

Historical Russian Grammar.  
Slavic 2702 Term: Fall 2012  
Course meets: MW, CL1432, 2:30-3:45  
Instructor: Oscar Swan  
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Office Hours: any day after class, or by appointment.

*Overview.* This course is NOT about early Russian culture, civilization, and history, or about Russian religious thought – although every effort was made to select Old Russian texts that are interesting and informative in this regard. Instead it is a course that examines how the modern Russian language evolved from the language of 11<sup>th</sup> East Slavic in both its sound inventory and in its grammatical dimension.

*Course Prerequisites.* Participants hopefully will have a good knowledge of Russian and familiarity with basic linguistic concepts and related terminology such as: tense, aspect, case, nominal phrase functions, phoneme, allophone, morpheme, allomorph, affix, suffix, prefix, ending, and others as needed. A decent glossary of linguistic terms that can be applied to Russian may be found in the back of the instructor's Russian Sounds and Inflections (Columbus, Ohio: Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2011)

*Course Goals.* The course aims to provide an overview of the changes in the Russian language, in both phonology, morphology and, to a lesser extent, syntax as these things developed from the earliest attested 11<sup>th</sup> century documents to the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the termini being the *Ostromirovo Evangelie* of 1096 and the *Zitie protopopa Avvakuma* (1620–1682) *im samim napisannoe*. The period from the 11<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries, coinciding largely with the literature of Old Rus', may be termed "Old Russian", while the period from the 15<sup>th</sup>–early 17<sup>th</sup> century, by and large reflecting the Muscovite period, can be called "Middle Russian". Beyond that, from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one has "Modern Russian".

*Expanded Overview of the Subject.* Students of the history of the Russian language are fortunate to have access to about a thousand years of Russian writing, including an exceedingly rich trove of writing from the earliest times. These writings consist, obviously, of religious writing: bible translations, liturgies, sermons, and saints' lives – but also of chronicles, secular tales, epic narratives, travel literature, codes of laws and conduct, alongside records of language used for everyday correspondence and for various official purposes, especially judicial.

Particularly fortunate for the student of medieval Russian is the fact that an exceedingly logical and, for the most part, consistent orthography is in effect from the earliest times and barely differs from the orthography used in the language today. Students will find most Old Russian words to be the same as, similar to, or guessable from, the words of modern Russian. Questions to be asked and answered in a course on historical Russian grammar may be divided into "big" and "little" ones, but most are of the form: What is the situation with X in Old Russian, and what is its situation in Modern Russian, and what stages led to the change from one state to the other? Others can assume the form:

“What were the repercussions of historical change Y on the phonological (or grammatical) structure of Russian?”

Among “big” questions to be answered – the sort of question one might expect on a final written examination – are:

1. The consequences for Russian phonology and morphology of the “fall of the jers”.
2. The consequences for Russian phonology and morphology of the change of /e/ to /o/ before hard consonants, and the subsequent merger of jat’ with /e/.
3. The development of the Russian tense/aspect system.
4. Historical developments in Russian nominal inflection, from the beginning to modern times.

“Little” questions usually focus on some aspect of one of the “big” question, for example: What was the fate of:

- a. the historical consonant stems
- b. the historical masculine i-. -stems
- c. the historical masculine u-. -stems
- d. the verb ‘be’
- e. the perfect tenses
- f. the imperfect tense, or the aorist
- g. the imperfective auxiliary budu
- h. the gerunds, whether perfective or imperfective
- i. the instrumental of predicate noun and of second object
- j. developments in noun gender and subgender (animate vs. inanimate)
- k. developments in the expression of possession and so on.
- l. the history of the dual number

*Dropbox.* Most material for this course will be distributed by and available through a Dropbox folder to which course participants will be required to subscribe (it is free). You will receive an invitation to Dropbox from the instructor. Simply follow the instructions for registration.

*Resources.* This is a text-based course, but it is not primarily a course on textological analysis. Consequently, we will read texts in a somewhat regularized orthography, with missing or unclear words filled in. Despite the grammatical orientation of the course, for the most part we will read texts that are interesting by virtue of their content, not only because of the linguistic interest they present.

Most texts to be read in this course may be found at:

- a) <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=2070> volumes 1-12. One reason you may prefer this site as a source is that it offers translations of texts into modern Russian which will help you to understand the Old Russian texts.

b) You may feel free to read translations of texts into English from any source. The richest collection is Zenkovsky, Serge, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles and Tales* (Penguin Books, 1974), available, for example, through Amazon.

c) Most texts read in standard courses on Old Russian literature may be found in the iLibrary of the University of Pittsburgh's Russian Dictionary at: <http://polish.slavic.pitt.edu/russian/> These texts are to a considerable extent linked to and interactive with the site's dictionaries.

