

Course Proposal

**Ethnolinguistics in the Slavic Context  
(The Slavic Linguistic Picture of the World)**

Level    Credits  
400        3

Target audience

Advanced undergrads in Russian, Polish, or Czech and graduate students in Slavic

Prerequisites

A minimum of two years of Russian, Polish, or Czech or the equivalent and permission of instructor

This course fulfills the area studies requirement for Russian and Polish majors in the Language & Civilization track.

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Do languages shape the way we think? This course in ethno- or cultural linguistics will frame an answer to this question through examination of data from three Slavic languages – Russian, Polish, and Czech – in comparison primarily with English and, where appropriate, other languages. We will examine the semantics of both words and grammar, everyday language and literature.

No formal background in linguistics is necessary: readings and class discussions will provide an introduction to semantic analysis in several compatible ethnolinguistic frameworks (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Anna Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage, and Jerzy Bartminski's Cognitive Ethnosemantics) as well as present resources for research in this area (dictionaries, national corpora, and specialized studies in English, Russian, Polish, and Czech).

Concepts to be analyzed include, but are not limited to, the following: *home (homeland), right and left, fair and reasonable, conscience, spirituality, soul and mind and heart, truth and lie, friend, honesty, fate*, and a range of emotion terms (eg, *sadness, happiness, anger, pity, yearning*). In addition, data from cross-linguistic studies of gesture and discourse will be discussed.

Materials

J. Bartminski, *Aspects of Ethnolinguistics*, 2009.

G. Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: How Words Colour Your World*, 2010.

A. Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words*, 1997.

A. Wierzbicka, *Emotions in Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, 2002.

A. Wierzbicka, *English: Meaning and Culture*, 2006.