

Russian & Russian Studies

“Our Russian courses provide an engaging and supportive learning environment where language is viewed within its cultural context. Course materials are drawn from many different sources, including online media, popular songs, and literary classics.”

Lynne Ikach, Professor of Russian

In the Russian and Russian Studies programs students explore the language, literature, history, and culture of the largest country in the world. While both programs provide a strong foundation in language, the Russian major and minor emphasize literature and culture, while the Russian Studies major focuses more on history and politics.

Russian, one of the six official languages of the United Nations, is spoken by more than 150 million people in the world today. In the last few years Russia has reasserted its standing as an important player in world politics, so it's more important than ever to understand the culture and history of this powerful nation. Until the recent worldwide economic decline, the country witnessed rapid growth, largely thanks to its prominence as an exporter of energy. The relationship between the United States and Russia has changed much since the end of the Cold War but remains quite complex, especially as a result of recent events. Today there exists a wide range of interactions between Russia and the United States in the areas of government, education, business, and social services, all of which provide those who know Russian with opportunities for study and employment.

Students at Cornell College study Russian for a variety of reasons. Some possess a keen interest in Russian history or politics. Others have read works of literature in translation by

writers such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, or Solzhenitsyn, and want to learn the language of these literary giants. Many have met visitors or immigrants from Russia, and those interactions have fueled a desire to learn the language.

BENEFITS OF ONE COURSE AT A TIME

Studying languages at Cornell is a unique experience. Language courses taught on the One Course At A Time curriculum provide an intensive learning environment that gives students the chance to make rapid progress in a short period of time. Russian students study the language intensely for three and a half weeks without interference from the demands of other courses. Because class sizes in the Russian program are small, students receive a lot of individual attention and have many opportunities to speak in class. With both small classes and the luxury of time each day, there are many pair and group activities, including skits and cooking events, that build a sense of community among the students. Students also have the chance to take independent study and tutorial courses, and are encouraged to participate in study abroad programs.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

The Russian and Russian Studies programs provide a range of courses, including language courses that study culture and current events at all levels, literature and film courses that explore classic as well as contemporary works, and history courses that help students understand Russia's complicated past. As part of their major, students carry out capstone projects in which they conduct research, write, and present on topics they develop in consultation with their advisor. Topics of recent capstone projects include women's health care

Faculty Bios & Courses

LYNNE IKACH

Professor of Russian

Teaches courses in Russian language, literature, and culture, and advises the Russian and Russian studies majors. Her research focuses on autobiographical genres and how they function as both literature and history; her most recent project is an analysis of the diaries of Lev and Sophia Tolstoy. In 2018 she created and taught a new course called Russian Spies and Statesmen in Their Own Words, which examines the memoirs of several Soviet-era spies and leaders. Ph.D., Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

ROBERT GIVENS

Professor of History

Teaches courses in Russian and Soviet history including Revolutionary and Soviet Russia, and the off-campus course Russia Today. Givens earned a Fulbright award for 2008-09 and spent September-January teaching at the School of International Relations at St. Petersburg State University, Russia, where he also taught as a Fulbright Scholar in 1999-2000. He also used this time to research changing interpretations of the Stalinist period. Givens serves as faculty advisor to Cornell's international relations program. Ph.D., history, University of California, Berkeley.

in Russia, Putin's views on foreign policy, changes in the Russian Federal archives system since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Leningrad Blockade during World War II, and methods and practice of literary translation.

Outside of regular courses students can take part in a weekly conversation group to improve their language skills, as well as the Russian Club, which sponsors regular activities to promote Russian culture such as films and dinners.

Students are also encouraged to study in Russia as part of their academic program. Cornell has an institutional affiliation with the American Institute for Foreign Study, which offers summer, semester, and yearlong programs in St. Petersburg. In addition, there are a number of other organizations that offer programs in Russia, such as the American Councils for International Education and the Council on International Educational Exchange.

AFTER CORNELL

Graduates of these programs have used their skills to pursue graduate studies and careers in various fields, including business, teaching, history, law, library science, and social services.

Alumni Careers

Fulbright English teaching assistant, Georgia (Class of 2017)

Fulbright English teaching assistant, Azerbaijan (Class of 2016)

VISTA for College Engagement, Albuquerque, New Mexico (Class of 2016)

Director of programming and operations, New Directions/Luria Study Abroad Programs, St. Petersburg, Russia (Class of 2014)

Freelance editor, writer, and translator, Chicago, Illinois (Class of 2014)

Leave of absence coordinator, Sedgwick, Lancaster, Wisconsin (Class of 2013)

Assistant county attorney, Independence, Kansas (Class of 2011)

Data librarian, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Kansas City, Kansas (Class of 2011)

Lead teacher, board representative, and classroom administrator, University Avenue Discovery Center, Madison, Wisconsin (Class of 2010)

Program analyst for Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and China, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C. (Class of 2009)

Skills coach, Kairos NW, Coos Bay, Oregon (Class of 2006)

Public health nurse, Sheridan County Public Health, Sheridan, Wyoming (Class of 2006)

Freelance English editor, translator, and instructor, Moscow, Russian Federation (Class of 2006)

Financial advisor-career development, Aramco Services Company, Houston, Texas (Class of 2006)

Graduate Schools Attended

Graduate student, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, Seattle, Washington (Class of 2016)

M.A., energy politics and economics, European University, St. Petersburg, Russia (Class of 2014)

Master of Library Science, Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, Illinois (Class of 2013)

J.D., University of Nebraska College of Law, Lincoln, Nebraska (Class of 2011)

Master of Social Work student, Erikson Institute, Chicago, Illinois; graduate fellowship in infant, early childhood, and family mental health, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin (Class of 2010)

M.A., international economics and international relations, Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Baltimore, Maryland; former Fulbright scholar who studied Georgian public education system reforms (Class of 2009)

M.S.W., social work, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon (Class of 2006)

Fulbright scholar working with at-risk youth, Vladivostok, Russia (Class of 2006)

M.Ed, educational policy studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois (Class of 2006)