

# RUSSIAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES

## Overview and Contact Information

From Pushkin to Putin, from Balanchine to Lake Baikal, from caviar to commissars, from yurts to baba yaga—Russia and Eurasia offer a glittering array of riches waiting to be discovered. Mount Holyoke's Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies invites you to join with us in our exploration of the vast area of the world that we engage in on a daily basis. Through course work in language, literature, history and politics, our students gain a multidimensional understanding of the diverse peoples and cultures that inhabit this region—its past, its present, as well as its prospects for the future.

As the world reconfigures itself at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a reenergized Russia will play a major role in shaping the political and economic futures of Europe and Asia, and resolving issues of global importance like resource use, climate change, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. Indeed, Mount Holyoke graduates who have focused on Russian studies can be found working in nongovernmental organizations in Washington D.C., embassies in Russia and Europe, the oil fields of Siberia, as well as in journalism and business.

Beyond the purely pragmatic, Russia's fundamental cultural achievements—in literature, art, music, theatre, and film—are of permanent value and interest to students of the humanities. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Akhmatova and Pasternak, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, Vertov and Eisenstein, Pavlova and Baryshnikov, Gergiev and Rostropovich—the Russian legacy of achievement is profound, and continues to be a living presence in the intellectual, spiritual, and creative life of humanity. Our commitment to this legacy is at once intensely intellectual and deeply personal: until his death in 1996, Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Brodsky was counted among our colleagues.

The Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies is unique among MHC's language departments in that its faculty includes both specialists in language, literature, and culture and specialists in history and politics. Various trained in Russia, Europe, and the United States, we strive to bring a balance and a perspective to our subject area that is challenging, engaging, thoughtful—and never dull.

For students with a strong interest in the non-Russian nations of Eurasia, a working knowledge of Russian and a grasp of Russia's historical role on the Eurasian continent are essential to understanding the peoples and places that have lived or continue to live under Russian influence (the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia). The Mount Holyoke Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies stands out among Russian departments in the Five Colleges in that it includes a specialist who is uniquely qualified to interpret events in Eurasia beyond the borders of Russia itself (Jones). Our students study not only in European Russia, but in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Siberia, and experience the multicultural expanse of Eurasia.

Beyond regular course work, the department sponsors spring and fall festivals of Russian food, a film series, lectures, and other events (like building a Mongolian yurt).

## Study Abroad

Study abroad is highly recommended and may be used toward fulfillment of major requirements.

There are numerous summer, semester, and yearlong programs offered for undergraduates. Since admission to many Russian study abroad programs is competitive, students are advised to consult early in their academic careers with members of the department. We have had great success in getting our students into these competitive programs.

Opportunities to study the non-Russian languages of Eurasia are rapidly expanding. Summer immersion programs and summer and academic-year programs abroad offer instruction in Armenian, Georgian, Azeri, Uzbek, Tajik, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Estonian, and others. In some cases, applicants may be expected to have an intermediate-level command of Russian.

## See Also

- Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/russian-east-european-eurasian-studies/>)

## Contact Information

**Peter Scotto, Chair**

**Dominique Rampton, Academic Department Coordinator**

103 Ciruti Center  
413-538-2648

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/russian> (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/russian/>)

## Learning Goals

On completion of the following levels, students will be able to:

### Elementary Russian (Completion of the RES-101 and 102 sequence)

- Make introductions and get acquainted with others.
- Talk about self, family, friends, university studies, and jobs by providing basic information and description.
- Read simple authentic texts, such as announcements, schedules, greeting cards, phone texts, e-mails, personal letters, and short prose and poetry pieces for basic facts and information.
- Acquire basic linguistic and cultural knowledge to engage in the following activities: shopping, ordering food, buying tickets, giving directions, giving advice, issuing invitations, filling out forms with basic biographical information.
- Describe hobbies, interests, personal preferences, and routine activities in some detail.
- Talk about past personal events and plans for the future.
- Compare, contrast, and express opinions and feelings about things and people.
- Ask and answer questions about familiar topics.
- Write multi-paragraph compositions on familiar topics.
- Acquire basic Russian grammar: nominal, pronominal and adjectival declension system (6 cases); past, present and future tenses; some verbs of motion; some verbal aspectual pairs; impersonal constructions.
- Acquire cultural knowledge: some facts and names pertaining to Russian and Soviet "high" culture; sociocultural norms of

interpersonal communication; some basic facts about Russian and Soviet literature and history which shape the way Russians think about themselves and the others, as well as basics of Russian worldview as coded in the language

- Acquire a working vocabulary of 800-1000 words.

