Russ 001: Elementary Russian  
Fall, 2014

Instructor: Kathleen Scollins (Екатери́на Миха́йловна, or Ка́тя)

Class hours:
002-B: MWF 11:45 am-12:35 and Tuesdays 1:00-2:15, Angell B104

Office hours: M/W/F 10:30-11:30, or by appointment

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Course Overview:

- Russian 001 provides an introduction to all aspects of contemporary standard Russian: grammar, speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing. Cultural components include topics such as music, art, literature, and current events.
- Students will be familiarized with the fundamentals of the Russian language, including reading, writing and pronouncing the letters and sounds of the Cyrillic alphabet; verbal conjugation; the present and past tense; nominal/adjectival declension; and verbs of motion.
- We will begin to develop conversational skills. As much as possible, classes will be conducted in Russian.
- This course is also intended to enhance your understanding of Russian culture, literature, and current events. Over the course of the semester, we will be reading short works by Pushkin and Gogol (in English translation) and will discuss them each week during our longer class period on Tuesday. In addition, we will devote time every week to Russian and Soviet music, film, and art, as well as to any questions you have about Russian culture, history, politics, daily life, etc.

Required Materials:
- RussianAlive, Samuel Cioran (sold as a coursepack)
- Russian Homework (daily homework sheets, sold as a coursepack)
- START: The Sound and Writing Systems of Russian, Ben Rifkin (Book and CD-ROM)
- The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky

Recommended (optional) Materials:
- A big 3-ring binder (Think of this as mandatory – I give out a lot of handouts, and you are responsible for keeping them organized and accessible)
- A good Russian-English, English-Russian Dictionary, such as Katzner or Oxford
Course Grade:
Grades for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature discussion</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Tests</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Component</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Class Participation:
Class attendance is mandatory! Daily engagement (active listening, speaking, reading and writing) is the only sure key to learning a foreign language; for this reason, regular attendance is absolutely essential to your progress in this course. Please note that class participation is not simply an attendance grade: you are expected to come to class prepared and ready to participate in the day's activities. You will receive a participation grade out of 5 points for every class period. You will lose points for being unprepared, for lateness to class, and for speaking English during Russian conversation activities. **I will drop your three lowest class participation grades at the end of the semester.**

Generally, if you come to class, participate actively, and do homework on time, you will do well in this class (and you will learn more Russian!). If you do not come to class or do homework, it will be very difficult for you to do well in this class.

A Note on Speaking Russian in Class:
At this early stage of language learning, some grammar topics need to be presented in English. However, whenever the class is doing exercises that require you to speak Russian, especially in pairs or small groups, you will be expected to keep your conversation in Russian. If I say something in Russian that you do not understand, do not hesitate to ask for clarification, but if you are able to formulate a question in Russian (even if you don’t know how to say it exactly), please do so – let’s try to keep the atmosphere as по-русски as possible!

A Note on Technology and the Problem of Divided Attention (adapted from the post “The syllabus it is a-changin’,” on the teaching blog “first efforts”)
A 2007 article in the New York Times summarized recent studies of productivity in business settings: simply put, researchers found that after responding to email or text messages, it took people more than 15 minutes to re-focus on the “serious mental tasks” they had been performing before the interruption. Other research has shown that when people attempt to perform two tasks at once (e.g., following what’s happening in class while checking text messages), the brain is simply not able do it. The brain has got to give up on one of the tasks in order to effectively accomplish the other. Hidden behind all the hype about multi-tasking, then, is this sad truth: it makes us slower and dumber.
For this reason alone you should seek to avoid the problem of divided attention when you are in class. But there’s another reason, too: technology often causes us to lose our focus when it comes to norms of polite behavior and, as a result, perfectly lovely people appear to be unbelievably rude.

