Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program

Why study Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies?

The interdisciplinary study of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia creates informed citizens with in-depth understanding of this geopolitically and culturally critical world region, central to political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues of the present and the future. The University of Kansas Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies (REES) program covers a broad geographic region, home to rich and diverse cultures that have had an enormous impact on today’s world. Our program, collaborative and interdisciplinary in nature, offers you a unique opportunity to study both contemporary politics and medieval history, environmental problems and great works of literature and art, as well as multiple other related subjects. It offers opportunities to study abroad in a variety of culturally rich, exciting places. Crucially, it prepares you for a wide range of careers in research, business, government, and the nonprofit sector, with the opportunity to make a profound impact on both national and international level.

Undergraduate Programs

The Bachelor of Arts in Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies (REES) offers students a broad background in the languages, arts, literatures, histories, politics, and cultures of Russia, Ukraine, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and countries of the West Slavic (Poland, Czech Republic) and South Slavic (Balkan) regions. The program is interdisciplinary and draws on over 45 faculty members and courses from 14 different KU departments and schools.

Prospective majors should begin language study in a REES language of their choice as soon as possible. REES 110 Understanding Russia and Eastern Europe & REES 220 Societies and Cultures of Eurasia are both certified as meeting KU Core learning outcomes.

Graduate Programs

A KU masters degree in Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies (REES) offers future professionals a comprehensive and interdisciplinary knowledge of Russia, Ukraine, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and countries of the West Slavic (Poland, Czech Republic) and South Slavic (Balkan) regions. The program develops language competency appropriate for a range of careers in the government, business, law, international development and non-profit sectors. And for those students interested in pursuing a PhD, the REES M.A. prepares for advanced graduate study in literature and the arts, history, political science, geography, and other disciplines.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The KU REES program is interdisciplinary and draws on over 60 faculty members and courses from 17 different KU departments and schools. Most REES M.A. students have completed an undergraduate major in the social sciences or humanities prior to beginning their graduate study, but successful REES graduate students have come from any number of other academic disciplines including business, law, and the sciences.

Our program requires advanced level competence in a REES-area language, which includes: Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Slovene, Tajik/Farsi, Turkish, Ukrainian, Uyghur, and Yiddish. It is recommended that incoming graduate students have at least 2 years of former language study or participate in an intensive summer or semester language program before they begin their REES M.A. at KU.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The traditional time period for a REES M.A. is 2 years, although 18-month and 12-month (see REES M.A. FAST Track) options are available. Most graduate students begin their program in a fall semester. Successful graduates of the program will complete 30 credit hours of intensive REES language and area studies. The 30 credit hours are broken down as follows: 2 methodology seminars (6 CR); 3 courses in your area of concentration (9 CR); 4 elective disciplinary courses outside of your area of concentration (12 CR); 1 second-semester advanced language course (3 CR).

METHODOLOGY SEMINARS

REES graduate students are required to take 2 methodology seminars intended to develop their advanced research skills using interdisciplinary and advanced target language resources. REES 898 is normally taken at the beginning of the degree program, and emphasizes the learning of tools and methods necessary to study the REES world area. REES 899 is taken towards the end of the degree program. In this seminar, students write an interdisciplinary capstone research paper using materials in the student’s chosen target language.

AREA CONCENTRATION AND ELECTIVE COURSES

The REES M.A. program offers courses in 5 thematic areas. M.A. students will take 3 courses in the thematic area of their choosing, determined by their personal interests and professional goals. They are then required to take one elective disciplinary course in each of the other 4 thematic areas for a full and complete understanding of the REES world area. The 5 thematic areas are: 1) Literature and the Arts; 2) History; 3) Political Science; 4) Philosophy & Religion; 5) Economics, Business & Geography.

MA PORTFOLIO AND FINAL EXAM PROCEDURE

CREES has replaced the traditional written M.A. exam and thesis with a progressive academic examination model known as the M.A. portfolio, a body of work that showcases the student’s interdisciplinary knowledge and expertise of the REES world area. At the end of the student’s final semester, the portfolio is read by a committee of 3 graduate faculty and tested through a 90-minute oral examination.

ADMISSION

While a student’s GPA and GRE scores are helpful in determining his/her overall academic potential, the department uses a holistic approach toward admissions, looking at all elements of the application packet before making a decision (language preparation, transcripts, letters of recommendation, GRE scores, statement of intent). CREES reviews applications on a rolling basis and graduate students are able to begin their program in the Fall, Spring, or Summer semesters. If you would like to be considered for priority admission and funding, please submit all materials by January 1st.
Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

The Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies promotes language and area study in an integrated, interdisciplinary framework and in traditional academic disciplines. The center administers a co-major and minor and M.A. degree programs in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies and supports study abroad programs in the region, including in Croatia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The center also coordinates and sponsors conferences, lectures, theatre, and outreach activities of interest to KU students, faculty members, K-12 teachers, and the community. It serves as a resource to the state, the Great Plains, and the nation.

The Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies (CREES) at the University of Kansas (KU) has been a national leader for the study of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since 1959. Our purpose and objectives are to:

- Promote the study of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia within an integrated, interdisciplinary framework, as well as within each of the traditional academic disciplines;
- Promote the study of languages in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, at all levels of instruction and research;
- Promote better understanding of the societies and cultures of the Russian, East European and Eurasian area through exchanges of students, faculty, and other forms of cooperation with universities and other institutions in those areas;
- Promote the study of Slavic languages and of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia in schools and colleges throughout Kansas and the surrounding area;
- Encourage coordinate, sponsor and support activities of interest to the students and faculty in the Russian, East European and Eurasian area;
- Serve as a local, regional, and national resource to educational, government, business, and community constituencies seeking information about the Russian, East European and Eurasian area.

HISTORY

KU first offered Russian language to its students in 1943. KU has offered credentials in some variant of Slavic or Soviet & East European Studies since 1959, and a master's degree since 1968. It was first designated a US/ED National Resource Center in 1965. CREES Directors have included some of the top experts in Soviet and Russian history, Slavic Literature, Philosophy, and Political Science: Oswald P. Backus (1955-1965); Herb Ellison (1965-1968); Roy Laird (1969); James Scanlan (1969); William Fletcher (1970-1992); Maria Carlson (1993-2003); Paul D'Anieri (2003); Erik Herron (2003-2006); William J. Comer (2007); Edith W. Clowes (2008-2012); Mariya Y. Omelicheva (2012-2014); Vitaly Chernetsky (2015-present).

FACULTY

CREES has over 50 teaching faculty members, representing a broad range of cooperating departments of the KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and professional schools. Our faculty are internationally visible in their field and have extensive foreign experience. And our teaching faculty are supplemented by visiting foreign faculty and scholars who enhance & expand KU offerings and serve as regional resources each year.

Courses

REES 110. Understanding Russia and Eastern Europe. 3 Hours SC AE42 / S.
A multidisciplinary introduction to the former communist states of Russia, the western Newly Independent States, Central Europe, and the Balkans. The course addresses the geography and history of the region, as well as the cultures of its peoples, as presented in literature, film, and music. Special attention is devoted to the current political, economic, and social situations, as they are reflected by the transition from communism and the rise of nationalism. LEC.

REES 111. Understanding Russia and Eastern Europe, Honors. 3 Hours SC AE42 / S.
A multidisciplinary introduction to the former communist states of Russia, the western Newly Independent States, Central Europe, and the Balkans. The course addresses the geography and history of the region, as well as the cultures of its peoples, as presented in literature, film, and music. Special attention is devoted to the current political, economic, and social situations, as they are affected by the transition from communism and the rise of nationalism. Prerequisite: Open only to students in the University Honors Program, or by permission of instructor. LEC.

REES 177. First Year Seminar: ____. 3 Hours GE11 / U.
A limited-enrollment, seminar course for first-time freshmen, addressing current issues in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Course is designed to meet the critical thinking learning outcome of the KU Core. First-Year Seminar topics are coordinated and approved by the Office of First-Year Experience. Prerequisite: First-time freshman status. LEC.

REES 220. Societies and Cultures of Eurasia. 3 Hours NW AE42 / S.
A broad, survey-type course that examines all the former Soviet republics-Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan-with additional coverage of neighboring regions. The course addresses the history of the region, literature, culture, geography, religion, and the building of post-Soviet states and societies. LEC.

REES 221. Societies and Cultures of Eurasia, Honors. 3 Hours NW AE42 / S.
Examines the unique cultures and societies of the Eurasian region (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and to a lesser degree, Russia, Mongolia and Afghanistan). For the better part of the 20th Century, this distinct region of the world was hidden beneath the communist veneer of the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the USSR, the countries of this region are returning to their historic roots, and this course introduces students to the history, politics, economics, literature and general culture of these countries. Open only to students admitted to the University Honors Program or by permission of instructor. LEC.

REES 480. Topics in Russian and East European Studies: ____. 1-3 Hours H.
Interdisciplinary examination of topics involving two or more disciplines in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies. LEC.

REES 485. War and Peace in Russian Culture. 3 Hours H/W.
Lectures, readings, oral discussion, and written analyses of selected major works of Russian writing and other modes of creative expression and discourse that treat the subject of war and peace, such as imaginative literature, works of history, memoirs, cinema, music, and painting. Reading examples are The Song of Igor's Campaign, Alexander Pushkin's The Captain's Daughter and A History of Pugachev, Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace, Nadezhda Durova's The Notes of a Girl-Cavalryman, Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, and George Kennan's Russia Leaves the War. Not open to students who have taken REES 685. LEC.
REES 492. Research Methods in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Development of interdisciplinary research skills and familiarity with resources and issues in the study of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Preparation for REES 496. LEC.

REES 496. Capstone Research Seminar in Russian and East European, and Eurasian Studies. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Interdisciplinary original research conducted using at least one REES language and resulting in a research paper. Prerequisite: REES 492. LEC.

REES 498. Directed Readings. 1-3 Hours H.
Individual and supervised readings in selected areas of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Prerequisite: Prior permission of instructor and either CREES director or associate director. LEC.

