-designed to meet the needs of those students who enroll, so that both intermediate and advanced students can benefit from taking RUSS 151 and/or RUSS 152 more than once, which may be done with the permission of the instructor.

Class Format: seminar, the class meets four hours a week, three with the professor and the fourth with the Russian Teaching Associate (time to be arranged)

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, completion of all assignments, quizzes, and a final exam

Prerequisites: RUSS 151 or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 4-6

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01 MWF 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm Vladimir Ivantsov

RUSS 203 (F) Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Rebels and Rebellion

Cross-listings: RUSS 203 COMP 203

Primary Cross-listing

"God save us from seeing a Russian revolt, senseless and merciless," famously proclaimed Alexander Pushkin. But is revolt always senseless? And if it's not, what is the meaning behind it? Throughout the nineteenth century, Russian literature gave different answers to these questions. In this course, students will familiarize themselves with the masterpieces of the Golden Age of Russian literature with a particular focus on rebellion understood in its broadest sense: philosophical, psychological, social, sexual, and aesthetic. We will examine the confrontation of the archetypal figure of Russian literature, the "superfluous man," with his milieu in Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, and Goncharov. The social and psychological revolt of another key figure—the "little man"—will be addressed in the works of Pushkin and Gogol. We will then discuss woman's sexual rebellion in Nikolai Leskov and the forms of spiritual rebellion in Leo Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Finally, we will examine the aesthetic revolution of Chekhov's plays, which challenged the principles of the old theater and marked the turn to new modernist drama. All readings are in English.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, writing assignments, written exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: students majoring or considering a major in Russian or Comparative literature

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)
RUSS 203 (D1) COMP 203 (D1)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies Electives

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01    TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm    Vladimir Ivantsov

RUSS 204 (S) Russia’s Long Revolution: a Survey of Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Russian Culture

Cross-listings: COMP 204 RUSS 204

Primary Cross-listing

With the one-hundredth anniversary of Russia’s October Revolution just behind us and the uncertain future of post-Soviet Russia unfolding before us, we can now take stock of the long century of revolutions in art, politics, and society that has brought Russia to Putin. This course takes a comprehensive look at twentieth- and twenty-first-century Russian culture, focusing on the literature, film, theater, and visual art that defined this transformative period in Russia’s modern history. Students will explore the radical aesthetic and political ideas that motivated this change, especially the utopian visions of the Russian avant-garde and early-Soviet Marxists, as well as key works that examine the tragic consequences of the failures of these revolutionary experiments for those who, willing or not, became their active participants. As we move on to the late-Soviet years, we will consider the emergence of a new, “conceptualist” avant-garde, which attempted to dismantle Soviet ideology and the totalitarian logic they attributed to the historical avant-garde using postmodern aesthetics. We will conclude the course by surveying literature, film, and performance that capture the traumatic experience of Russia’s transition to market capitalism in the 1990s and its slide into authoritarian “stability” under Putin. Readings include works by Babel, Bulgakov, Platonov, Pasternak, Nabokov, Solzhenitsyn, Prigov, Pelevin, Sorokin, and recent Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich. Films screenings include the cinema of avant-garde masters Eisenstein and Vertov. All readings are in English.

Class Format: mixed lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, discussion leading, papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: declared or prospective Russian or Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 204 (D1) RUSS 204 (D1)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies Electives

Not offered current academic year

RUSS 213 (F) Why do Pussies Riot and What is “Homosexual” Propaganda? Gender and Sexuality in Putin’s Russia (DPE)