By the end of the academic year, students will communicate at the Intermediate Low to Mid level of proficiency, as defined by ACTFL guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking/>).

### Intermediate Russian (Completion of RES-201 and 202 sequence)

- Exchange information on familiar topics (such as family, relationships, housing) using complete sentences and time expressions in the past, present and future.
- Negotiate social interactions in familiar situations (such as daily routine, studies, visit around a city, health issues) in a culturally appropriate way.
- Narrate past events and talk about future plans in a string of connected sentences with some detail.
- Read longer authentic texts in various genres (stories, plays) and extract key information from the texts, as well as ask and answer questions about heroes' motivations.
- Understand main ideas of simple newspaper articles.
- Talk about reasons for personal preferences and choices.
- Exchange ideas on some abstract topics (Is it better to be an idealist or a pragmatist?).
- Expand knowledge of Russian grammar: construct complex sentences with the help of various conjunctions; prefixed and transitive verbs of motion; verbal aspect; conditional constructions.
- Acquire cultural knowledge through analyzing Russian and Soviet prose and film.
- Broaden active vocabulary to more than 1700 words.

By the end of the academic year, students will communicate at the Intermediate Mid to High level of proficiency, as defined by the ACTFL guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking/>).

### Advanced Russian (Completion of RES-251)

- Read authentic Russian texts of various genres and length.
- Exchange ideas about texts' structure and composition, heroes' motives, and author's intent.
- Develop the notion of subtext and the skill of "reading between the lines".
- Respond to authentic texts by writing multi-paragraph essays.
- Contrast and compare various works of literature.
- Broaden active vocabulary to include specialized words and phrases describing shades of meaning.
- Adhere to Russian-only rule during class times.
- Develop cultural knowledge through analyzing historical and social background as well as people's behavior in various texts.

By the end of the course, students will communicate at the Intermediate High to Advanced Low level of proficiency, as defined by the ACTFL guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking/>).

## Faculty

**This area of study is administered by the Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies:**

Stephen Jones, Professor of Russian Studies

Peter Scotto, Professor of Russian

Susanna Nazarova, Lecturer in Russian, On Leave 2021-2022

Daniel Brooks, Visiting Lecturer in Russian and Eurasian Studies

## Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 40 credits:

| Code   | Title   | Credits   |
|--|---|-----------|
| 12 credits of Russian language courses beyond RES-201              |   | 12        |
| RES-210  | Great Books: The Literature of Nineteenth-Century Russia    | 4         |
| RES-211  | Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature <sup>1</sup> | 4         |
| RES-240  | Contemporary Russian Politics: From Lenin to Putin          | 4         |
| RES-241  |   | 4         |
| 12 credits at the 300 level, divided among two or more disciplines |   | 12        |
| <b>Total Credits</b>   |   | <b>40</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Any RES-211 offering, for example RES-211MM

### Additional Specifications

- Majors are strongly encouraged to take elective courses that reflect their particular focus within the major and to study abroad for at least one semester.
- When students have completed two courses at the 200 level, they may, with the permission of the instructor and in consultation with their advisor, enroll in a 200-level course for 300-level credit.
- Students are encouraged to explore Russian and Eurasian Studies courses offered through the Five Colleges if needed.
- The major in Russian and Eurasian Studies is interdisciplinary. Students who complete this major automatically fulfill the College's "outside the major" requirement.

## Requirements for the Minor in Language

A minimum of 12 credits above the 100 level, ordinarily drawn from the following:

| Code                 | Title   | Credits   |
|----------------------|---|-----------|
| RES-201              | Intermediate Russian I                              | 4         |
| RES-202              | Intermediate Russian II                             | 4         |
| RES-301              | Advanced Russian Language: From Reading to Speaking | 4         |
| <b>Total Credits</b> |   | <b>12</b> |

## Requirements for the Minor in Culture and Literature

A minimum of 20 credits, which ordinarily include:

| Code                 | Title   | Credits   |
|----------------------|---|-----------|
|                      | A one-semester course in Russian history  | 4         |
| RES-210              | Great Books: The Literature of Nineteenth-Century Russia  | 4         |
| RES-211              | Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature <sup>1</sup>   | 4         |
|                      | Two additional courses to be chosen in consultation with the Russian department, including one at the 300 level | 8         |
| <b>Total Credits</b> |   | <b>20</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Any RES-211 offering, for example RES-211MM

### Additional Specifications

- The minor in culture and literature is designed for students who have an interest in Russian literature and culture, but have not studied the language. It requires 20 credits and is not recommended for anyone who wishes to focus on Russia at the graduate level.

