TRADITIONS AND TRANSITIONS:
RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES
A Symposium Celebrating the Career of Dr. Victorina Lefebvre

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2012
9:00am-5:00pm

University of California, Irvine
Humanities Gateway 1010

Co-Sponsored by
UCI Dean of Humanities
UCI Dept. of European Languages & Studies
UCI Humanities Center
UCI Office of Research
UC Consortium for Language Learning & Teaching
UCLA Russian Flagship
UCI Department of European Languages & Studies
UCI Humanities Center
UCI Office of Research

9:00-9:15am Welcome and Opening Remarks
Glenn Levine, Humanities Language Learning Program Director and
Lora Mjosness, Lecturer of Russian, UC Irvine

9:15-10:00am “We’ve Come a Long Way: Recent Developments in Teaching Russian in the United States”
Olga Kagan, Professor of Russian, Director of the National Heritage Language Resource Center & the Center for World Languages, UCLA

10:00-10:30 BREAK

10:30-11:15am “Cultural Content and Student Outcomes in Russian Language Classrooms”
Jason Merrill, Associate Professor of Russian, Michigan State University &
Director of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian, Middlebury College

11:15am-12:00pm “Hits and Misses in Teaching Russian in the U.S.: Triangulation of Instructors’, Students’, and the Enrollment Perspectives”
Ludmila Isurin, Assistant Professor of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University

12:00-1:30pm LUNCH (non-presenters rsvp required)

1:30-2:15pm “Teaching Untethered: Transitioning away from a Textbook-Centered Curriculum”
Mark Kaiser, Associate Director, Berkeley Language Center, UC Berkeley

2:15-3:00pm “Keeping it Real: Intensive Instruction and the Future of Russian Language and Culture in U.S. Universities”
Thomas Garza, Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor & Director of the Texas Language Center, University of Texas at Austin

3:00-3:15 pm  BREAK

3:15-3:45 pm  Respondents
   Lora Mjolsness, Lecturer of Russian, UC Irvine, and
   Kathleen Dillon, Associate Director, UC Consortium for Language Learning
   and Teaching, UC Davis

3:45-5:00 pm  Discussion and proposals for action
Thomas Garza, Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor & Director of the Texas Language Center, University of Texas at Austin

“Keeping it Real: Intensive Instruction and the Future of Russian Language and Culture in U.S. Universities”

Languages other than English, especially those less-commonly taught, are facing a perfect curricular storm: ever-shrinking federal, state and institutional budgets to support classroom instruction, and an ever-growing demand in the public and private sectors for increased functional proficiency in these languages upon graduation. Enter Intensive methods of language and culture instruction. With theoretical and practical roots in Soviet methodology of the late 1980s (Kitajgorodskaja; Passov; and Leontiev) and the US/NSEP Flagship model of the 2000s (Davidson; Van Olphen; and Snell), properly designed and executed Intensive classes might provide a means to attain basic proficiency more quickly in order for students in college programs to pursue advanced instruction for longer portion of a typical four-year university tenure. The term “Intensive” (with a capital “I”) here designates a curricular as well as methodological approach toward the presentation and assessment of language and cultural material; it is distinguished from “intensive” courses that aim simply to pursue an accelerated, but traditional, syllabus.

This paper will present two years of data collected from an experiment in Intensive instruction of Russian at the University of Texas aimed at bringing students to functional proficiency (ACTFL Intermediate, ILR 1) at the end of one academic year (thirty weeks) of instruction, while fulfilling the University’s language requirement and prerequisites to pursue upper-level coursework and/or study abroad. By making substantial use of out-of-class language and culture task-based activities (beyond traditional “homework”), and extensive use of web-based goal-oriented activities for students’ progress portfolios, the actual number of contact hours with authentic materials is substantially increased to support instruction in class. Syllabi and sample materials from in- and out-of-class use will be provided and discussed. Sample web-based materials for presentation, practice, and presentation of the language and culture will be demonstrated live, simulating an in-class experience. The proficiency results for the first two cohorts of this Intensive model for Russian instruction will also be presented and interpreted. Finally, the experiences of these students in an Intensive “Bridge Course” abroad at the Moscow International University during the summer of 2011 will be discussed.

Ludmila Isurin, Assistant Professor of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University

“Hits and Misses in Teaching Russian in the U.S.: Triangulation of Instructors’, Students’, and the Enrollment Perspectives”

The Russian program at the Ohio State University is one of the biggest in the US. The present paper discusses results of a study conducted in the 2011-2012 academic year. The study was based on a number of surveys and the analysis of the enrollment data over the last five years. Altogether, forty one 2nd year students learning Russian as a GEC (General Education Course) requirement, fifteen 3rd year Russian majors and minors, and twelve Russian language instructors participated in the study. In addition, the enrollment data and attrition trends were analyzed in order to identify possible trends. The paper discusses the most problematic areas in language proficiency, motivational factors in learning Russian, the role of the instructor, perception of the Communicative Method and the textbook used in the program, etc. This is
analyzed both from the students’ and instructors’ perspectives and, in turn, is juxtaposed with the enrollment/attrition data.

