

WHY RUSSIAN AT MAC:

1. Russian & the liberal arts Macalester & comparison schools. (See the table "Russian at Comparison schools" on this site)

- ALL our comparison schools offer Russian
- the large majority offer Russian majors
- the 3 FTE size of the Russian department is "just right" compared to our comparison schools—we are close to the 15-school averages for tenure-track faculty (2.4—we have a bit less at 2.0) and non-tenure track faculty (0.7, we are at 1.0). The 3 FTE configuration was a result of consolidating part-time positions and hence an upgrading more of quality than quantity. Even when we were at our smallest we were never below 2 FTEs.
- looking at the course offerings and requirements as well as supporting faculty in other departments, Macalester is quite competitive and our curriculum is more innovative than most in terms of interdisciplinarity and non-canonical offerings
- Macalester has had a Russian department ever since the late 1940s, when we raised the UN flag. Unlike many programs which emerged after Russia threatened to overtake the US in the space race with Sputnik in 1957, Macalester Russian was built on hope rather than fear for the future. Macalester has supported it in this spirit ever since.

2. Russian as a world language & ethnic diversity/multi-culturalism.

- Russian is the native language of ca. 150 million citizens of the Russian Federation.
- Russian is still one of the five official languages of the UN.
- Russian ranks with English, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, and Spanish as a major world language. It is still the lingua franca of the former Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia and closely related to the West and South Slavic languages in Eastern and Central Europe—those parts of Europe that will be most affected by economic development in the 21st century.
- Russian is one of the languages heard in the US from Brighton Beach, NY, to Alaska, to Highland Park, St. Paul—in MN it is the fastest growing ethnic group. According to the 1990 census some 470,000 Soviet immigrants arrived in the US and since then the number has more or less doubled. Russian is also a major language for the sciences, especially physics, as attested by two of this year's Nobel laureates.
- Russian culture has always spanned the East/West and North/South divides and has always interrogated questions such of Eurocentrism (Tolstoy calls Europe "a certain kind of civilization of a small corner of the world") and Orientalism. It is the discourse of a multi-ethnic Federation, a former empire that in its heyday included Central Asia and Eastern Europe and still today wants to claim the Caucasus, which involves imperial, ethnic, anti-terroristic, and linguistic negotiations.

- Russia/the Soviet Union provides its own version/s of multiculturalism, useful as comparison to the US "melting-pot" model. For instance, in a May 4, 2003 NYT article, Bill Keller pointed to the incorporation of the Kazan Tatars into the Russian Federation as a model for intercultural interaction. We all know the Russia-Chechnia model for unsuccessful incorporation.
- Russia has enormous natural resources, such as oil, a highly educated population, and huge potential for economic growth and cultural development, in other words, though not a super-power, still a significant global partner.
- Macalester's Russian curriculum has developed over the last couple of decades to strengthen its Russian language/literature core, while simultaneously increasing courses with multi-cultural implications, e.g. "Culture and Revolution," "Orientalism and Empire: Russia's Literary South," or "Translation as cross-cultural Communication." Closing the Russian program would significantly diminish our liberal arts focus on multiculturalism and internationalism.

3. Russia across the curriculum.

- Russian culture is a lasting and dynamic phenomenon, an obvious part of world literature, theater, music, ballet, or painting—all of which we teach in our courses and all of which resonates with other departments' offerings: the History department offers several courses on Russian/Soviet history, the Economics department several courses on transitional Marxist systems, IS has recently added expertise in human rights issues in Central/Eastern Europe, Tadjikistan is one of the foci of a current Geography faculty member, and Mark Mazullo in the Music department is working on a project on Shostakovich. Our courses are cross-listed with IS, HCST, WGS, ENG and accepted for credit towards other language/literature majors as well as English majors.
- Student initiatives such as last year's colloquium with Ilyas Akhmedov, a Chechen minister in exile brought together faculty from departments such as Political Science, History, and Russian, as well as ca.150 students from across the curriculum.
- Taking our courses will help students understand the rise and fall of other totalitarian cultures and philosophers, such as Marx or Nietzsche. Soviet society is particularly relevant to the world today, even as the Soviet empire has disintegrated: worldwide revolutions follow many of the patterns of Russia in 1917, many aspects of the Chinese economy can only be understood with relation to Soviet Marxism-Leninism, and the toppled effigies of Saddam Hussein we've just cheered are very familiar to those of us who've followed the toppling of Stalin, Lenin, or Dzerzhinskii or visited the fallen sculpture parks in Budapest or Moscow.

