

## **“A Distance Learning Russian Course with Blackboard”**

### **Course overview and rationale:**

This course is an introduction to the fundamentals of the Russian language and exposure to Russian culture and civilization. The course stresses basic language skills -speaking, listening, reading and writing, with progressive emphasis on conversation. The objective of this course is to provide Russian language instruction to learners who often don't have easy physical access to the classroom Russian course, or who may need extra time to complete the course. Students in both the on campus section and in the distance education counterpart use Blackboard to access course resources and to communicate with the professor and with each other. The on campus Russian course and its distance education counterpart are practically identical in content. Both include extensive on-line tutorials and exercises to supplement the textbook, workbook and classroom activities.

1. **Speaking.** Distance education students are expected to practice speaking in Russian with the instructor and with other students in the course using synchronous communication programs. They have daily assignments consisting of listening and repeating simple dialogues.

After each such assignment they are required to engage in short

conversations with the instructor using telephone or online chat messenger. They have numerous such exercises that help them acquire a good speaking skill.

2. **Listening.** Students develop a good listening skill by working with audio resources that accompany the textbook. The textbook comes with two CDs that contain the audio portion of each lesson in the textbook. These audio clips are accessible on-line as well. Each lesson in the textbook is divided into four sections, and for each section students are required to spend at least one hour working with audio drills. Listening activities comprise the most important part of the student's regular homework assignments. Large portion of the tests and quizzes consist of listening exercises.

Additional listening activities are provided through a set of video clips. The video program that accompanies this course presents selected scenes from the storyline comprising the reading in each lesson. The video clips have been digitized and placed on a server, and students are provided links to them in the syllabus. The video clips are an important component to the course. Students are expected to watch each assigned video clip several times until they feel comfortable comprehending the

content and to complete all of the accompanying exercises for each video clip. The contents of the video clips are incorporated in quizzes and in tests.

3. **Reading.** Students also have regular reading assignments from the textbook. Additionally, they have extensive reading assignments that are based on Russian web pages. All reading assignments are accompanied by a set of self-correcting on-line exercises.
4. **Writing.** Speaking and writing are similar skills in that they both require students to produce their own thoughts and opinions in Russian. Students are asked to write commentaries based on reading assignments. Additionally, they write short essays on topics covered in each section of a lesson.
5. **Grammar.** All grammar is covered in the textbook and in specially prepared on-line grammar tutorials. For each grammar point that is covered in the textbook I have developed a set of on-line exercises that students are required to work with and complete successfully.

### **Assignments:**

The on campus and distance education students have the same homework assignments. These consist of:

- 1) On-line listening exercises.
- 2) Speaking exercises with the instructor and with other students.
- 3) Reading exercises from the textbook and the Web.
- 4) Writing exercises from the Laboratory Manual and on-line.

Students have regular writing assignments where they are asked to translate texts into Russian, describe people, places and situations, or write about themselves.

- 5) For each grammar point discussed in the textbook there is a set of web-based exercises that students are required to work with and complete successfully.

All of the assignments in a given lesson need to be completed successfully before a student can take a test.

### **Interaction with the professor:**

Students in the distance education course interact with the professor by e-mail, phone and through audio conferencing. Students submit recorded assignments on-line. Students are required to practice speaking Russian

with the professor for approximately one hour for each lesson in person or through audio conferencing.

### **Evaluation:**

The on-campus and distance education sections are evaluated almost identically. There are three one hour tests and a final during the course.

Each test covers one lesson from the textbook. Each lesson test comprises reading, writing, listening and speaking activities.

### **Examination Proctor Process**

Students must select a proctor to supervise both the lesson tests and the final examination. Arrangements to take the final exam are made through the Distance Learning Office. To complete the process, students must obtain the consent of an approved proctor and have the proctor complete an **Examination Proctor Form**. Approved proctors are usually academic administrators in the student's locale: City and County school superintendents or principals, academic deans or department heads of colleges, Principals of Accredited Senior High Schools, another independent learning office test supervisor at a college, or an education officer at a military installation.