Olga Kagan, Professor of Russian, Director of the National Heritage Language Resource Center & the Center for World Languages, UCLA

“We’ve Come a Long Way: Recent Developments in Teaching Russian in the United States”

The paper will begin by presenting information on two recent federal initiatives that fund the teaching of critical languages: STARTALK and Flagship. The purpose of STARTALK programs is to expose K-12 students to foreign languages via short term summer classes. In contrast, Flagship programs’ goal is for undergraduate students to reach ACTFL Superior/ILR Level 3 proficiency in order to become “global professionals.” I will briefly talk about the main goals and strategies of UCLA STARTALK Russian classes and then will address the approaches used by the UCLA Russian Flagship Program in greater depth.

Because ascertaining the level of students’ language proficiency at all stages is of paramount importance to Flagship, and because UCLA Flagship attracts both L2 students and Russian heritage learners (HLL), one of central issues I will consider is their degree of compatibility in the classroom. To that end, I will focus on the test results for both groups at the Intermediate-High/1+ and Advanced/2 levels of proficiency. In conclusion, I will make recommendations as to the possibility of creating separate tracks for the two groups or for bringing them together in one classroom, depending on their proficiency levels.

Mark Kaiser, Associate Director, Berkeley Language Center, UC Berkeley

“Teaching Untethered: Transitioning away from a Textbook-Centered Curriculum”

In this presentation, I will consider the central role that the textbook has played in structuring the foreign language curriculum. A valuable resource for both students and instructors alike, nevertheless too often the textbook becomes the road map for one day’s lesson after another, stifling instructor creativity. I will demonstrate several ways that instructors at UC Berkeley have creatively moved beyond the textbook to create new materials for the teaching of pronunciation, listening comprehension, culture, textual analysis, as well as assessment of student learning.

Jason Merrill, Associate Professor of Russian, Michigan State University & Director of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian, Middlebury College

“Cultural Content and Student Outcomes in Russian Language Classrooms”

Cultural competency is an important aspect of overall language proficiency, and teachers agree that cultural content should be included in language classes. This paper will attempt to discover how our students are using Russian outside the classroom and focus on practical concerns such as the types of cultural content that should be delivered in language classes and what percentage of class time should be devoted to them. I will address these questions by examining the results of a survey sent to students who studied at the Middlebury College Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian between 1990 and 2011. The survey asks students about their classroom experiences with cultural content; what they were taught and what they would like to see more of in our classrooms. The survey also inquires about students’ plans for using Russian when they began studying Russian and at the present time. Students are also asked to describe how they currently use (or plan to use) Russian socially and professionally. The goal of this paper is to provide some answers to questions about who our students are, how they plan to use Russian,
what content areas are important to them, and how they are actually using Russian outside the classroom. Answers to these questions can have important implications for the ways in which we structure our language courses. With this information we will be better equipped as teachers to focus on content areas and skills (such as social media) that will better prepare our students for the myriad potential uses of Russian in the twenty-first century.
ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Kathleen Dillon (Ph.D. is Associate Director of the University of California Consortium for Language Learning & Teaching. She has published book chapters and articles on the poetry of Boris Pasternak and Russian women poets of the 19th century. Research and publications, co-authored with Olga Kagan, have focused on teaching Russian as a heritage language. She received the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) excellence in teaching award in 2001.

Thomas Jesús Garza is University Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, and Director of the Texas Language Center. He teaches Russian language and literature, foreign language pedagogy, and contemporary Russian culture. He has been traveling to and researching in Russia since 1979 and has lived in Moscow for over six years. A native Texan, Dr. Garza received his doctorate in foreign language education from Harvard University in 1987. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the American Council of Teachers of Russian, is a member of the Delegates Assembly of the Modern Language Association, and holds positions on the board or editorial board of ACTFL, AAUSC, AATSEEL, and ASEEES. During his twenty-year tenure at the University of Texas, he has received numerous prizes for undergraduate and graduate teaching, including the Texas Excellence Award, the President's Associates Award, the Harry Ransom Award, was inducted into the University Academy of Distinguished Teachers in 2003, and selected for a Regents Outstanding Teaching Award in 2009. He has written or contributed to several Russian language textbooks, including *Russian Stage One: Live from Russia!*, and has published numerous articles on contemporary Russian culture, including youth movements, changes in Russian lexicon, attitudes of Russian consumers towards Asia, and the vampire in Slavic culture. He is currently teaching Russian in an intensive format, using a hybrid model of instruction that incorporates extensive use of Internet material and portfolio assessment, in addition to classroom contact hours. Dr. Garza also organizes and directs summer intensive courses in Moscow at the International University. In addition to studying the proficiency gains and benefits of intensive instruction, Dr. Garza’s current research concerns the attitudes of Russian youth toward the Chechen wars and conscription, and filmic portraits of *machismo* in contemporary Russian and Latino culture.