4. Russian and Macalester internationalism on campus and in students' careers.

- The Russian program, together with other language/literature/culture programs on campus, prepares students to be citizens of the world. One of the best ways to understand another culture is through mastering a foreign language, which gives us at least some skills needed to see another culture as participants/observers

- rather than linguistically challenged outsiders and to gain new perspectives on our own culture.
- We bring Russian Native Speakers from Russia to live with our students in a Russian House and teach oral proficiency labs and we require that our majors study abroad.
 - Our faculty has helped develop and direct the ACM program in Krasnodar since its inception in 1987 and we consult with and periodically host representatives of other study abroad programs (Boston U Internships, CIEE, SIT, etc.).
 - Our faculty conducts research in Russia annually and maintains close contacts with colleagues abroad.
 - In addition to the traditional career opportunities in teaching at US universities and colleges or working for the US government, job opportunities for Russian speakers in Russia and the US are greater than ever in NGOs, joint ventures, publishing houses, print and broadcast media, Russian schools, marketing and advertising, aerospace, and computer engineering. A knowledge of Russian language and culture opens more doors than ever for our students and a double major in Russian and something else makes for a particularly strong career profile.
 - Our alumni return to work in Russia after graduation as lawyers, at the embassy, as journalists or English instructors in Russia, as consultants, in the Peace Corps, etc. (see "Response from the Russian Department" on this site for details!), they do well in graduate school, and many of them actually use their linguistic skills in their careers.

5. Regional Minnesota service

- The Macalester Russian program is regionally important: we are the only full-fledged Russian program in the ACTC and we serve the needs of numerous ACTC students, including majors that are not reflected in the official Macalester statistics. Last year, for instance, we had 5 Russian majors from other ACTC schools while this year we have at least three-- and several other ACTC students take the bulk of their Russian courses at Macalester for their individually designed majors completed at their home schools.
- The ACTC connection as well as the programmatic cooperation we have with other regional colleges and universities (mainly Carleton, St. Olaf's, and the U of M) have been important for our students in projects such as the annual RCEES student conference/paper competition which prepares our students for future public appearances and cooperation, or joint sponsoring of performers such as the folklore ensemble Zolotoi ples a few years back.
- Connections with the U of M Slavic department have always been friendly; we've had joint DOE grants, joint sponsorship of cultural events, our faculty have taught in the U of M Slavic department and their faculty have taught here. Nevertheless, the Slavic program at the U has been allowed to atrophy over the years: they no longer offer PhDs or even MAs and their faculty is not much bigger than ours while their course offerings are not as rich as ours. The upturn in enrollments is

affecting the U—all their elementary Russian courses, for instance were fully enrolled this semester and closed.

6. Low enrollments, geo-political vacillations, and current trends. (See the response from the Russian department on this site)

- Like all language enrollments, Russian enrollments are now stabilized after some years of a downturn and there are clear signs that enrollments are rising over the last few years
- Macalester Russian enrollments look comparable to those at other liberal arts colleges, virtually all of which show significant rises in elementary Russian language course
- Russian majors numbers given by Institutional Research are misleading since several ACTC students graduate with Macalester Russian majors. The number of registered majors at Macalester is larger than that at Berkeley we were told by Berkeley Chair, Irina Paperno who gave the keynote speech at our student conference last spring.
- The ratio of Russian majors to enrollments are excellent—in other words, our retention rate is better than that in many other departments.
- Partly our enrollments are a function of the instability in faculty presence in the department, due to grants, administrative duties, study abroad duties, and in general faculty excellence.
- Partly our low enrollments (compared to other departments at Macalester) are a function of low enrollments in our upper level language courses: Russian is a more difficult language than most languages we teach (German, French, Spanish)
- Russian is the **only** case where a program's existence is threatened solely by numbers rather than "first-order" criteria—see EPAG's "Discussion paper" on this site. Who'll be next—there will ALWAYS be a department with the lowest enrollments. . .

