**Reading List for post-A-level Russian (updated summer 2024)**

Congratulations on your offer of a place to study Russian at Wadham – we look forward to your joining the vibrant community of modern linguists in the college and hope you enjoy the four years of your course. It is important that you should devote time and energy between now and October to preparing for the work you will be doing here. The Preliminary Examination, which is held at the end of the first year, is a tough (but realistic!) examination, and it is vital that you should keep your Russian language up in the meantime. One obvious way of doing this is to embark upon the reading of the literature texts set for the course (see below); otherwise, take every opportunity you can find to talk and hear Russian, watch Russian plays and films, and so on. You will also need to make sure that your grammar is up to scratch; for example that you know your regular and irregular declensions and conjugations off by heart. We recommend that you acquire the following books, which will be useful throughout your course:

- Terence Wade's *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* (there is also an accompanying *Workbook*);

- Derek Offord's *Modern Russian - An Advanced Grammar Course*.

You should, of course, acquire a good bilingual dictionary (the *Oxford Russian Dictionary* is a popular choice), and we also encourage you to use a Russian-Russian dictionary as an excellent way of learning vocabulary in context (there are copies of these in libraries here, but your own copy will always be useful). A further invaluable way of consolidating and expanding your vocabulary is by consulting Nick Brown, *Russian Learners’ Dictionary: 10,000 Words in Frequency Order*, as well as Patrick Waddington, *A First Russian Vocabulary* and *Russian by Subjects*.

The Preliminary Examination tests your language skills, and also requires that you should read and be able to comment on works by seven Russian authors in the original. Roughly in order of difficulty, starting with the most accessible, the set texts at present are as follows:

1. Anton Chekhov – three stories: *Случай из практики, Анна на шее* and *Дом с мезонином*;
2. Aleksandr Pushkin – his short story *Пиковая дама* and his narrative poem *Медный всадник*;
3. Mikhail Lermontov's poem *Мцыри*;
4. Anna Akhmatova – *Реквием*;
5. Aleksandr Blok – *На поле куликовом* and *Двенадцать*, both in *Selected Poems*, edited by James Woodward;
6. Sergei Dovlatov – the short novel *Чемодан*;
7. Gavrila Derzhavin – the poem *Фелица*.

Many of these are available in excellent and authoritative annotated editions published by Bristol Classical Press (Chekhov, Pushkin, Blok), and the Russian Azbuka series is a good option too. For Dovlatov, you might want to consult this website - <http://www.sergeidovlatov.com/> - where you can download the text of *Chemodan*. In the case of Akhmatova and Derzhavin, these are also available (at a modest cost) from the Modern Language Faculty office in Oxford (there is also a set of explanatory notes to accompany the Dovlatov). When reading copies downloaded from the internet, be aware that this may infringe copyright (for modern authors), and there is a high risk of errors in transcription.

The exact order in which you tackle these is yet to be determined, so please make sure you have familiarized yourself with them *in the original* before you come up. You may find it helpful to keep an English translation to hand so that the work is not too laborious, but it is *essential* that you get to know *all* the texts in Russian as you will be asked to translate and comment on passages in the original in both tutorials and the examination. You will be expected to write essays on them from the very beginning of Michaelmas Term, spending only two weekson each text, whilst also coping with your other language/subject, prose and translation classes, grammar and conversation classes. The Oxford course is very intensive, and vacations always need to be used for extensive preparatory reading in this way, so get used to establishing good habits like this from the outset.

The vacation is also an excellent opportunity to begin exploring the immense riches of Russian literature in greater detail (the earlier you begin to do this, the more informed you will be when it comes to making future course choices). Good general introductions to poetry include *The Heritage of Russian Verse* and *The Garnett Book of Russian Verse* (these are bilingual, so you can practice your Russian with an English version to hand), and the riches of its prose tradition are famous, so enjoy navigating your way around that, whether independently, or by talking to family, friends and teachers.

You might also set about familiarizing yourself with aspects of Russian history – this will help your study of the literature enormously. Good introductions might include:

Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* and *A History of The Soviet Union*

James Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour*

Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: from Nicholas II to Putin*

Useful introductions to Russian literature might include:

V. Terras, *A History of Russian Literature*

D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*

C. H. M. Kelly, *Russian Literature: A Very Short Introduction*

Caryl Emerson, *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature*

However you are spending it, have a very good summer. I very much look forward to seeing you in the autumn. Please don’t hesitate to contact the college if you have any queries in the meantime.

***Philip Ross Bullock***

**Professor of Russian Literature and Music**

**Fellow and Tutor in Russian, Wadham College**

**Lecturer in Russian, Worcester College**

**Email:** **philip.bullock@wadham.ox.ac.uk**

**Postal address: Wadham College, Oxford, OX1 3PN**