

Old Church Slavic - Spring 2008

Instructor: Oscar Swan, 1417 CL

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 4:00-5:00 or by appointment:
624-5707 or swan@pitt.edu (feel free to ask questions by e-mail)

Course Meets: Tuesdays and Fridays, 2:30-3:45, in 1432 CL

Required Materials

O. Swan, *Outline of Old Church Slavic Inflectional Morphology* (Berkeley Slavic Specialties).

The book is most easily available through Amazon.com.

O. Swan, *OCS Reader* to above.

O. Swan, *OCS Glossary* to above.

Recommended as background reading: Alexander M. Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. ISBN 9780300058468. The book is available on reserve in Hillman Library or through <Amazon.com> or <bestwebbuys.com>.

Course Overview. This is a course in: (a) the descriptive phonology and morphology of Old Church Slavic; and (b) OCS translation and textological criticism.

Background. Old Church Slav(on)ic (OCS) is the designation of the language in which the earliest Slavic writings appear. For the most part these consist of readings of the Gospels, Psalms, liturgies, sermons, prayers, and other religious texts, almost all of which are translations from Greek. OCS is studied today for both cultural and linguistic reasons. In Indo-European comparative linguistics it is studied as the earliest attested form of the Slavic branch of Indo-European. Since the modern Slavic languages can be traced to a language-state similar to what is reflected in the OCS manuscripts, this language also serves as a model to bear in mind when approaching the history and often even the synchronic description of the later individual languages. Because of its relatively transparent structure, OCS comprises an excellent corpus on which to practice principles of phonological, morphological, syntactic, and textological analysis.

Culturally, OCS was a medium of intellectual exchange among the early South and Eastern Slavs. The Church language had a profound impact on the literary development of Russian throughout its early and middle history. The language of Old Rus, including chronicles and other texts associated with that tradition, can best be approached by studying first the language of the earlier Slavic writings. Many Church Slavonic accretions survive in the contemporary Russian literary language in phonology, morphology, syntax and, especially, the lexicon.

Prerequisites. The course is open to those with at least a fourth-year knowledge of Russian or some other Slavic language, possibly to others upon application to and approval by the instructor. While most work will be in transcription, familiarity with the Cyrillic alphabet is essential.

Assignments. We will proceed through the morphology, word-class by word-class, beginning with nouns and moving on to adjectives, verbs, and participles, and we will begin to read as soon as we have enough nominal and verbal morphology to make this task feasible. Texts will be both normalized and not, preserving the gaps, scribal errors, and other quirks of the original manuscripts. Reading will focus not only on arriving at the correct translation of a given text but also at developing the ability to give thorough and thoughtful grammatical and textological explications. In this respect, the course should be of benefit to any prospective language teacher.

Grading. There will be a Midterm and a Final Examination, and possible quizzes (both announced and unannounced). The final examination will consist of two parts, given a week apart: a. ; morphology; b. translation and textual commentary. The final grade will be determined as follows: midterm 25%, quizzes 25%, morphology final 25%, translation final 25%.