7. Parallels at Macalester.

- The Classics Department was threatened with closing several times since the 1960s. Provost Lucius Garvin, forestalled the first threat by pronouncing: "A liberal arts college with any self respect must have a Classics Department." More recently a Classics faculty member who had moved into the Art department recommended deleting Classics—unsuccessfully, as it turned out and after subsequent good hires Classics is now thriving
- We have heard proposals for introducing new languages into the Macalester curriculum: Chinese and/or Arabic. While we would welcome a more language oriented curriculum, we know from experience that it takes many years and several faculty members to establish departmental curricular excellence—we have accomplished this in Russian. These two languages will also be fraught with many of the problems Russian is facing. They are even more difficult to learn than Russian and hence it takes even longer to gain usable proficiency. Upper

level language classes will be essential, and enrollments in 3rd and 4th year courses are likely to be no higher than in Russian at those levels. Most comparison schools do not offer these languages, and hiring currently takes place only at large research institutions. Chinese and Arabic will no doubt be just as volatile as Russian over the long term and as dependent on geo-political conjunctures. Can Macalester afford them if we can't afford Russian?

8. Last outside review of Russian and our response to it.

- The reviewers praised our commitment to interdisciplinary ventures and courses reflecting the post-Soviet transition; since the review we have not only maintained that commitment, but expanded the number of cross-listed courses. We now have courses on: Revolution and Culture (covering Russia, France, Iran), Russian Religious experience (covering Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and other religions in post-soviet Russia), Translation as Cross-Cultural Communication (which covers translation theory and applies it to texts in any number of languages), Orientalism and Empire (Russian literature of the Caucasus region analyzed in the context of Orientalist, Eurasian, and Postcolonial theories and in the context of the lingering Chechen wars), Mass Culture under Communism, and several recent topics courses.
- The reviewers suggested that we "English" our offerings on Russian women's writing and cooperate with WGST. We have developed a new gender based topics course on "Dandies: Textual and Sexual Vacillations" which was approved by WGST, but hesitate to make it a permanent course since our enrollments have been marginal (lack of advertising? Problems in advising structure?). Our latest hire took the WGS needs into account: Hilde Hoogenboom has expertise on Russian women writers, and would gladly teach special courses.
- The reviewers praised our language program and we have continued to improve it since then with new technological supplements. They felt that we needed more upper level courses in Russian and we have addressed that by assuring that our Senior Seminar, conducted in Russian, varies in content so that students may repeat it. In addition we have offered students co-curricular ways of keeping up their Russian after returning from a semester abroad by staging Russian plays two years in a row and scheduling unofficial conversation hours and cultural activities in the Russian House. More upper level courses taught in Russian are unrealistic, given the current low language enrollments, but we are prepared to create new courses, should the situation change.

9. Lean and mean Russian curriculum:

- Anticipating, directions in the Slavic field at a time of nationally dwindling language enrollments, we have developed in the "right" direction, streamlining the traditional language and literature curriculum, while at the same time moving beyond it into other areas of culture,. A couple of years ago we redesigned our major to better reflect both developments in the field and our own teaching interests and to provide richer and more rigorous options for our students.

- We have cut down the number of sections in our language curriculum to the bare minimum (i.e. we no longer offer multiple sections of any language courses, nor do we offer out-of-phase courses—which naturally has an impact on enrollment figures) and we have found ways to "import" Native Speakers every year who not only live with our students in the Russian House, but also teach oral proficiency sections (1 1/2 hour per week) for all our language courses, each faculty member coordinating his/her courses with the native Speaker, and all of us sharing the responsibility of running co-curricular programming in the Russian House.