A GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT STUDY IN RUSSIAN STUDIES

The College of Wooster

I. PHILOSOPHY OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

Howard Lowry, who founded the Independent Study program at Wooster, summarized its challenge simply: "It invites all students to come to their best in terms of their own talents." In their *Independent Study Program in the United States*, Robert Bonthius, James Davis, and J. Garber Drushal, outlined the philosophy of education underlying commitment to Independent Study:

> The purpose of higher education is to stimulate and assist growth... Facts may stimulate thought, but thought is not imparted. That is the individual's reaction. Education is an active, not a passive, process, in that it does not consist in receiving but in reacting to information, ideas, concepts. Independent thinking is a difficult art but it is the primary goal of the educative process. (p. vii)

Independent Study in the Department of Russian Studies offers students a challenging opportunity to explore and focus their interests in Russian and East European culture, to develop their abilities to read and interpret cultural texts in a particular context, to enhance their critical, analytical, and writing skills. Above all, the Department views Independent Study as valuable preparation for a life after graduation heightened by intellectual curiosity and self-discipline.

II. COLLEGE REGULATIONS

All candidates for the B.A. degree are required to complete one course of Independent Study plus a two-course I.S. Thesis (or an equivalent project). The three I.S. courses count toward the total number of courses required for a Wooster degree. The I.S. Thesis is identified on the Wooster transcript by department, number, and title. Students are expected to register for the I.S. during the Fall and Spring semesters of their senior year. Exceptions to this regulation will be rare and must be approved in writing by the Dean of the Faculty prior to registration.

III. THESIS PREREQUISITE

Russian Studies 401 (Independent Study) is a prerequisite for beginning the I.S. Thesis. The course is normally taken in the spring of junior year or, for students who spend junior year off-campus, in the spring of sophomore year. The course will consist of weekly individual conferences (occasionally a more seminar type approach will take the place of individual meetings). Students will find and use major bibliographies and resources useful in the study of Russian texts, culture, and language. Students will also learn and practice organizational skills, project planning, writing, and editing. In conjunction with the instructor, students will choose a topic, research that topic, and write a paper (typically 30-35 pages). Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to do any readings required by the instructor and to meet

deadlines agreed upon with the instructor. Failure to do so will negatively impact one's final grade.

Instead of a research paper, students are allowed to undertake alternative projects with the approval of the instructor. Students are encouraged to think creatively and bring any ideas to the instructor. One such alternate possibility would be a translation project with a critical introduction. In the case of the first option (traditional research paper), a small component of translation is also required. In most cases the text would be a short article (8-10 pages), related to the topic of the paper. The translation is to be included as an appendix to the paper. Students are especially encouraged to select topics that allow them to benefit from previous course work and that can be supported by the resources available through the College Libraries. Students may wish to explore an area they conceive of pursuing in the I.S. Thesis. (Please note that two copies of the Junior I. S. paper should be turned in to the advisor on a day specified by the instructor – either the last day of classes of the semester or a day during finals week.)

IV. THESIS ADVISOR

Normally students in Russian Studies work under the guidance of the head of the program, with the majority of students asking the Russian historian at Wooster to serve as second reader. However, when specific topics warrant a different advisor or second reader, arrangements are made accordingly. Ideally, arrangements with the advisor should be made in the first week of the semester in which the student is registered for I.S. Thesis (451). The student is responsible for meeting regularly with the advisor. She or he is also responsible for contacting a second reader before the end of the first semester.

V. OVERALL SCHEDULE

While specific deadlines may vary with individual students, the following model is suggested as an effective schedule:

Fall Semester:

Week 1	Meet with advisor to discuss possible topics
Week 2	Select topic and begin preparing bibliography
Week 3	Prepare preliminary bibliography, generate a schedule/syllabus
Week 4	Formulate thesis/critical approach, devise preliminary outline, work on lit review
Week 8	Submit draft of one chapter
Week 15	Submit drafts of two chapters (finalize thesis outline)

Spring Semester:

Week 5	Turn in first rough draft
Week 7	Turn in second rough draft (this should be a polished, nearly finished draft). Second rough draft is due one week before Spring Break.