## Requirements for the Minor in Russian and Eurasian Studies

A minimum of 12 credits, which ordinarily include:

| Code                 | Title   | Credits   |
|----------------------|---|-----------|
| RES-201              | Intermediate Russian I (or its equivalent)                            | 4         |
|                      | Two courses in Russian studies, including one course at the 300 level | 8         |
| <b>Total Credits</b> |   | <b>12</b> |

### Additional Specifications

- The minor in Russian and Eurasian studies is designed to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the former Soviet Union and its peoples and cultures and to develop intermediate-level proficiency in the Russian language.

## Teacher Licensure

Students interested in pursuing licensure in the field of Russian and Eurasian studies can combine their course work in Russian and Eurasian studies with a minor in education. In some instances course work in the major coincides with course work required for licensure; in other cases, it does not. For specific course requirements for licensure within the major of Russian and Eurasian studies, please consult your advisor or the chair of the Russian and Eurasian studies department. Further information about the minor in education (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/psychology-education/#minortext>) and the Teacher Licensure program (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/psychology-education/#teacherlicensuretext>) is available in other sections of the catalog, or consult Ms. Lawrence in the psychology and education department.

Licensure also requires a formal application as well as passing scores on the Massachusetts Test of Educator Licensure (MTEL) in both the literacy component and the subject matter component. Copies of the test objectives for the MTEL are available in the Russian and Eurasian studies department and in the Department of Psychology and Education.

Additional information about the Licensure Program, including application materials, can be found on the Teacher Licensure Program website (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/teach/>).

## Course Advice

### Getting Started in Russian

A student coming to Mount Holyoke with no background in Russian language should enroll in RES-101 and RES-102, a yearlong introduction to Russian language and culture.

Students who have previously studied Russian and plan to elect Russian language should consult with the department for individual placement.

In addition to the RES-101 and RES-102 sequence, recommended courses for first-year study include:

| Code    | Title  | Credits |
|---------|--|---------|
| RES-210 | Great Books: The Literature of Nineteenth-Century Russia (Humanities I)  | 4       |
| RES-211 | Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature (Humanities I)            | 4       |
| RES-240 | Contemporary Russian Politics: From Lenin to Putin (Social Sciences III) | 4       |
| RES-241 | (Social Sciences III)  | 4       |

As listed, courses on Russian history or literature and culture may be used to satisfy the Humanities distribution requirement, while courses on Russian and Eurasian Politics satisfy the Social Science distribution requirement.

## Course Offerings

### Taught in Russian

#### RES-101 Elementary Russian

*Fall. Credits: 4*

The four-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) introduction to the Russian Language with the focus on communicative skills development. Major structural topics include pronunciation and intonation, all six cases, basic conjugation patterns, and verbal aspect. By the end of the course the students will be able to initiate and sustain conversation on basic topics, write short compositions, read short authentic texts and comprehend their meaning, develop an understanding of the Russian culture through watching films and listening to songs.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive*

*D. Brooks*

*Coreq: RES-101L.*

#### RES-102 Elementary Russian

*Spring. Credits: 4*

Continuation of Russian 101. A four-skills course, with increasing emphasis on reading and writing, that completes the study of basic grammar. Major topics include: predicting conjugation patterns, un-prefixed and prefixed verbs of motion, complex sentences, time expressions, and strategies of vocabulary building. Students watch Russian films, read and discuss authentic texts.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive*

*D. Brooks*

*Prereq: RES-101. Coreq: RES-102L.*

**RES-201 Intermediate Russian I**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

In-depth review of grammar topics and expansion of vocabulary with the goal of developing communicative proficiency. Readings include short stories, poetry, and newspaper articles. Students watch Russian films and discuss them orally and in writing. Classes are conducted mostly in Russian.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive*