Cross-listings: GBST 213 RUSS 213 WGSS 214 COMP 257

Primary Cross-listing

Since Vladimir Putin’s rise to power, the media has highlighted events in Russia that at first glance resemble oddly sexualized jokes. At the same time that the Kremlin has reinstated authoritarian policy reminiscent of the Soviet Union, the Western press has chronicled Putin’s topless vacations in Siberia, protests by the feminist collectives Pussy Riot and Femen, a 2011 ban on women’s lacy underwear, federal legislation from 2013 prohibiting “homosexual” propaganda, and a 2017 court decision that outlawed a meme of Putin as a “gay clown.” This course examines the Putin regime’s ongoing attempts to police gender expression and private sexual behavior, as well as how Russian citizens’ performance of gender and sexuality has changed in the past twenty years. We will consider gender and sexuality as distinctive features of Putinism, which have contributed to a biopolitical turn in official policy and inspired resistance and protest among Russian feminists and queers. All readings will be in English, and all films with have English subtitles.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation in class discussions, several response papers, two short papers (3-5 pages each), and a final project
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The course engages in cultural comparison, explores how power and privilege are allocated differently in post-Soviet Russia than in the West, and critically theorizes contemporary Russian culture and discourse.

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies Electives

Fall 2019
SEM Section: 01    MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Julie A. Cassiday

RUSS 219  (F)  Cults of Personality  (WS)
Cross-listings: RUSS 219  COMP 215
Primary Cross-listing

First uttered by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, the phrase "cult of personality" was formulated to discredit the hero-worship that accompanied Joseph Stalin's iron-fisted rule of the Soviet Union. Since then, the phrase has gained currency as a condemnation of a variety of seemingly all-powerful leaders in oppressive political regimes, including China's Mao Zedong, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, and the ruling Kim family in North Korea. In this course, we will examine the phenomenon of the cult of personality from a variety of perspectives, beginning with the cult surrounding Stalin and ending with that of Vladimir Putin. Our course material will encompass scholarship from multiple disciplines, including history, sociology, political science, cultural and media studies, as well as artistic expression typically labeled propaganda in literature, the visual arts, and film. Although our course will begin in the Soviet Union and end in contemporary Russia, we will explore how the cult of personality has been adapted and updated for different cultural and political purposes in fascist Germany, Italy, and Spain, China, Iran, North Korea, and Cuba. All readings will be in English, and all films will have English subtitles.

Class Format: Tutorial
Requirements/Evaluation: completion of weekly reading and writing assignments, as well as active engagement during tutorial sessions
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: first-year students
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)  (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
RUSS 219 (D1) COMP 215 (D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will be writing papers (5-6 pages) every other week and receiving detailed feedback on their writing with the expectation that they will identify areas in need of improvement and work on these throughout the semester. The course will also require that students write one paper together with their tutorial partner and that they rewrite two different papers, one at midterm and the other at the end of the term.

Fall 2019
TUT Section: T1    TBA     Julie A. Cassiday

RUSS 222  (S) Russian Literature and European Existentialism
Cross-listings: COMP 270  RUSS 222

Primary Cross-listing

Existentialism was a highly influential movement in twentieth-century European literature and thought. Nowadays the terms existentialism and existentialist are broadly used to describe the worldview and literary style of writers and thinkers as different as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leonid Andreyev, Martin Heidegger, Franz Kafka, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Reflecting the shift to irrationalism in early twentieth-century philosophy and psychology, as well as the global cataclysms of the twentieth century, existentialism focuses on the problem of human alienation in the modern world, suggesting ways of overcoming it. In this course addressing the key concepts of existentialist philosophy (angst, borderline situation, the absurd, freedom), we will examine the origins of the existentialist worldview in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russian literature (Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Leonid Andreyev); read and discuss existentialist texts by Kafka, Albert Camus, and Sartre; and look at the existentialist legacy in contemporary Russian and Western culture, including rock music. All readings are in English.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, 3 writing assignments, oral presentation, final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: students majoring or considering a major in Russian or Comparative Literature

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 270 (D1) RUSS 222 (D1)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

RUSS 232  (S)  Phantasmagoria, Madness, and the Absurd in Russian Literature and Film