VI. CHOICE OF TOPIC

Russian Studies 451-452 should be developed within the context of the student's prior course work and, if relevant, off-campus experience in Russia. This is not the time to begin entirely new work for which a student has no prior preparation. Since Russian Studies is an interdisciplinary program, the range of possible topics is broad; yet it is recommended that the overall focus reflect an aspect of Russian cultural studies. (A list of past I.S. Thesis projects is appended.) It is essential that the student check the availability of resources through the College libraries before making a final choice of topic. Those students who study in Russia during the junior year are encouraged to collect any primary source material they might find useful in researching the Senior Thesis. For example, projects dealing with popular culture, current events, or regional concerns are most easily documented in the country of origin. Although the I.S. Thesis in Russian Studies has usually involved analytical research papers, students may undertake other appropriate projects. For example, students might wish to translate a text; such a project would normally include a critical introduction. Research might also result in a theatrical or musical performance or in a film. In any case, just as in Russian Studies 401, a translation component is required. Typically, this would be an article of moderate length (8-10 pages), related to the topic of the paper or alternative project. For some topics a literary text may be appropriate.

VII. LENGTH

The length of a research paper depends on the nature of the topic and should be discussed with the advisor. Most topics cannot be adequately treated in a short paper; that is, under 30-35 pages. At the same time, a research paper over 75 pages has to be very concisely written to justify the length. Quality, not quantity, is the chief criterion in judging all projects.

VIII. FORMAT AND DOCUMENTATION

A sample title page is attached. Every I.S. Thesis must include an annotated critical bibliography; sample entries are attached. Mechanics, documentation, and bibliography must conform either to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* or the *Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* Copies are available in the department, the library, and the bookstore.

IX. COLLEGE REGULATIONS ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADVISOR

The responsibilities of the advisor are as follows: 1) to encourage the student to attempt an inquiry or project of appropriate rigor within the limitations of the student's potential, the time available, and the College's and the student's access to resources; 2) to advise the student toward the successful completion of the chosen I.S., meeting the general College specifications as interpreted by the program; 3) to assist with the editing of the I.S. thesis according to the following guidelines: a) On all drafts of the thesis, including the final draft if received by the eighth week of the semester, the advisor is responsible for indicating to the student typical errors of logic, style, and mechanics, etc. that may occur. He or she is not required to edit and proofread

these drafts paragraph and sentence by sentence. The editing of any draft by the advisor does not imply the ultimate acceptability of the thesis. b) After the completed I.S. thesis is submitted and evaluated, the advisor is responsible for indicating to the student any specific typographical and mechanical errors that must be corrected before the document is filed with the department.

X. COLLEGE REGULATIONS ON DEADLINES

Advisors may impose deadlines for the purpose of commenting and advising when the work is in progress. The student may not expect editorial comment, guidance, and advice on drafts of the thesis or versions of the project submitted after the eighth week of the semester in which the project is completed.

Two copies of the I.S. thesis are due in the Registrar's office by 4:00 p.m. on the first day of classes following Spring Recess or four weeks prior to the end of classes for Spring Semester, whichever date is sooner. (In the case of a double major, a third copy should be made for the additional department.)

Any delay in turning in a thesis beyond the deadlines specified above automatically establishes the grade of I for the thesis. The conditions for changing the I to a passing grade will be established by the Dean of the Faculty after consultation with the student's advisor. The I automatically becomes NC two weeks after the deadline for the submission of the thesis unless prior approval for an extension of the I has been given by the Dean. No thesis turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of Honors without the unanimous vote of the Russian Studies faculty and the approval of the Dean.

XI. THE ORAL EXAM

In the weeks following submission of the final copy of the project to the Registrar, the student is examined by his or her advisor and by a second reader, at a time that is mutually convenient for all three participants. The oral exam inquires into the project's purposes and results, including questions of style, form, and strategy. In all cases, the second reader takes primary responsibility for conducting the oral. The student's performance on the oral exam is considered by the two readers in determining the grade. Upon completion of the oral exam, the advisor and second reader will immediately determine whether or not the independent study thesis is judged to be satisfactory, and will so inform the student. After further consultation, and within 48 hours of the oral, the advisor will inform the student of the grade that the project has received. The second reader is responsible for providing the student with a written evaluation of the thesis prior to the end of the semester in which the student is registered for I.S. 452. The prime copy of the I.S. is returned to the student; the advisor retains the second copy. Students may be asked to make minor alterations before the copy is accepted.

XII. COLLEGE REGULATIONS ON GRADING

In evaluating the I.S. project the faculty readers will consider the following elements and the manner in which these are combined in the realization of the project:

Content: The choice of the I.S. Thesis topic should reflect a considered judgment as to the significance and manageability of the subject, and the completed project should represent a serious and systematic attempt to deal with it by having used effectively the available resources. An awareness of what has and has not been accomplished should be part of the presentation of the project.

Method: The methods chosen should be stated and followed. The choices involved in the design should be made clear, and an appreciation of its uses and limits should be one of the results of the project.