*D. Brooks*

*Prereq: RES-101 and RES-102.*

**RES-202 Intermediate Russian II**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Emphasis on increasing active command of grammar while focusing on conversational topics. Readings include poetry, short stories, and magazine and newspaper articles. Students watch and discuss Russian films. Classes are conducted mostly in Russian.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*

*The department*

*Prereq: RES-201.*

**RES-301 Advanced Russian Language: From Reading to Speaking**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course aims at expansion of students' vocabulary and improvement of both writing and speaking skills. Heritage learners of Russian (those who speak the language) will also benefit from the course. With a strong emphasis on integrating vocabulary in context, this course aims to help students advance their lexicon and grammar, increase fluency, and overcome speaking inhibitions. We will read and discuss a variety of texts including short stories, films, and articles.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive*

*The department*

*Prereq: RES-202.*

*Advisory: The course is intended for students who have completed at least four semesters of Russian or the equivalent.*

**RES-302 Advanced Russian Language II**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course is a continuation of RES-301 and is a further expansion of students' vocabulary, writing and speaking skills. We will read and discuss a variety of texts including short stories, films, and articles. Heritage learners of Russian (those who speak the language) will also benefit from the course.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive*

*The department*

*Prereq: RES-301.*

**Taught in English****RES-210 Great Books: The Literature of Nineteenth-Century Russia**

*Fall. Credits: 4*

In no other culture has literature occupied the central role it enjoyed in nineteenth-century Russia. Political, social, and historical constraints propelled Russian writers into the roles of witness, prophet, and sage. Yet, far from being limited to the vast, dark 'Big Question' novels of legend, Russian literature offers much humor, lyricism, and fantasy. We will focus on the Russian novel as a reaction to western European forms of narrative and consider the recurring pattern of the strong heroine and the weak hero. Authors will include: Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English*

**RES-211 Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature**

Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature provide students with an intensive study of major writers, themes, and paradigm shifts in Russian literature during this turbulent century.

**RES-211DZ Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature: 'Doctor Zhivago: A Poet in History'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Combining epic sweep with lyrical intensity, *Doctor Zhivago* is a great writer's look back at a turbulent epoch in his country's history. Set in Russia's revolutionary years, Boris Pasternak's novel is a testament to the survival of life, love, art -- and the possibility of freedom even under the most difficult conditions. This course will situate a close reading of Pasternak's novel within the various contexts (biographical, political, literary) relevant to understanding this major, but sometimes mysterious, work of Russian fiction.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English. May be taken for 300-level credit with permission of instructor and in conjunction with a weekly independent study (RES-395).*

**RES-211MM Topics in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature: 'Diabolic Carnival: Bulgakov's Master and Margarita and Its Contexts'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Mephistopheles in Moscow? The Gospel retold? At turns both wildly comic and metaphysically profound, Bulgakov's novel has been a cult classic since its unexpected discovery in 1967. This course will consider Bulgakov's masterpiece together with some of its literary, historical, and social contexts. Additional readings from Goethe, Gogol, E.T.A. Hoffman, Akhmatova, and others.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English*

**RES-213 War and Peace**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

We will be engaged in a close reading of a translation of Tolstoy's epic novel *War and Peace*. Tolstoy's sweeping account of men and women caught up in Russia's desperate struggle to survive against the onslaught of Napoleon's army is often considered among the greatest novels. We will focus on Tolstoy's literary strategies, philosophy, and historical contexts.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English.*

**RES-215 Dostoevsky and the Problem of Evil: The Brothers Karamazov**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Perhaps no other novelist has delved as deeply into the psychological and metaphysical dimensions of evil as the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. This course will be devoted to a close reading of Dostoevsky's landmark novel of murderous passion and parricide, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Why should crime and transgression be a privileged avenue of access into the human interior? How is psychology tied to the metaphysical aspect of human existence? What are the sources of evil—and redemption?