Cross-listings: RUSS 232  COMP 271

Primary Cross-listing

In one of Nikolai Gogol's most famous stories, a man wakes up one day to find that his own nose has left his face and taken on a life of its own. This situation, which we might label bizarre or absurd, just as easily shows how reality often fails to meet our expectations and even suggests that the story's leading character might have gone mad. But what then is insanity? Likewise, one of Dostoevsky's socially marginal characters contemplates the fact that only sick people see ghosts, which, in his opinion, "only proves that ghosts cannot appear to anyone but sick people, not that they themselves do not exist." This course aims to analyze the rich tradition, typified by Gogol and Dostoevsky, of the absurd, the fantastic, and madness in Russian literature and film of the 19th-21st centuries. Addressing the aesthetic, historical, and political circumstances that nurtured this tradition in Russian literature and cinema, our course material will explore new dimensions of reality, point out the many paradoxes and absurdities of human existence, and question our perceptions, as well as the assumption that we are sane. Close analysis of literary and cinematic texts will lead us to a broader discussion of the relationship between reality and representation, as well as the notions of the absurd and madness. Authors/directors will include Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Andrey Tarkovsky, and Kira Muratova, among others. All readings will be in English, and all films will have English subtitles.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance and participation; two analytical papers (3-5 pages); leading class discussion; a creative assignment; an oral presentation; a final paper (6 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
RUSS 240  (S)  The Soviet Experiment

Cross-listings:  HIST 240  RUSS 240

Secondary Cross-listing

In 1917, the former Russian Empire became the site of the world's first socialist revolutionary government and the twentieth century's largest multiethnic state. Over the next quarter century, the Soviet Union witnessed the rise of one of history's most violent dictatorships, an apocalyptic war that claimed upwards of 26 million lives, and communist expansion into Eastern Europe and the decolonizing world. It also became the site of vibrant and optimistic utopian cultural projects, flights into space, bitter and hilarious political satire, and a society that was, for the most part, economically equal. Then in 1991, everything fell apart. This course will survey the origins, life, and collapse of the Soviet Union, paying particular attention to the ideas that shaped its development, the mark its architects' and leaders' policies left both at home and abroad, and the impact it had on the people who lived and didn't live to tell the tale.

Class Format:  lecture

Requirements/Evaluation:  evaluation based on active class participation, two short essays (3-5 pages), one in-class midterm, and one take-home final exam

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  40

Enrollment Preferences:  History Majors

Expected Class Size:  15-20

Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option

Distributions:  (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 240  (D2) RUSS 240  (D1)

Attributes:  HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia

RUSS 241  (F)  Tsarist Russia: State and Society between Europe and Asia

Cross-listings:  HIST 241  RUSS 241

Secondary Cross-listing

Russia. The name alone evokes wonder, fear, romance, and history itself. Over the past ten centuries, the land that we now call the Russian Federation has witnessed dramatic transformations that underwrote its transition from feudal backwater to global superpower. Its journey from tribalism to imperialism, feudalism to autocracy, agrarianism to industrialization, monarchism to parliamentarianism, Orthodoxy to revolutionary atheism left a mark not just on the collective Russian conscious, but on a world that has grown accustomed to viewing Russia as a test case for ideas, projects, and processes both fortuitous and tragic. How did Russia become the site of such a diverse array of political, social, economic, and cultural experiments? In what ways did they contribute to the formation and exercise of Russian political power? How did they contribute to the creation of a “Russian” identity, and to what effect for Russian citizens? This course will seek to answer these questions through a survey of Russian history from its founding in Kievan Rus’ in the 9th century to the October Revolution of 1917.

