

# RUSSIAN STUDIES

Laurel Brook, Tomson 368  
507-786-3383  
brookl@stolaf.edu  
wp.stolaf.edu/russian

The Russian Studies Department, in keeping with the college mission to provide a “global perspective,” offers a variety of courses that build upon Russian language proficiency to give students the knowledge and tools for a successful career. Recent graduates have entered professions in higher education, business, government, the church, law, and the arts.

Russia continues to be a major player in the global community in many areas: politics, economics, space-age technology, and the development of new computer software. As the new Russia opens itself to the outside, college graduates are increasingly sought after for positions in government service, business and investment, journalism, environmental studies, education, and social service.

The department offers a major in Russian studies as well as courses on Russian literature taught in English. Taking Russian at St. Olaf means more than just studying a language. The study of Russian introduces you to one of the great cultures of the world — the culture of Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Kandinsky, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and many others. Russian language is the key to reading more than one-fourth of all the published scientific literature in the world.

Students may satisfy OLE Core curriculum requirements with Russian studies courses such as RUSSN 265 Soviet and Russian Film Directed by Women (Taught in English). RUSSN 231 or a higher numbered course taught in the Russian language or demonstrated proficiency satisfies the world language requirement for all students. Upper-level students may participate in the CIEE program in St. Petersburg, or with St. Olaf programs in Novgorod and Irkutsk (Siberia).

## Overview of the Major

The Russian Studies Department offers the Russian Studies major with the aim of preparing students to understand, interact with, and work in the Russian area from a foundation of cultural literacy. The multidisciplinary major also provides students with a comprehensive view of the culture, history, and contemporary problems of the area.

## Intended Learning Outcomes for the Majors

## Requirements

Requirements for the Major in Russian Studies

Code	Title	Credits
Russian language courses <sup>1</sup>		
RUSSN 111	Beginning Russian I	1.00
RUSSN 112	Beginning Russian II	1.00
RUSSN 231	Intermediate Russian I	1.00
RUSSN 232	Intermediate Russian II	1.00
Select five elective courses in any combination of language or culture: <sup>2, 3</sup>		5.00
HIST 121	The Making of Modern Russia	

HIST 231	People and Power in Soviet Russia
HIST 320	Research Seminar: Modern European History (When topic is Russian History)
PSCI 282	Russian and Eurasian Politics
PSCI 382	Seminar: The Geopolitics of Eurasian Energy
RUSSN 124	The Russian World
RUSSN 250	Topics in Russian Literature (Taught in English)
RUSSN 256	Theater in Russia: January Term (study abroad)
RUSSN 261	The Golden Age of Russian Literature (Taught in English)
RUSSN 265	Introduction to Russian and Soviet Film (Taught in English)
RUSSN 262	20th-Century Russian Literature (Taught in English)
RUSSN 271	Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov (Taught in English)
RUSSN 294	Academic Internship
RUSSN 298	Independent Study
RUSSN 301	Conversation and Composition
RUSSN 302	Russian Culture and Civilization
RUSSN 371	Dostoevsky (Taught in English)
RUSSN 372	Topics in Contemporary Russian Society
RUSSN 394	Academic Internship
RUSSN 396	Directed Undergraduate Research
RUSSN 398	Independent Research

**Total Credits** **9**

1

A minimum of four semesters of Russian language is required, though more is encouraged. If a student places into Russian beyond the beginner level, they are required to take more elective courses (language or non-language) to fulfill the course requirement.

2

Students may petition to count courses in which they do a significant amount of work on topics related to Russian culture, history, or politics. Examples include PSCI 215 Authoritarian Survival, PSCI 321 International Relations Seminar, ENVST 283 Topics: Arctic Literature, NORW 244 Sami: Traditions in Translation. A maximum of 3.0 credits can count from study abroad.

3

One elective must be numbered 303 or above.

*\*By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

## Courses

### RUSSN 111: Beginning Russian I

This course offers an introduction to grammar and reading through oral and written work. Offered annually in the fall semester.

**RUSSN 112: *Beginning Russian II***

This course offers an introduction to grammar and reading through oral and written work. Offered annually in the spring semester.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 111 or equivalent.

**RUSSN 124: *The Russian World***

This course introduces students to Russian culture and civilization from its beginning to the present. Students will gain a general understanding of Russia and will be introduced to her history, art, literature, political systems, music, society, geography, religions, etc. No prerequisites.

**RUSSN 231: *Intermediate Russian I***

Students continue their grammar, oral, and written work with an emphasis on conversation and reading selections from classical and contemporary Russian authors. Offered annually in the fall semester.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 112 or equivalent.

**RUSSN 232: *Intermediate Russian II***

Students continue their grammar, oral, and written work with an emphasis on conversation and reading selections from classical and contemporary Russian authors. Class meets four times weekly. Offered annually in the spring semester. Also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 231 or equivalent.

