MAYMESTER IN RUSSIA

RUSSIA TODAY: POLITICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CHANGE (RUSS 2210, 3 credits, AXLE INT)

“...any expectations I could possibly have had were surpassed. ...I participated in a culture without being a tourist...and spent [time] outside of my carefully constructed comfort zone. The experience was nothing short of changing my worldview.” (Vanderbilt University student 2015)

May 15 – June 16, 2016

- First-hand experience with contemporary Russian culture, economy, politics, and society
- Meetings with Russian students, lectures by experts, home stays, excursions, trips to Moscow and St. Petersburg
- Service learning at several community organizations
- Knowledge of Russian is not required

Faculty Director: David Johnson, Lecturer in Russian (david.matthew.johnson@vanderbilt.edu)

Summer program fee: $ (not including 3 credits of tuition, airfare, visa, local transportation and some meals)

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

- Lectures and presentations on economics, politics, international relations, language, education, culture, history, sociology, etc
- Volunteer work at Vladimir Handicapped Children's Association, Youth Health and Education Center, local Russian Orthodox Church, local dog shelter, etc
- Home stays (home-cooked breakfasts and dinners)
- Conversations, dinners, and fun evenings with Russians, including university students
- Excursions to UNESCO World Heritage Sites and other fascinating places
- Trips to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Suzdal, Bogoliubovo, Murom, a rural village
- Weekend at a dacha (summer house) with a Russian banya
- Russian language lessons
- Group reflection and discussion
- Concerts, ballet in St. Petersburg and a soccer match
- Train, boat, bus, and bike rides
- Russian tea breaks!
- And more!

HOW TO APPLY?
Online: Global Education Office → Programs → Maymester

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 22, 2016

* Candidates will be contacted for interviews once application review is completed
MAYMESTER IN RUSSIA

Vodka, bears, long winters, the Cold War, Putin as dictator, ... Break through these and other stereotypes!

Who is Putin, really? Is Russia still a superpower? Why is Russia doing that? Should we fear Russia? Are Russians more Asian or European? What do Russians think?

Find answers to these questions and more!

Experience Russian hospitality and post-Soviet political, socio-economic and cultural change from the inside out.

- First-hand experience with Russian culture, economy, politics and society
- Meetings with Russian students, expert lectures, home stays, excursions to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, trips to Moscow and St. Petersburg
- Service learning at several community organizations

Application Deadline: January 22, 2016

Available Scholarships:

For more information: Global Education Office → Programs → Maymester or contact David Johnson (david.matthew.johnson@vanderbilt.edu)
Guided excursions to UNESCO World Heritage Sites in and around Vladimir; 5-7 days in Moscow and St. Petersburg; time spent with your Russian host family; visits to rural villages, historic churches, theaters, sporting events, government agencies; meetings with Russians of all ages and varying professions; ...
Possible lecture topics and related excursions include (in English or Russian with translation):

- Russian history,
- Vladimir region history,
- religion,
- industry,
- handcrafts,
- economic development,
- icon painting,
- icon restoration,
- art and art history,
- law enforcement,
- foreign investment,
- rural life,
- farming,
- tourism development,
- the army and military,
- women,
- mass media,
- youth culture,
- education,
- social trends,
- public opinion,
- Russian and local politics.

The four-week program includes 15-22 hours of Russian language instruction.

REFLECTING

Think about Russia and the role that it plays in the contemporary world and about your own ideas about Russia, as you study, serve and explore in and around Vladimir.

Guiding Question: How does my theoretical understanding of contemporary Russia, which I developed during spring semester at Vanderbilt, coincide and differ with what I am learning, hearing, seeing, and feeling in Russia?
Program Structure:

PART 1: SPRING SEMESTER (Foundation Course - 3-4 credits, VISAGE Course - 1 credit)

Foundation Course: Register for a course from The College of Arts and Sciences, Peabody, Blair, Law, or Owen.

Supplemental VISAGE Course (1 credit): Register for RUSS 294A - Gather readings and other information about the topic of your Foundation Course that are directly related to Russia, compile a resource list with brief summaries of the content of each source, write about your understanding of the topic as it relates to Russia.

Guiding Questions: How does this relate to Russia? What is the current situation?

PART 2: FOUR WEEKS IN RUSSIA, MAY 15-JUNE 16 (RUSS 251: Russia Today, 3 credits, AXEL International Cultures)

Spend four weeks in Vladimir, Russia, studying, serving, exploring, meeting Russian young people, and reflecting about your theoretical and empirical knowledge of contemporary Russia.

PART 3: FALL (1 credit, optional)

Prepare a descriptive summary of your experience using any media.

Host Organization: The American Home (Vladimir, Russia)

With a wealth of experience arranging educational programs and exchanges that bring Americans to Russia for language and cultural learning opportunities, and strong connections with people in Vladimir’s educational, cultural, social, and political life, the American Home is in a unique position to organize lectures, excursions, conferences, meetings, tours and field trips, volunteering opportunities, and other educational, cultural, and social contacts for American university students and faculty in Vladimir and the Vladimir region.