Class Format:  lecture and discussion

Requirements/Evaluation:  class attendance and participation, 3 five page papers, ~50 pages of reading a week, one "in-class" midterm exam and one "in-class" final exam

Prerequisites:  none, open to all students
RUSS 248  (F)  Altering States: Post-Soviet Paradoxes of Identity and Difference  (DPE)

Cross-listings: RUSS 248  GBST 247  SOC 248

Secondary Cross-listing

Critics and apologists of Soviet-style socialism alike agree that the Soviet ideology was deeply egalitarian. Putting aside for a moment the very reasonable doubts about how justified this perception actually was, it is still worth asking, how did people who lived in the world in which differences in rank, class, gender or ethnicity were not supposed to matter, make sense of their postsocialist condition, one in which new forms of difference emerged, and old ones assumed greater prominence? And how do these encounters with difference impact current events, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the persistent tensions between East and West Germans? This tutorial will examine new dilemmas through ethnographic studies and documentary films that aim to capture in real time the process of articulating and grappling with newly discovered divides. We will focus especially closely on Russia, but will also read studies on East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine. This course fulfills the DPE requirement by exploring comparatively the ways in which people in different countries made sense of the social, cultural and political heterogeneity of the postsocialist condition.

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: 5-page paper every other week, comments on the partner's paper in alternate weeks

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology, Sociology, and Russian majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)  (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 248 (D1) GBST 247 (D2) SOC 248 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students will learn to identify and interrogate processes of social differentiation and exclusion as they take place across Russia and Eastern Europe. We will also train ourselves to identify parallels, as well as differences, between responses to the social and economic uncertainty ushered by the fall of socialism, and the discontents triggered by similar conditions closer to home.

Not offered current academic year
RUSS 252 (S) Continuing Russian II

The same course as RUSS 152 but for students at the advanced level. See RUSS 151/152 for full course description.

Class Format: seminar, the class meets four hours a week, three with the professor and the fourth with the Russian Teaching Associate (time to be arranged)

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, completion of all assignments, quizzes, and a final exam

Prerequisites: RUSS 251 or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: none

Expected Class Size: 4-6

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 MWF 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm Vladimir Ivantsov

RUSS 275 (S) Russian and Soviet Cinema

Cross-listings: COMP 287 RUSS 275

Primary Cross-listing

In this course, we will survey over a hundred years of Russian and Soviet film to explore how cinema has reflected and, at times, created the country's most important historical events and cultural myths. We will pay close attention to Russian filmmakers' varied reactions to Hollywood cinema, as well as to the lively body of cinema theory that these reactions generated. Our survey will begin in the pre-Revolutionary era and include representative films from the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, Stalinism and World War II, the Thaw and Stagnation, Glasnost, and the Putin era. In addition to studying films by auteur filmmakers, such as Sergei Eisenstein, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Aleksandr Sokurov, we will watch movies made for the masses, which have helped to form Russians' understanding of their country and themselves. All readings will be in English and all films will be viewed with English subtitles

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: completion of all viewing and reading assignments, active participation in class discussions, two short papers, and a final research project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 287 (D1) RUSS 275 (D1)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies Electives

Not offered current academic year
RUSS 286  (F)  Russian Politics and Foreign Policy under Vladimir Putin

Cross-listings:  PSCI 286  RUSS 286

Secondary Cross-listing

In 1939, Winston Churchill has famously characterized Russia as a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. In the 75 years that followed, Russian politics has continued to defy expectations and conventional explanations. The collapse of the Soviet Communist dictatorship in 1991 has caught most observers by surprise, and has led Russia on a path of political and economic liberalization of an unprecedented scope. But despite the initial optimism, these processes produced a political and economic system characterized by authoritarianism and crony capitalism. Why did Russia follow this particular trajectory? Why did Russia's political and economic transition fail to produce the intended results? What are the factors that gave rise to and sustained Vladimir Putin's system? Why did Putin's Russia adopt an aggressive posture toward its neighbors and the West? And as Russia once again faces extraordinary challenges--marked by the wars in Ukraine and Syria, the economic crisis and social tensions at home, and the looming issue of Vladimir Putin's succession in 2024--what lessons can we draw for the future? This course will explore the key perspectives on these issues. The first part of the course will provide a concise overview of Russia's historical background, the roots of the communist collapse, and the country's subsequent trajectory. The second part of the course will look into the rise of the Putin regime, its key pillars, and its contradictions. The third part of the course will survey the trajectory of Russia's foreign and security policy under Vladimir Putin. This segment will explore the defining events and processes that led to the decline in the relations between Russia and the West, ranging from the Iraq war and the colored revolutions in East Europe, to the annexation of Crimea and the Russian meddling in the US elections. It will also explore how the eroding domestic legitimacy of the Putin regime drives its aggressive behavior abroad.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation:  Analytic Paper (6-8 page), Book Review (8-10 page), final exam

