

Congratulations on your offer to read Beginners' Russian at Somerville! The course is intended for students with no experience of the language, and aims to give you a thorough grounding in the language from the beginning. We therefore recommend that you do not embark on studying Russian by yourself before you arrive. You can, of course, learn the Cyrillic alphabet or listen to simple audio materials online – but we recommend that you stop there.

As soon as you come up to Oxford you will need to purchase the course textbook: *Rus': A Comprehensive Course in Russian* by Sarah Smyth and Elena Crosbie. Note that you will *not* need to buy the audio materials for the textbook which are available in Canvas (https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/168683/pages/rai-audio-materials?module_item_id=1749564). You will also need a medium-sized Russian-English / English-Russian dictionary, such as those published by Oxford University Press or Collins. After you have begun to study Russian, you will also need a Russian reference grammar, I would recommend Terence Wade, *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* (4th edition, 2020).

The best way of preparing for the course would be to read up on Russian history and culture, and start exploring Russian literature in translation. Below is a list of suggested readings and introductory works. The list is intended for browsing, you should not try to read all of this!

I would also like to say something about the Year Abroad. As you will have gathered from your interview in December, one of the requirements for our beginners' course in Russian is that you should spend the second year on an approved language course. After the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it is naturally no longer possible to have this language course in Russia, and our current beginners are going to spend their year abroad in Tallinn, Estonia. We will keep you updated about developments affecting your year group.

Under the current arrangements, the course fees for the course in Tallinn are paid by the Faculty. As is the case for the Year Abroad in any language combination you will need to cover the cost of your flights, insurance and visa, and pay for local accommodation and subsistence. All students on the Year Abroad are liable for a course fee set by the university (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/fees/abroad>). The total cost should not be greater than a year at Oxford, but if you have difficulty in getting the money together, the college and the Faculty may be able to help with small hardship grants, and there may be grants through the UK's Turing scheme.

I look forward to seeing you in October! If you have any queries, please do contact me at hanne.eckhoff@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk.

Best wishes,

Hanne Eckhoff

Associate Professor of Russian Linguistics and Slavonic Comparative Philology
Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, lecturer in Russian for Somerville College

Suggested introductory works

It can be difficult to appreciate Russian literature without knowledge of the historical and cultural background – these books may be helpful.

Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (1997), and *A History of The Soviet Union: Final Edition* (1992)

C. Kelly, *Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (2001).

L. Kochan: *Russia in Revolution - 1890-1918* (1966)

D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian literature: Comprising A history of Russian literature and Contemporary Russian literature* (1949 and more recent issues)

D. Saunders: *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform - 1801-1881* (1992/2014)

Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Putin* (2003).

V. Terras, *A History of Russian Literature* (1993)

J. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour* (1992)

19th- and 20th-century Russian literature in translation

Getting to know some of these authors will help you to make choices about options after your year abroad.

19th-century authors:

PUSHKIN: short lyrics and the poem *The Bronze Horseman*; any of the prose works (e.g. *The Queen of Spades*, and *The Captain's Daughter*).

LERMONTOV: the novel *A Hero of Our Time*.

GOGOL: the 'Petersburg Tales', including *The Overcoat*, *Nevsky Prospect*, *The Nose*, and *Diary of a Madman*; also his play *The Government Inspector*, and his novel *Dead Souls*.

DOSTOEVSKY: the four great novels - *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, and *The Possessed (The Devils)*, as well as his shorter novel *Notes from Underground*.

GONCHAROV: the novel *Oblomov*.

TOLSTOY: his autobiographical *Childhood and Youth*; the story *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*; and the two great novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

TURGENEV: the novel *Fathers and Sons*, and the *Huntsman's Sketches*.

CHEKHOV: any selection of short stories, and the four major plays - *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*.

20th-century authors:

ZAMYATIN: the novel *We*, and any of his short stories.

ZOSHCHENKO: any of his short stories, especially of the 1920s.

BABEL: his cycle of short stories *Red Cavalry*.

BULGAKOV: his novels *The Master and Margarita* and *The White Guard*, as well as *The Heart of a Dog* and *A Young Doctor's Notebook*.

GROSSMAN, Vasily: his epic novel of WWII, *Life and Fate*.

PASTERNAK: *Doctor Zhivago*.

VLADIMOV: his short novel *Faithful Ruslan*.

SOLZHENITSYN: the short novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and his two longer novels *Cancer Ward* and *The First Circle*.