For both these reasons, then, turn off your cellphones or set them on silent mode when you come to class: ringing (or buzzing) phones are a distraction to me and to other students, and these distractions will keep you from engaging with the material. Similarly, texting is unacceptable in class; any student found to be sending or checking text messages during class will be asked to stop texting immediately or leave the classroom. You are welcome to bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we’re discussing, and the like. You are not welcome to surf the web, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here’s my best advice: If you aren’t using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, put it away. Failure to follow these guidelines will negatively affect your class participation grade.

**Homework:**
Homework is due at the beginning of each class. Homework will be graded on a 5-point scale and returned the following day with corrections. Late homework may not be corrected (it will be your responsibility to self-correct against a classmate’s corrected homework), and will receive a grade no higher than a 4 (80%). *All homework for a given unit must be turned in by the day of that unit exam in order to receive any credit.* If you know that you will have to miss class on a particular date, submit your homework assignment in advance and you will still receive full homework points for that day (as well as 1 attendance point for the class period). **I will drop your two lowest homework grades.**

A Note on Collaboration and electronic translators:
There are many times in this class that collaboration with other students will be encouraged or even required, but some assignments that you will need to complete independently. Generally, it is completely acceptable for you to do homework assignments with other students if everyone is contributing and thinking through every problem. Preparing for quizzes and tests in groups is also fine (and even encouraged), but please do all written assignments (such as dialogues) on your own, without help from outside sources (like translation websites or native speakers of Russian).

Do not use electronic translators (such as Google translate) to complete your homework! For one thing, you will end up with sentences that don’t sound anything like Russian (or even much like real language; for instance, here are the lyrics from one popular American song, translated into Russian and back: “In this it is difficult to watch on the right hand side, you have the child, but my number, therefore, to call me, it may be?” Can you name the song?). You will not receive credit for electronically translated assignments; more importantly, doing your homework this way will not help you to learn the material.
Quizzes:
For each unit there will be at least one vocabulary quiz. I may also assign other quizzes, announced or unannounced, on vocabulary, grammar, or reading. Quizzes missed without a legitimate excuse may not be made up, but I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Tests:
Students will be tested on their mastery of the targeted vocabulary, grammar and cultural themes of each unit covered in the textbook. Students will always know the dates of Unit Tests well in advance. Missed tests may not be made up.

Oral Component:
Students will be responsible for a short oral presentation; more specific information will be provided to you closer to the date of the exam.

Final Exam:
The final exam will consist of the same kinds of activities and tasks represented on the unit tests.

Special Needs:
Students with special learning needs are asked to discuss them with the instructor as soon as possible. Our department is committed to providing instruction to all learners.

General Syllabus (subject to change): For each Textbook Unit, you may also receive a more detailed schedule, including homework, in-class assignments, and quiz dates.

Aug 25-29: START (an introduction to the sound and writing systems of Russian)
Sept. 2-5: START (cont.); basic vocabulary and conversation
Sept. 8-12: Units 2-6 (nominative case of nouns; gender and number; pronouns)
Sept. 15-19: Units 8-9 (verbal conjugation, “whose”)
Sept. 22-26: Unit 7 adjectives; plural practice) UNIT TEST I (Monday, Sept. 29)
Sept. 29-Oct. 3: Units 7-9 (adjectives, conjugation)
Oct. 6-10: Unit 10 (accusative case)
Oct. 13-17: Units 10/14 (accusative case, verbs of motion)
Oct. 20-27: review; UNIT TEST II (Wednesday, October 29)
Oct. 31-Nov. 3: Unit 13 (past and future tense)
Nov. 3-7: Unit 12 (prepositional case)
Nov. 10-14: Units 12/13
Nov 17-21: review; UNIT TEST III (Friday, Nov.21. ****Note that this is the Friday before Thanksgiving break; please plan your departure accordingly!!!)
Nov. 24-28: THANKSGIVING BREAK
Dec. 1-3: Review days

Final Exams:
001-A: Monday, Dec. 08  7:30-10:15 pm  Waterman 401
001-B: Friday, Dec. 12  10:30-1:15 pm  Angell B-104