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  24

Enrollment Preferences:  none

Expected Class Size:  18

Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option

Distributions:  (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PSCI 286 (D2)  RUSS 286 (D1)

Attributes:  PSCI Comparative Politics Courses  PSCI International Relations Courses

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01  TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Aleksandar Matovski

RUSS 305  (F)  Dostoevsky: Navigating Through the Underground

Cross-listings:  COMP 305  RUSS 305

Primary Cross-listing

In this course, students will acquaint themselves with Dostoevsky's oeuvre--from his early masterpieces to his artistic testament, The Brothers Karamazov. The key concept through which we will approach Dostoevsky's various writings will be the underground--a powerful metaphor of spiritual decay, angst, resentment, and rebellion against the whole of creation shared by many Dostoevsky characters, from the anonymous protagonist of Notes from Underground, to Raskolnikov (Crime and Punishment), to all the brothers Karamazov. Inheriting Dostoevsky's own existential doubts, his major characters strive to find an exit from their various "undergrounds," some with and some without success. What are the philosophical, psychological, and artistic foundations of the underground? How does one end up there in Dostoevsky's view? And what is the way out? These are just a few of the questions to be answered as we explore the primary genius of Russian literature. All readings are in English.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation:  attendance and participation in discussion, one 1-page writing assignment, two research papers, digital project, final project (paper)

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  none
**RUSS 306 (S) Tolstoy and the Meaning of Life**  
**Cross-listings:** RUSS 306 COMP 306  
**Primary Cross-listing**  
This course examines the works of the great Russian writer Lev Tolstoy, whose stories and novels represent a life-long quest to uncover the meaning of life. Readings include Tolstoy's two major novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, as well as several shorter works, such as *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and *Hadji Murad*. We will also examine Tolstoy's aesthetic and didactic writing so that we understand precisely how Tolstoy answers life's most troubling questions, as well as what role artistic representation plays in these answers. *All readings will be in English.*  
**Class Format:** seminar with some lecturing  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** timely completion of all reading assignments, active class participation, three short papers, and a final research project  
**Prerequisites:** none  
**Enrollment Limit:** none  
**Expected Class Size:** 15  
**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D1)  
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:  
RUSS 306 (D1) COMP 306 (D1)  
**Attributes:** GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies Electives  

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**RUSS 331 (S) The Brothers Karamazov**  
**Cross-listings:** ENGL 371 COMP 331 RUSS 331  
**Primary Cross-listing**  
Widely hailed as one of the greatest novels ever written, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* contains a series of enigmas, not the least of which is precisely who murdered the Karamazov father. In addition to exploring the shared guilt of all four of the brothers Karamazov in the crime of patricide, Dostoevsky poses the most probing questions of his day: Are families tied together merely by blood or by deeper spiritual bonds? Is religious faith possible in an age of reason, science, and technology? Can man's earthly laws ever carry out divine justice? Is humanity prepared to bear the burden of responsibility that comes with freedom? This tutorial will spend an entire semester exploring Dostoevsky's masterwork, and we will read a variety of secondary sources alongside *The Brothers Karamazov*, including history, philosophy, and literary theory. Our goal will be to understand Dostoevsky's answers to these so-called "accursed questions" through the unique artistic form of *The Brothers Karamazov.*  
**Class Format:** tutorial  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** evaluation will be based on completion of weekly reading and writing assignments, as well as active engagement during tutorial sessions  
**Prerequisites:** at least one 200-level literature class  
**Enrollment Limit:** 10  
**Enrollment Preferences:** students majoring or considering a major in Russian, Comparative Literature, or English
RUSS 337 (F) After Stalin: Soviet History from "Thaw" to Collapse