Form: Form is an essential element of clear expression. The project should reflect explicit attention to the requirements of form for a given discipline, field, or mode of expression.

Independent Study projects are graded as follows:

Honors: Outstanding in terms of content, method, and form.

Good: Significantly above average in terms of content, method, and form.

Satisfactory: Acceptable overall in terms of content, method, and form, though consideration may be given to balancing weakness in one area by strength in another.

No credit: Seriously deficient in content, method, or form with no compensating strengths in other areas.

XIII. DEPARTMENTAL HONORS AND THE I.S. THESIS

A graduating senior will receive honors in the major by attaining all of the following:
-A cumulative grade point average of 3.500 or better for all courses completed in the Department of Russian Studies.
-A cumulative average of 3.200 or better for all courses completed at the College.
-Honors for the I.S. Thesis or the unanimous vote of the Russian Studies faculty that the student's overall performance is of the quality to merit honors in the major.

The Department of Russian Studies reserves the right to make changes and additions in successive editions of this guide. (Last revised: Fall 2010)

Attached appendices: Sample Title Page
The Tradition of I.S. in Russian Studies

[updated: September 2011]

[sample title page]

The College of Wooster

TITLE OF THE THESIS

(CAPITALIZED AND CENTERED)

[NO college seal, please]

by

Student's Name

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of Independent Study

Russian Studies 451-452

Supervised by

Advisor's Name

Date submitted

XIV. THE TRADITION OF I.S. IN RUSSIAN STUDIES

Senior I.S. Projects

The End of a Nation: Russian Nationalism as a Reaction to Westernization

Defining Episodes in the History of the Russian Moderate Activist

Observing Political Identity Contestation Among the Political and Social Elites of the Russian Federation

The Battle for Russia's Last Sphere of Influence: Understanding American and Russian Interest in Central Asia and the Caucasus

Resisting the Faust Myth: A study of two Post-Goethe Faustian Texts

Translating "The Obstacle": An Exploration of the Concept of Self and the Symbol of the Window in Selected Works of Daniil Ivanovish Kharms

Doubt and faith in Dostoevskii's Later Novels: A Re-Evaluation of Bakhtin's Polyphonic Theory

Hope and Strength: Images of Women in Ivan Klima's Work

Mothers, Wives, Prisoners: Feminine Literary Perceptions of Stalin's Purges

Russian Foreign Policy, 1995-2002

Censorship and the Development of the Russian Media

The Return of the Black Hundreds: Anti-Semitic Social and Political Trends in Russia, 1988-1999

Chechens in Russian Literature and History

The Soviet Union's Foreign Aid Policy in Africa (double major: Political Science)

Marxism, Patriarchy, and "Bourgeois Feminism": The Position of Women in Soviet Russia

Why Vodka? Understanding the Russian's Obsession with Alcohol

Women's Travel Literature from Russia

Sustainable Development and the Indigenous Peoples of Siberia: Environmentalism with a Social Conscience

Power Maps & Pit-stops: Development of the 1993 Russian Constitution & Its Historical Context

L. N. Tolstoy's Discovery of Meaning in Life and Peace in Death

The Emergence and Evolution of Russian Women's Prose

Soviet Mass Media: *Pravda* and the Untruths of the Chernobyl Accident

The 1993 Split of Czechoslovakia: Contributors to Ethnic Tension between the Czechs and Slovaks

A Critical Study of Peter Chaadaev's Philosophy

Junior I.S. Topics

Redefining the Slavophile-Westernizer Controversy in Soviet Literature

Nikolai Gogol's Definition of Context and Anti-Context for the Slavic Soul as Outlined in *Taras Bulba* and *Dead Souls*

The Guitar Poetry of Vladimir Vysotsky: An Analysis of Selected Songs

Reflections of the Past: An Analysis of Fictional Accounts of the Stalinist Era

The Rise and Fall of Ukrainian Nationalism

The Russian Orthodox Church during the Stalin Era

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina:* The Role of Women in 19th-Century Russia

Russian and German Fairy Tales: Their Commonality in Structure Russian Holy Fools

Ecoglasnost: Environmental Awareness in the Former Soviet Union and Today

The Devil in Russian and American Folklore and Religion

Cossacks Yesterday and Today

Russian Music: Four Genres in Post-Soviet Pop Culture

Ivan Klima: A Post-Modern Lover

Contemporary Russian Marriage Practices and the Mail-Order Bride

The Delicate Balance of Literary Translation: The Case of Anton Chekhov's *The Lady with the Dog*