

A GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT STUDY IN RUSSIAN STUDIES

The College of Wooster

I. PHILOSOPHY OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

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, writing, and translation 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 (I.S.) 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 (JUNIOR I.S.)

Russian Studies 401 (Junior I.S.) 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 that semester off-campus, in the fall of junior year. The course will consist of weekly individual conferences. Occasionally a seminar type approach will take the place of individual meetings.

Option 1: Research Paper

In conjunction with the instructor, students will choose a topic, research that topic, and write a paper (typically 30-35 pages). The research paper must include a component of translation. In most cases the text would be a short article or a primary text related to the topic of the paper (8-10 pages). The translation is to be included as an appendix to the paper.

Option 2: Translation Project

In conjunction with the instructor, students will choose a topic, research that topic, determine a text or set of texts related to it, and translate them throughout the semester. The translation should be prefaced by a critical introduction that contextualizes the project, provides historical/theoretical/literary background, establishes the main themes and probes into the main questions of the translated text.

Choice of Topic

Students are 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.

Logistics

In pursuing both options, students will find and use major bibliographies and resources valuable

in the study of Russian culture and language. Students will also practice organizational skills, project planning, writing, and editing. Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to do readings required by the instructor and to meet deadlines agreed upon with the instructor. A digital copy, as well as two hard 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 (SENIOR I.S.)

1. 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.

2. What Kind of Thesis Can I Write?

- **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. For example, a Math and Russian double major with an interest in space exploration may write the Russian Studies part of their thesis by analyzing Russian cultural production (film, fiction, journalistic writing) devoted to space exploration. See the list of past I.S. Thesis projects appended here.

- **Resources**

Before making a final choice of topic, it is the student's responsibility to confirm the availability, in consultation with the instructor, early on in the semester, of the availability of necessary resources through the College library. 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.

- **Project Type**

Students can write:

- (a) an analytical research paper. Typically, a research paper will include an introduction, two or three chapters, and a conclusion;
- (b) pursue a translation project with an extensive critical introduction and an analytical conclusion. Ideally the text chosen for this project will not have been translated previously. If a student chooses a text with an existing translation, a justification should be given (e.g. existing translations are outdated; the student will annotate and footnote their translation, etc.);
- (c) produce a research-based theatrical or musical performance, film, or piece of creative writing, all of which should include a critical introduction.

A translation component is required for all projects. 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 (short story, poem, or an excerpt from a longer prose or poetic work), a journalistic text, or even a film script may be appropriate. Every I.S. Thesis must include an annotated critical bibliography; sample entries are attached.

- **Alternative Options**

Students are allowed to undertake alternative projects with the approval of the instructor. Think creatively and bring your ideas to the instructor!

3. Length, Format and Documentation

The length depends on the nature of the topic and type of project and should be discussed with the advisor. For research papers, most topics cannot be adequately treated in 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.

Depending on the type of your I.S. project, citation style and bibliography must be agreed upon with the instructor and consistently conform to either the MLA or Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style. A sample title page is attached.

4. Resources on Writing, Style and Formatting

1. OWL – Purdue Online Writing Lab https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
2. Birkenstein, Cathy, and Gerald Graff. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. WW Norton & Company, 2018.
3. Corrigan, Timothy, and Graham Corrigan. *A short guide to writing about film*. Vol. 7. Pearson Education, 2014.
4. White, Elwyn Brooks, and William Strunk. *The elements of style*. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

5. Resources on Translation and the Russian Language

1. Национальный корпус русского языка / Russian National Corpus
<https://ruscorpora.ru/new/en/index.html>
2. Академик / Academic (Russian Dictionaries, Thesauruses and Encyclopedias)
<https://dic.academic.ru/>
3. Multitran (User-generated English-Russian-English Dictionary)
<https://www.multitran.com/m.exe?l1=1&l2=2>

6. 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.

7. 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 5:00 p.m. on the first day of classes following Spring Recess (I.S. Monday). 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.

8. Overall Schedule

While specific deadlines may vary with individual students, the following model is suggested as an effective schedule for a research paper project:

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 and grading rubric
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.

9. The Oral Exam

In the weeks following submission of the final copy of the project to the Registrar, the student is examined by their 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. Students may be asked to speak about their methodological choices, how study at Wooster has impacted their choice of topic, and about all the questions raised and assertions made in the I.S. thesis. 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.

10. College Regulations on Grading

Student and adviser will agree upon a rubric that will be used for the project. The rubric will be finalized in week 4 of the Fall semester.

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.

11. 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 2021)

Attached appendices:

1. Sample Title Page
2. Sample I.S. Projects in Russian Studies

[updated: September 2021]

[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

Sample I.S. Projects in Russian Studies

Senior I.S. Projects

Kindred Ideologies: Fascism and Communism in Vasily Grossman's Life and Fate

Make Some Noize: Rap as a Form of Political Protest in Russia (double major with Global and International Studies)

What it Means to be Lithuanian in America and what Russia's Got to Do with it: Ethnic Identity Formation among Later Generations in a Diasporic Community (double major with sociology)

The Memorialization and Legacy of the Soviet Playwright Aleksandr Vampilov in the Irkutsk Region

The First Spacewalk: An Exploration of the Mathematical and Cultural Implications of the Space Race (double major with mathematics)

The Babushka: Between Past and Future in Contemporary Russian Literature

Once upon a Regime: Nazi and Soviet Propaganda in Children's Literature in the 1930s and 40s (double major with German)

The Lady in Red: Fashion and Femininity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia 1922-2000

Our Crimea or Our Can of Worms? (Крым наш или наш Крым?): A Russian Media Portrayal of the 2014 Crimean Crisis

Russian Military Adaptation to a Changing Battlefield: A Study of Military Reforms after 1992 and the 2008 Conflict in Georgia

The Adulteress and the Patriarchy: The Search for Female Independence and Autonomy in Anna Karenina and The Awakening

The Soviet War in Afghanistan and the Application of U.S. Special Forces: A Combat Analysis (double major with mathematics)

With or Without the State's Consent: Female Sexuality in the Soviet Union During WWII

You Laugh and Cry from the Same Mouth: A Exploration of Successful Aging in Contemporary Russia

Chekhov: A Response to Romantic Solipsism in 'The Little Trilogy'

Putin and the Russian Federation: Securing Power at the Expense of Democracy

In the Shadow of the prophet: Shalamov and the New Prose of the Gulag

Chechnya: Death, Journalism and History

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

Defining Episodes in the History of the Russian Moderate Activist

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

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

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

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

Censorship and the Development of the Russian Media

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

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

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

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*