Cross-listings: RUSS 337 HIST 337

Secondary Cross-listing

When Joseph Stalin died in 1953, the crowd of people that gathered to view his embalmed body on Moscow's Red Square grew so large, it provoked a stampede that killed nearly 500 people. This moment embodies the uncertainty and challenges that ordinary citizens and state officials faced when they imagined what a post-Stalin future might bring to the Soviet Union. For all the suffering that his rule infected on the Soviet people, Stalin remained for many a reliable constant in a life dominated by revolution and war. Stalin's successors faced a classic dilemma: how to reform and breathe new life into a system without disturbing the foundation it needs to stand intact? Despite superpower status and some stunning achievements at home and abroad, the fault lines in Soviet society ran deep. This course will consider the experiences that grew out of the uncertainty that emerged after Stalin's death. We will examine how the "Soviet experiment" evolved - politically, legally, socially, culturally - once the last of the original Bolshevik revolutionaries left the Kremlin. What opportunities did the post-Stalin moment open up for political elites, members of the professional class, the intelligentsia, and citizens from Soviet republics and satellite states? What obstacles did they face, and how successful were they at overcoming them? In what ways did the spirit of the October and Stalinist Revolutions persist or erode from 1953 until 1991? Most importantly, how did the "children of the revolution" participate in, check out of, or contest the socialist system whose birth their parents witnessed first hand? After all, more generations experienced the Soviet Union without Stalin as their leader than generations who only knew a life with the "Vozhd" in power. Through secondary and primary source readings, we will attempt to recover the voices of those whose lives both shaped and were shaped by the nearly four decades after Joseph Stalin's death.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation based on active class participation, three short essays (2-3 pages), and one long essay (8-10 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: History Majors

Expected Class Size: 15-20

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 337 (D1) HIST 337 (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01 W 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm Yana Skorobogatov

RUSS 341 (S) Collapse: The Fall and Afterlife of the Soviet Union

Cross-listings: RUSS 341 HIST 341

Secondary Cross-listing

On Christmas Day 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev ended two things: his tenure as President of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union itself. The following day, Boris Yeltsin entered office as the first president of the Russian Federation, and without delay, began to institute radical economic and social reforms. Under his watch, the country privatized national industry, cut the state budget, and courted foreign multinational businesses. The world most commonly used to describe Russia in the early 1990s is "disappear": money, jobs, food, and people. The very things that Soviet-style socialism had
committed itself to providing for started to vanish as a result of invisible and market forces. This course will explore what emerged in the spaces left empty after Soviet-style socialism's demise in three parts. The first part of the semester will examine the origins of the Soviet Union's collapse and its breakup into fifteen successor states. The second part of the semester will survey the political, economic, and social processes that followed the collapse. Finally, the third part of the course will focus on Putin's ascendancy to the presidency and its consequences for Russian citizens at home and Russia's image abroad. By semester's end, students will have acquired the content and analytical literacy to place present-day Russia in its specific historical context and identify multiple sources of causation that may help explain Russia's transition from socialism to capitalism to Putinism during the past quarter century.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** evaluation based on active class participation, three short essays (3-5 pages), and one long essay (10-12 pages)

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 25

**Enrollment Preferences:** History Majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15-20

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 341 (D1) HIST 341 (D2)

**Attributes:** HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia

Not offered current academic year

RUSS 401 (F) Senior Seminar: The Myth of Lenin

Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live Forever! So proclaimed the Soviet slogan, pointing out the mythological status of the Communist leader. This course, conducted in Russian, aims to demonstrate that the Lenin myth was so powerful that it survived the collapse of the state and ideology he created. We will explore the development of the myth and cult of Lenin by way of a variety of texts and media, from classical poems by Mayakovsky, to children's stories, folklore, conceptualist art, and Soviet and post-Soviet film.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation in class discussions, three written essays, oral presentation, final creative project

