

The following information will be published on the Courses page of the Summer Sessions Website:			
Course Title:	Russia Today): Political, Socio-economic, and Cultural Change In Russian-speaking Estonia at the Border of Russia, NATO, European Union, Scandinavia, former USSR		
Course Number:	RUSS 2210	Credit Hours:	3
First Instructor:	David M. Johnson.	First Instructor Email:	david.matthew.johnson@vanderbilt.edu
Second Instructor:		Second Instructor Email:	
Program start date:	06 May. 2026	Program end date:	05/30/26
Program destination(s): (Each city, country - start/end date)	Narva, Estonia – 08 May 2026/28 May 2026 Pyukhtitskaya Monastery – 15 May 2026/17 May 2026 Chudskoye Lake – 18 May 2026/19 May 2026 Tallinn – 27 May 2026/29 May 2026		
Does this course fulfill any AXLE credit? If so, what?		INT.	
What are the academic prerequisites (if any) for enrolling in this course?		No prerequisites	
What are some are some conditions or challenges that students will face? (Ex. Hiking long distances, extreme temperatures, rocky terrain, etc.)		Actively Interacting with new people in a new country in a new language.	
What is covered in the student budget:		Detailed answers below.	
Lodging (Total nights + included amenities):		Individual home-stays in Narva with home-cooked breakfasts and dinners (21 days) Hotel accommodations (two people in one room) in Tallinn and at Chudskoye Lake) (5 nights) Hostel dormitory at Monastery (2 nights)	
Meals:		Total breakfasts: 28 Total lunches: 0 Total dinners: 24	
Transportation (Airfare, public transit, etc.):		Local and intercity bus, train and tram transportation is included in the student fee.	
Supplies (Textbooks, gear, etc.):		Supplies for Russian language classes are included in the student fee.	
Excursions (Tour fees, admission fees, etc.):		All excursions, tour fees and admission costs are included in the student fee.	
What is <u>not</u> covered in the student budget:		Detailed answers below.	

Lodging (Total nights):	All course-related lodging is included in the student fee.
Meals:	Total breakfasts: 0 Total lunches: 28 Total dinners: 0
Transportation (international airfare, public transit, etc.):	International airfare
Supplies (Textbooks, gear, personal items, etc.):	Personal items (clothes, medications, etc.)
Excursions (Optional activities, tour fees, admission fees, etc.):	All excursions, admission and tour fees are included in the student fee. Each student purchases an ISIC student ID card which costs approx. \$25.
Visa needed for US passport holders?	US passport holders do not need a visa to travel to Estonia, but they do need an ETIAS travel authorization from the European Union which costs approximately \$20.
Is the cost of the visa included in the student fee?	The cost of the ETIAS travel authorization is not included in the student fee.
Does the course have a service-learning component:	Yes. Service learning is one of the main components of the course.
Please provide the course description below:	
<p>The goal of the course is to help us think about borders and Russia, Russians and Russian language and culture and its influence on neighboring states. Estonia previously was part of the Soviet Union. Its easternmost city, Narva, sits at the confluence of political-economic systems – Russia, NATO, the European Union, Scandinavia and an internal border of the former USSR – and at the nexus of social constructs – cultural norms, languages, histories, religion, world views, etc.</p> <p>We explore the strong presence of Russia, Russians and Russian language and culture in Estonia (and other parts of the former Soviet block), the role they play in the contemporary world, and our own ideas about them, through community service and both broad and focused studies in language, economics, political science, international relations, history, sociology, law, religious studies, music and culture, etc. We will have a unique opportunity to see Russia's influence on the region from the inside out.</p> <p>Vanderbilt students are immersed in Narva – Estonia's third largest city, which was founded in the 13th century and almost became Russia's second city instead of St. Petersburg – studying, serving, exploring, interacting with Russians from many different social groups, including Russian university students, and reflecting about their knowledge and perceptions of contemporary Russia and its influence on Estonia and other former Soviet bloc states. Nearly 98% of people on the Narva region are Russian and speak Russian as their first language.</p>	

Each participant lives with a Russian host family that has been vetted by our experienced colleagues at Narva College (which is affiliated with world-renowned Tartu University).

STUDYING

Daily seminars and excursions focus on aspects of economics, political science, international relations, education, culture, history, sociology, law, religious studies, music, art, etc. Every effort is made to include something relevant to each student's area of interest, so that they can look at Russian Estonia through the theoretical lens of their own particular field of interest.

Students spend two academic hours each weekday with a highly qualified Russian language instructor so that they can communicate more effectively with their host families and the people that they are meeting and with whom they are working and interacting.

SERVING

To experience first-hand how history and current linguistic, economic, political, sociological, educational, legal, and cultural developments intersect and impact specific groups in Russian Estonia, program participants work in several community organizations, including the Narva Palace of Children's Creativity (an after school education program), Narva City Museum, Pyukhtitskiy Russian Orthodox Monastery, Narva Veterans Association, social service programs of the Narva city administration.

REFLECTING

As they participate in seminars, lectures and guided excursions to important locations, volunteer at community organizations, meet one-to-one with Russians from many different social groups, visit significant cities and villages in Russian Estonia, spend two weekends with the Russian Old Believers community at Lake Peipus and at a Russian Orthodox monastery, and explore, each participant considers the guiding questions that are posed for the program: What is the current situation in Russian Estonia in general and in terms of my area of interest and specialization? How does my understanding of the current situation in Russian Estonia coincide and differ with what I am learning, hearing, seeing, and feeling in Russian Estonia?

EXPLORING

The schedule includes:

Daily Russian language lessons

Daily lectures and presentations about economics, political science, international relations, language, education, culture, history, music, art, architecture, religion, and sociology

Volunteer work (Narva Palace of Children's Creativity (an after-school education program), Narva City Museum, Pyukhtitskiy Russian Orthodox Monastery, Narva Veterans Association, social service programs of the Narva city administration, etc.)

Home stays (including home-cooked breakfasts and dinners)

Conversations, dinners, and fun evenings with Russians from different social groups, including university students

Excursions to a former Soviet "closed" city, a Baltic Sea resort town popular with Russian tourists for at least two centuries, the Old Believers community at Lake Peipus, one of the Russian Empire's and Soviet Union's largest textile factories, and many other fascinating places

Trips to Tallinn, Tallinn, Silamae, Narva-Joesuu, Kolkja and Mustvee on Lake Peipus, Russian Orthodox Monastery in Kuramae and a Russian banya

Group reflection and discussion

Concerts, possible soccer match and ballet in Tallinn

Train, boat, bus, and bike rides

Russian tea breaks!

And more!

SUMMARY PROJECT

At the end of the course students prepare a descriptive summary of their responses to the Guiding Questions using any media of their choice.