From the moment of our arrival at the Moscow airport until our departure four weeks later we will under the protective and guiding care of the American Home staff.

Faculty Director and Group Leader:
David Johnson, Lecturer in Russian, Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, david.matthew.johnson@vanderbilt.edu
COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE AMERICAN HOME

"The thing that probably has affected me most is not Moscow, not Red Square, not the countryside, but, Vladimir, and my time there. My heart and soul are still in that strange and beautiful city, with those people who helped to create one of the best times of my life" (Adam Treml, University of Pittsburgh, Alternative Spring Break 2012).

“What you’ve done is truly incredible. The excitement and positive energy that we witnessed was something that I’d rarely seen before. You deserve hearty congratulations!” (US Embassy Official, visiting the AH (2010)).

"I’m a big supporter of the American Home in Vladimir; You have been doing such an amazing job for so many years!” (Professor Maia Solovieva, Faculty-in-Residence, Lecturer in Russian, Oberlin College).

“I am extremely impressed by all that I have learned about the program: the educational opportunities..., the enthusiasm of the participants, the careful planning the American Home staff puts into each participant’s experience. In the post-Soviet period there are many opportunities for Americans in Russia; I find the Serendipity program one of the most exciting” (Dr. Judith E. Kalb, Russian Program, University of South Carolina).

“I don’t know if the American Home staff realizes what an amazing comfort zone they provided for us American[s]. [T]hey were truly a safe harbor...provid[ing] that amazing place where we could stand at the side of a swimming pool and dip our toes in before deciding whether or not to jump in. For the more adventurous the day could be spent in the deep end knowing that there was always an AH “life guard” on duty” (Carol Kirsch, 7th grade social studies, Westview Junior-Senior High School, Topeka, Indiana).

“Vladimir offers a real opportunity to immerse yourself in Russian language and culture. Such immersion can be very frightening at first, and that is why...the American Home is such a plus. Here I am given the opportunity to work with Russians in an atmosphere that is very familiar, fostering, and comfortable. I would certainly recommend it to anyone who wants to experience Russia for what it really is...” (Matt Plischke, Miami University (Ohio)).

“Not only have the staff at the American Home helped facilitate my travel, they also have offered kindness and hospitality. They are truly wonderful. I don’t know what we would have done without them!” (Wendy Woith, PhD, RN).

“The AH has a superb staff and an excellent reputation in the community” (Momar Ndiaye, Director, Office of International Studies, Illinois State University).

“Galina and the [rest of the staff] made a profound impression with their efficiency and helpfulness. If only everyone we worked with on [our] trips was as reliable and efficient as [the AH] staff” (Diane Ignashev, Professor of Russian, Carlton College).

“You have a fantastic program here. This is cooperation at its finest, and the skills and respect that you are giving your students is invaluable” (Patrick
“Vladimir and the American Home are ideally situated. Vladimir is a part of Russia’s famed Golden Ring, and the American Home lies in the heart of downtown Vladimir. Here, you have all the advantages of Russian city life, but with all the charm of the nearby dachas. **The American Home really is the meeting and mixing point for two cultures.** The longer I stay, the more I discover how much Vladimir has to offer me” (Erika Boeckler, University of Wisconsin at Madison).

“Every night when I come home from work I’m greeted enthusiastically by my 15-year-old host brother, Pasha. After dinner we drink tea, and Pasha usually launches into one of his favorite conversation topics and doesn’t stop for quite some time. **Living in Vladimir...has provided a rich assortment of unique experiences that I know I wouldn’t have encountered elsewhere**” (Joanna Greenlee, Gordon College, Wenham, MA).

“The American Home is **easily the single most influential American presence in [Russia] outside Moscow and St. Petersburg**” (Dr. Nils H. Wessel, Professor of Government, Emeritus, US Coast Guard Academy).
VISAGE Vanderbilt in Russia

**Program Description:**
Life in Contemporary Russia

**Highlights:**
Homestays (with home-cooked breakfasts and dinners), guided excursions to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, service learning in several community organizations, meetings with Russian university students, immersion in Russian daily life and culture in a provincial city not too far from Moscow.

Look at Russia through the lens of your own particular field of interest – political science, history, education, economics, health, religion, international relations, sociology, law, etc – while studying, serving, exploring, meeting Russian young people, and reflecting about your theoretical and empirical knowledge of contemporary Russia.

**SERVING**

To experience first-hand how history and current economic, political, sociological, educational, legal, and cultural developments intersect and impact people's lives, you will be working and learning in several community organizations, like: Vladimir Youth Health and Education Center, Karl Liebknecht Orphanage, Vladimir Humanitarian Aid Store, Handicapped Children's Association “Light”.