**Prerequisites:** RUSS 202, or equivalent, or permission of the instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 8

**Enrollment Preferences:** Russian majors

**Expected Class Size:** 4

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01    TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm     Vladimir Ivantsov

RUSS 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Russian

Russian senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

**Class Format:** independent study

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

Fall 2019

HON Section: 01    TBA     Julie A. Cassiday
RUSS 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Russian
Russian senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).
Class Format: independent study
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2020
HON Section: 01 TBA Julie A. Cassiday

RUSS 497 (F) Independent Study: Russian
Russian independent study.
Class Format: independent study
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Fall 2019
IND Section: 01 TBA Julie A. Cassiday

RUSS 498 (S) Independent Study: Russian
Russian independent study.
Class Format: independent study
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2020
IND Section: 01 TBA Julie A. Cassiday

Winter Study

RUSS 16 (W) Russian Spies in DC: FX's The Americans
From the beginning of the Cold War to the present, the presence of Russian intelligence operatives in the nation's capital has been the subject of fascination and speculation. In this course, we will examine the FX Channel's series The Americans, in light of both the popular imaginary about Russian spies in the United States and the actual history of intelligence wars in Washington. How does the series represent the lives of Russian political and intelligence operatives during the Reagan presidency, and how does it interpret the larger events of the Cold War in its final decade? Readings will draw from accounts on both side of the Cold War, focusing on signature developments such as Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union, the covert biological weapons programs, and Soviet attempts to build relations with progressive movements in the United States. Prior to the beginning of the course, students are expected to view the first two seasons of the series. Adjunct Instructor Bio: Alexandar Mihailovic has taught at Bennington College, Williams College, and Brown and Columbia Universities. His books include "Corporeal Words: Mikhail Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse," "Mitki: The Art of Postmodern Protest in Russia," and the edited volume "Tchaikovsky and His Contemporaries: A Centenary Symposium." He has also published articles about cultural relations during the Cold War, African-American studies, art history, and cinema studies.
Requirements/Evaluation: 10-page paper and final project or presentation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: discretion of the instructor
Grading: pass/fail only
Materials/Lab Fee: $22
RUSS 25 (W) Williams in Georgia

Cross-listings: SPEC 25 RUSS 25

Primary Cross-listing

Williams has a unique program in the Republic of Georgia, which offers students the opportunity to engage in three-week-long internships in a wide variety of fields. Our students have helped in humanitarian relief organizations like Save the Children, interned in journalism at *The Georgian Times*, taught unemployed women computer skills at The Rustavi Project, documented wildlife, studied with a Georgian photographer, done rounds at the Institute of Cardiology, and learned about transitional economies at the Georgian National Bank. In addition to working in their chosen fields, students experience Georgian culture through museum visits, concerts, lectures, meetings with Georgian students, and excursions. Visit the sacred eleventh-century Cathedral of Svetitskhoveli and the twentieth-century Stalin Museum, see the birthplace of the wine grape in Kakheti, and explore the region where Jason sought the Golden Fleece. Participants are housed in pairs with English-speaking families in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital city. At the end of the course, students will write a 10-page paper assessing their overall trip experience. Adjunct Instructor Bio: Vladimir Ivantsov holds a PhD in Russian Studies from McGill University (Canada). Prior to coming to Williams, he taught at McGill University and St. Petersburg State University (Russia). His research interests cover a broad spectrum of topics, including Dostoevsky, existentialism, and rock and pop culture. He published a book on the contemporary Russian writer Vladimir Makanin.

Requirements/Evaluation: 10-page paper
Prerequisites: none; knowledge of Russian or Georgian is not required
Enrollment Limit: 8
Enrollment Preferences: interested students must attend an informational meeting and submit a short essay about their interest in the course
Grading: pass/fail only
Materials/Lab Fee: $2,922

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SPEC 25 RUSS 25

Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses  TRVL Winter Study Travel Course
RUSS 99 (W) Independent Study: Russian

Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study
Grading: pass/fail only