REES 499. Capstone Research Seminar in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Honors. 3 Hours AE61 / H.
Research and writing of a substantial paper, involving interdisciplinary original research and use of sources in at least one REES language, and presentation of this paper to an Honors committee of three REES faculty members. This thesis must be substantially different from any other Honors thesis. Prerequisite: REES 492. LEC.

REES 510. Understanding Central Asia. 3 Hours NW AE42 / S/W.
An intensive, multidisciplinary survey of Central Asia, focusing on the former Soviet republics-Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan—with additional coverage of neighboring regions (the Caucasus and the Caspian basin, Afghanistan, and western China). The course addresses the history of the region (from the Silk Road to Soviet rule), geography, religion, and the building of post-Soviet states and societies. (Same as GEOG 590.) LEC.

REES 512. Siberia: Yesterday and Today. 3 Hours NW AE42 / H/W.
An interdisciplinary course examining the development of Siberia from its beginnings to the present day. Topics to be covered are selected from the following list: topography and natural resources; conquest and exploitation by Russian and other European settlers; Siberia’s role as a place of imprisonment and exile; the development of towns and transportation systems; Siberian historiography; Siberian Russian literature; and Siberia’s place in Russia’s economy and national defense. LEC.

REES 513. Siberia: Russia’s Eastern Frontier. 3 Hours NW AE42 / H/W.
An interdisciplinary course examining the terrain, peoples, and cultures of the vast expanse in northern Asia known as Siberia. Areas of inquiry include geology, archeology, ethnography, religions, folk culture, the arts, science and education, politics, and environmental problems. With an emphasis on the natural and social sciences, and exploration of the relationship between Siberia and its neighbors in all directions, including the United States (Alaska, “Russian America”), this course can be taken without duplication by students who have already taken REES 512 (or SLAV 512) Siberia Yesterday and Today. LEC.

REES 573. Borderland Between Russia & Europe. 3 Hours H/W.
Examines the history of relations between the governments, emerging national elites, and populations of Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and other East European countries, and the different regional perceptions and stereotypes, including the new post-Soviet states and their European neighbors. LEC.

REES 574. Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eastern Europe. 3 Hours AE42 / H/W.
Examines the emergence and evolution of regional ethno-cultural and national identities in Eastern Europe. Discusses the theories and definitions of ethnicity, nationality, and nationalism, and offers a practical approach to understanding nationalism’s and nationalist movements in Eastern Europe. LEC.

REES 646. Translation in Theory and Practice. 3 Hours H.
Students undertake substantial work in the translation of non-technical writing, (e.g. poems, short stories, novels, essays, works of history, scientific treatises), from any REES language into English, and examine the practical and theoretical problems encountered in translation from the source to the target language. Prerequisite: BCRS 508, PLSH 508, RUSS 508, or permission of instructor. LEC.

REES 685. War and Peace in Russian Culture (in Russian). 3 Hours H/W.
This course is taught in Russian. Lectures, readings, oral discussion, and written analyses of selected major works of Russian writing and other modes of creative expression and discourse that treat the subject of war and peace, such as imaginative literature, works of history, memoirs, cinema, music, and painting. Reading examples are Slovo o polku Igoreve, Pushkin’s Kapitanskaia dochka and Istorichna Pugacheva, Tolstoy’s Voina i mir, Evgenii Tarle’s Napoleon, Pasternak’s Doktor Zhivago and Andrei Petukhov’s Pamiat’ o sluzhbe. Not open to students who have taken REES 485. Prerequisite: 3 years of Russian at the college level. LEC.

REES 687. Biography of a City: St. Petersburg. 3 Hours AE42 / H.
Examination in depth of the historical, social, intellectual, and artistic development of St. Petersburg as a major urban center. LEC.

REES 704. Russian Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective. 3 Hours.
This course examines Russian Orthodoxy as a religious system and the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church from its first appearance in Russia to the present. It focuses on beliefs and practices of the clergy and laity; institutional structures; the relationships between Church and State; interactions with non-Orthodox religious communities; responses to Soviet atheist policies; Orthodox influences on political theory, philosophy, literature, and the fine arts. (Same as REL 704.) LEC.

REES 799. Directed Readings in Russian and East European Studies. 1-5 Hours.
RSH.

REES 895. Special Problems in Area Studies: _____. 3 Hours.
Interdisciplinary examination of topics involving two or more of the cooperating disciplines in Russian and East European studies. LEC.

REES 897. Research. 1 Hour.
Enrollment to fulfill Masters continuous enrollment rule. Prerequisite: Completion of all degree requirements except submission of seminar paper or comprehensive examination. RSH.

REES 898. Seminar in Russian and East European Studies. 3 Hours.
Mastery of interdisciplinary research skills, and knowledge of resources and scholarship on the study of Russian, east European, and Eurasian Studies. LEC.

REES 899. Capstone Research Seminar in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. 3 Hours.
Research, write, and present a professional-quality paper, involving interdisciplinary original research, consultation with REES faculty, and substantial use of sources in at least one REES language. Prerequisite: REES 898. SEM.