*The required textbooks for this course are:*

d) Borkovskij V.I. and Kuznecov P.S.. (B&K, 1963) *Istoričeskaja grammatika russkogo jazyka* (Mocow: Akademija Nauk, available in reprint at the Book Center or from an on-line source. This has been the standard work on the topic, containing the standard analyses of the problems raised in such a course, ever since it was published.

e) Lunt, H.G. (2012). *A Concise Dictionary of Russian of the XI-XVII Centuries*, ed. and with inflectional tables by Oscar E. Swan (Columbus: Slavica), available in the book center. The book contains inflectional tables that you will find useful, since Borkovskij and Kuznecov are rather skimpy in this regard. ISBN 978-089357-397-3

f) Sreznevskij, I.I. (1895) *Materialy dlja slovarja drevnerusskago jazyka*, vols. I-. -III. (Sanktpeterburg: Tipografija Imperatorskoj Adademii Nauk). An essential resource for any scholarly work on Old Russian lexicography. The volumes may be downloaded from: <http://polish.slavic.pitt.edu/Sreznevskij/>

*Articles.* Articles for Reading are contained in the Dropbox folder under this title. They will be assigned as the course progresses.

*Supplementarty Reading.*

g) An excellent introduction to Slavic philology, the history of the Slavs, and the origin of Slavic and East Slavic writing, may be found in Alexander Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic* (Yale University Press).

In addition to Schenker, the following books have been placed on 2-hour reserve in Hillman library:

\*Kiparsky, Valentin. *Russische historische Grammatik*. Band II.

\*Vlasto, A. P. *A linguistic history of Russia up to the end of the Eighteenth Century* (Clarendon Press: Oxford).

\*Ivanov, V.V. *Istoričeskaja grammatika russkogo jazyka*. PG21101.I88.1990

\*Lomonosov, M. *Rossijskaja grammatika*. PG2103.L6.1975

\* Matthews, William K. *Russian Historical Grammar*. PG2101.M442

\*Sokolsky, A. A. *A History of the Russian Language*. PG2075

*Course Expectations.* Tests and assignments in this course will be open-book with a time limit. You will not be asked to reproduce specific grammatical forms, but you will need to recognize them passively. The more time you spend in the beginning memorizing

such things as inventories of sounds, lists of grammatical endings, and rules of sound-changes, the easier your work will be as the course progresses.

Listen to lectures on “big questions” and either understand them or ask questions on them until you do understand them. Find and read corresponding sections in B&K or other works relating to the “big questions” until you would be able to answer questions on them on a written test.

Read, understand, and be able to translate into English and comment grammatically on the assigned texts. By ‘comment grammatically’ is meant: be able to identify forms and tell, in rigorous terms, what is their identity and what is their function is in the sentence in which they occur.

Be able to comment on a text, whether known or unknown, as to its characteristic innovative or archaic features. Be able on such basis to identify the approximate date of a text on the basis of its features.

*Presentation.* Each person in the course will choose, write a report (approximately five pages), and give a classroom presentation on, a “small” topic of Russian historical grammar (see the list of suggestions above, to which you are free to add, with the instructor’s permission).

*Lecture Notes.* Lecture notes, summarizing the instructor’s lectures on the grammatical and other aspects of texts, will be published following the lecture on Dropbox in the folder entitled Lecture Notes. You should read these, as they will give a good idea of the points the instructor feels are important and on which examination questions may be given.

*Examinations and Grading.* There will be a midterm and a final examination. The grade will be determined as follows: midterm 20%, presentation 20%, final 30%, classwork: 30%.

*Tentative Order of Assignments and Material to be Covered.* During the first several weeks we will review the Old Russian sound system and its system of nominal, pronominal, adjectival, and verbal inflection. As soon as reasonably possible we will begin to read and comment on Old Russian texts. Generally speaking, a text will be divided into parts, with each student being responsible for translating and commenting on (primarily linguistically) the text’s characteristics. Sometime during the initial weeks of the course, students should choose a given “small topic” (including the possibility of some topic of their choosing) on which to deliver a classroom presentation, and on which to write a short descriptive paper. The weeks following the introductory ones will generally be devoted to a given “big question”, consisting of lecture and classroom discussion. The final weeks of the course will be devoted both to readings and student presentations. Lectures by the instructor on “smaller questions” may be given at any time, the choice to be determined to an extent by which topics are chosen by students for classroom presentation. Textual selections are subject to change.

Week 1. Introduction to course. The OR sound system. Introduction to nominal inflection.

Week 2. Nominal inflection, continued. Adjectival inflection. Introduction to verb conjugation.

Week 3. Verb conjugation. *Povest' vremennykh let: Mest' Ol'gi*.

Week 4. The nasal vowels, their loss, and repercussions for the phonological and morphological system. *Ostromirovo Evangelie*.

Week 5. The “fall of the jers” and the repercussions for the phonological and morphological systems. *Ostromirovo Evangelie* (continued).

Week 6. The change of /'e/ to /'o/ before hard consonants, and the subsequent merger of jat' with /e/, and the effects on the phonological and morphological systems. *Aleksii čelovek božii*.

Week 7. The historical development of the Russian tense/aspect system. *Aleksii čelovek božii* (continued). Midterm Examination.

Week 8. The historical development of nominal declension. The loss of the dual and its reflection in the modern numeral system. *Slovo o polku igoreve*.

Week 9. The authenticity question of “Igor”. *Slovo o polku igoreve* (continued).

Week 10. Student presentations begin. *Povest' o Petre i Fevronii*.

Week 11. Student presentations. *Povest' o Drakule*

Week 12. Student presentations. *Povest' o razorenii Rjazani*.

Week 13. Student presentations. *Avvakum*.

Week 14. Student presentations. text to be announced (suggestions are welcome).

Week 15: Final Examination.