**RUSSN 250: *Topics in Russian Literature (Taught in English)***

This course examines the development of differing approaches to some aspect of Russian life and culture as presented in the classical texts of Russian literature. Actual topics vary according to year and instructor. Offered periodically. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors; does not count toward Russian language major.

**Prerequisites:** WRIT 120, equivalent or permission of the instructor.

**RUSSN 256: *Theater in Russia: January Term (study abroad)***

Students study theater through the readings and attend approximately twenty productions, group discussions, lectures, and tours. Students focus on the staging, acting and audience reactions in the productions. Texts and all lectures are in English. Students look at Russian and Western classics and a variety of theatrical styles from opera to puppet theater. Offered periodically during January Term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors; does not count toward Russian language major.

**RUSSN 261: *The Golden Age of Russian Literature (Taught in English)***

This course explores a remarkable period of literary history: Russia's 19th century or the "golden age" of Russian literature. In rapid succession, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov produced one masterpiece after another, dazzling Western audiences and shaping the modern mind. Beyond the arts, diverse fields - philosophy, theology, psychology, political science - have been influenced by the Russian classics. Topics include doubt, nihilism, despair, faith, God, death, and the meaning of life. Taught in English. Offered alternate years. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors; does not count toward Russian language major.

**RUSSN 262: *20th-Century Russian Literature (Taught in English)***

This course explores the development of Russian literature from the beginning to the end of the 20th century: from pre-revolutionary anxiety through revolutions, wars, and terror, to political thaw, collapse, and the post-Soviet wilderness. Authors include Bely, Platonov, Pasternak, Bulgakov, Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva, Solzhenitsyn, Bitov, Nabokov, Tolstaya, and Petrushevskaya. Themes include revolution, war, totalitarianism, terror, modernity, technology, alienation, tradition, suffering, resilience, and the meaning of life. Taught in English. Offered alternate years. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors; does not count toward Russian language major.

**RUSSN 265: *Soviet and Russian Film Directed by Women (Taught in English)***

This course considers masterworks of Russian and Soviet cinema that were directed by women. In what subtle and/or overt ways did being socialized as a woman affect a director's perspective? In what subtle and/or overt ways are the challenges that women faced in the USSR and in contemporary Russia reflected in their films? Topics include basic cinema analysis, Russian cinema criticism, Russian film theory, and gender theory.

**RUSSN 271: *Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov (Taught in English)***

This course explores Dostoevsky's magnum opus, *The Brothers Karamazov*, in its literary, historical, philosophical, and religious contexts. Acclaimed for its spiritual and psychological depth, *The Brothers Karamazov* is considered by some (e.g., Einstein and Freud) to be the greatest novel ever written. Course topics include faith, doubt, nihilism, the problem of evil, suffering, death, God, ethics, the law, guilt, forgiveness, and the interrelation of heaven and earth, of time and eternity. *The Brothers Karamazov* will be taught in English translation. Offered periodically. Offered in January term.

**RUSSN 294: *Academic Internship*****RUSSN 298: *Independent Study*****RUSSN 301: *Conversation and Composition***

This course facilitates oral and written use of the language through conversation and composition, English to Russian translation, selections from Russian literature, and original themes. Offered annually in the fall semester. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors for students not simultaneously working toward Russian language major; also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 232 or permission of instructor.

**RUSSN 302: *Russian Culture and Civilization***

This survey of Russian culture and civilization uses original Russian texts on history, the arts, religion, and education, as well as documentary films and selections from literature. The course fosters the acquisition of the language of Russian cultural and intellectual discourse at the third level. Offered annually in spring semester. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors for students not simultaneously working toward Russian language major; also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 301 or permission of the instructor.

**RUSSN 371: *Dostoevsky (Taught in English)***

Students read and discuss Dostoevsky's major novels from *Poor Folk* through *Brothers Karamazov*. Offered alternate years. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors; does not count toward Russian language major.

**RUSSN 372: *Topics in Contemporary Russian Society***

This course covers a variety of topics that are both culturally and intellectually challenging. The goal of this course is to explore a variety of topics significant for Russian society and culture as well as to further develop the language of intellectual discourse through the treatment of complex issues in the press and social media. Taught in Russian. May be repeated if topic is different. Offered annually in the spring semester. Counts toward Russian studies and Russian area studies majors for students not simultaneously working toward Russian language major; also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** RUSSN 254 or permission of the instructor.

**RUSSN 394: *Academic Internship*****RUSSN 396: *Directed Undergraduate Research***

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to his/her research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

**Prerequisite:** determined by individual instructor.

**RUSSN 398: *Independent Research***

Independent Research is required for all students seeking credit for a senior project.

## Faculty

**Department Chair, 2024-2025****Ying Zhou**

Associate Professor of Asian Studies  
second language acquisition and language pedagogy

**Giulia Dossi**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian Studies

**Anna K. Kuxhausen**

Professor of History and Russian Language and Area Studies  
Russian history; women's history

**Ashley Morse**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian Studies