Ludmila Isurin graduated from the University of St. Petersburg in Russia with a degree in German Philology and received her Ph.D. in psycholinguistics from Louisiana State University. She has an extensive experience of teaching foreign languages and directing language programs in the universities of three countries: Russia, Israel, and the US. She is currently an Assistant Professor of SLA at the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, OSU, and has recently been promoted to the rank of the Associate Professor with tenure (effective August 2012). Also, she is on the core committee of the interdepartmental graduate specialization program in Second Language Studies and an affiliated member of the Center of Cognitive Studies. Her research interests focus on bilingualism, second language acquisition and first language attrition, Russian immigration and identity, and interconnection of language, culture, and cognition. She has created and taught more than a dozen courses at OSU, including graduate courses, such as Cognitive Aspects of Language Acquisition; Cognitive and Linguistic Aspects of Bilingualism; Language, Culture, and Cognition; Language and Memory; Diaspora; Psycholinguistics of Code-Switching, etc. She has directed a few Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. thesis in a new track open at the department (SLA of Slavic languages). She has published three books: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Code-Switching (2009, John Benjamins); Russian Diaspora: Culture, Identity, and Language Change (2011, De Gruyter); and Memory, Language, and Bilingualism: Theoretical and Applied Approaches (Cambridge, in press). In addition, she
has numerous publications in edited volumes and journals. In 2010 the US Federal Government solicited and fully funded a research project that she conducted. The study took place during the 2010 US census and concerned Russian immigrants with poor or no English skills. This was the first observational study in the history of the US census.

**Olga Kagan** is Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at UCLA and Director of the National Heritage Language Resource Center. She is in charge of the UCLA Russian Flagship Center. Kagan is the author of nine Russian-language textbooks, including two textbooks for heritage speakers of Russian. She is the co-editor of Heritage Language Education: A New Field Emerging (Routledge, 2008) and The Teaching and Learning of Slavic Languages and Cultures (Slavica, 2000). Her main research interest is heritage language acquisition and teaching, on which she has published widely. Dr. Kagan is co-editor of the Heritage Language Journal.

**Mark Kaiser** (PhD in Slavic Linguistics, U Michigan 1989) has served as the Associate Director of the Berkeley Language Center since 1996, and as a lecturer of 1st- and 2nd-year Russian at Cal. His interest in teaching foreign languages through film is reflected in the project he has worked on for the past four years: the BLC's Library of Foreign Language Film Clips, now being used by 23 universities, and guest editorship of the special issue of the *L2 Journal* devoted to the teaching of languages with film.

**Jason Merrill** is Associate Professor of Russian at Michigan State University and Director of the Middlebury College Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian. At Michigan State he regularly teaches intermediate and advanced Russian, as well as Russian literature and cinema courses in English. He annually leads a summer study abroad program in Volgograd. His articles on Fedor Sologub and Russian Symbolism have appeared in journals such as *Russkaia literatura, Slavic and East European Journal, Russian Literature*, and *Slavonica*, and he has published on Russian cinema in *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*. He is the author of *Russian Folktales: A Student Reader* (Focus, 2000) and co-author (with Maria Alley and Julia Mikhailova) of *Russian Animation for Conversation* (Focus, 2008).
DIRECTIONS TO UCI:

405 Freeway
From the North:
• Exit at Jamboree Rd.
• Right on Jamboree Rd.
• Left on Campus Dr.
• Right on West Peltason into UCI
From the South:
• Exit at University Dr.
• Left on University Dr.
• Left on Campus Dr.
• Right on West Peltason into UCI

73 Freeway / Tollway
From the North:
• Exit at Bison Ave.
• Left on Bison Ave. into UCI
From the South (toll):
• Exit at Bison Ave.
• Right on Bison Ave. into UCI

91 Freeway / 261 Tollway
From the North:
• Take 91 West to 241 South to 261 South (portions toll)
• 261 becomes Jamboree Road
• Left on Campus Drive
• Right on West or East Peltason Drive into UCI

5 Freeway
From the North:
• Take 5 South to 55 South to 73 South
• Exit at Bison Ave.
• Left on Bison Ave. into UCI

From the South:
• Take 5 North to 405 North
• Exit at University Dr.
• Left on University Dr.
• Left on Campus Dr.
• Right on West Peltason into UCI
55 Freeway

From the North:
- Take 55 South to 73 South
- Exit at Bison Ave.
- Left on Bison Ave. into UCI

From the South:
- Take 55 North to 73 South
- Exit at Bison Ave.
- Left on Bison Ave. into UCI

PARKING AT UCI:
Park at the Mesa Parking Structure. If you have a permit from another UC school, you can park in any unmarked stall.

LOCATION OF THE MEETING:
Exit the Mesa Parking Structure and walk up the hill toward Lot 7
The Meeting will be in Humanities Gateway 1010
Link to UCI Campus Maps Page: http://www.uci.edu/campus_maps.php