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*The department*

*Notes: Taught in English*

**RES-216 Pushkin: Found in Translation**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) is universally regarded as Russia's greatest poet. However, the magnitude of his achievement has remained inaccessible to readers who do not know Russian. That has now changed. With the renaissance in the art and practice of translation over the past several decades, much of what was previously unavailable to readers of English is now available, and it has become possible to offer this course. Participants will encounter Pushkin in three different, but intersecting ways: through a careful reading of his masterpieces, through a comparison of the renditions of various translators, and finally through responses to his work by his literary heirs.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*The department*

*Notes: Taught in English.*

**RES-226 Philosophical Tales: The Short Fiction of Anton Chekhov**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

Explore the short fictions of Anton Chekhov as brilliantly crafted exemplars of the *Philosophical Tale*, stories that use the resources of short narrative fiction to probe life's deepest questions: "what is the meaning of our lives, how do we face our inevitable death, why is there evil and suffering, what does it mean to be human, how should we live?" How do these stories work? What can fictions do that discursive philosophical essays can't? How do they engage the complexity of the world and of life? We'll also read Chekhov's work in larger tradition of Wisdom Literature, with readings drawn from Biblical, Hassidic, Classical, Folk, and Chinese traditions, as well as from other notable practitioners of the genre (Chesteron, Borges, Poe).

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English.*

**RES-231FA Anna Karenina and Contexts: 'Tolstoy on Love, Death, and Family Life'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

*Anna Karenina* (1873) is one of a series of important works Tolstoy wrote pondering love, death, the nature of happiness, and the foundations of family life. Our reading of *Anna Karenina* will be the centerpiece of this course which will also include works ranging from *Childhood* (1852) to *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), which shocked and repelled readers with its unsparing depictions of human sexuality and murderous jealousy. Film versions of works will be screened.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*The department*

*Notes: Taught in English*

**RES-235 The Strange World of Nikolai Gogol**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Gogol was a strange creature, but genius is always strange." - Vladimir Nabokov. Nikolai Gogol was one of Russia's greatest and most enigmatic writers. Revered by Dostoevsky, he created a literary universe that has lost none of its original power despite the passage of time. This course will trace the development of Gogol's genius from his early Ukrainian stories, through his tales of St. Petersburg, to his comic masterpiece *Dead Souls*. Special attention will be paid to Gogol's deployment of the comic, fantastic and grotesque to render the reality of tsarist Russia.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*P. Scotto*

*Notes: Taught in English.*

**RES-240 Contemporary Russian Politics: From Lenin to Putin**

*Fall. Credits: 4*

Russia was transformed by communist revolution into a global superpower that challenged the dominant ideologies of liberalism and nationalism. It became a powerful alternative to capitalism. In 1991, this imperial state collapsed and underwent an economic, political, and cultural revolution. What explains the Soviet Union's success for 70 years and its demise in 1991? What sort of country is Russia as it enters the twenty-first century? Is it a democracy? How has Russia's transformation affected ordinary people and Russia's relationship to the West?

*Crosslisted as: POLIT-209*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences*

*S. Jones*

*Notes: Taught in English*

**RES-312 Silk Roads: Ancient and Modern Highways Across the Eurasian Continent**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

The silk roads were ancient transportation and trade links that wound their way across the Eurasian continent, or by sea through the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, to Europe. They carried silk, glass, jade, and moved religions and literatures across continents. Today, the new silk roads carry oil, gas, drugs, capitalism, and immigrants seeking better lives. We will investigate the parallels between the ancient and modern silk roads and the contemporary strategic, cultural, and economic significance of these new highways, which link China, Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe.

*Crosslisted as: POLIT-312*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences*

*The department*

*Prereq: 8 credits in Politics, International Relations, History, or Russian and Eurasian studies.*

*Notes: Taught in English*

### **RES-350 Revolutions**

*Fall. Credits: 4*

By the 1980s, after the failure of Marxist revolutions, scholars and politicians declared that "history" and with it, the age of revolution was over. From now on, they said, all states will move toward the model of market capitalism. But the last decade of the 20th century and the first fifteen years of the 21st century have shown that history, and with it, revolution, is far from over. We will look at the American and Russian revolutions, at Nazism, the Iranian revolution of 1979, Eastern Europe in 1989, the 'colored revolutions,' and the Arab Spring. Revolutions are still with us, and we will study why.

*Crosslisted as: POLIT-350*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences*

*S. Jones*

*Prereq: 8 credits in politics, international relations, or Russian and Eurasian studies.*

*Notes: Taught in English*

### **Independent Study**

#### **RES-295 Independent Study**

*Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4*

*The department*

*Instructor permission required.*

#### **RES-395 Independent Study**

*Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8*

*The department*

*Instructor permission required.*