

An Introduction to Belarusian Studies

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Course description:

The main focus of this course is the exploration of Belarusian Studies as presented by a scholar from Belarus. This course will introduce students to the country of Belarus through the exploration of geography, language, culture, customs and traditions, ethnography, history, literature, and policy, while considering its position at the center of Europe. Students will also have the opportunity to experience Belarusian traditions (culinary practices) and various forms of expression (dancing, Belarusian “folk” as well as contemporary music). This multidisciplinary approach will allow for a holistic understanding of Belarus in the current political and cultural climate. The course also focused on developing in students a general awareness of Belarus, its place in European history (the Polack Principality, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), and the dynamics of a region under the Russian Empire, Soviet dominance and the post-Soviet realities.

Lectures and class discussion will be supplemented by films, slides and sound recorders. Students are also encouraged to investigate information on Belarus available on the Internet.

Part I Introduction.

Week one: General Introduction of Belarus.

- Geography location and administration division;
- Role and place of Belarus in modern European, Post-Soviet and World-wide context;
- Religion (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Apostolic Christian, Baptist, Muslim, New Apostolic, Old Believer, Pentecostal etc.)
- Population of Belarus and ethnic groups (Polish, Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Jews, Tatars and etc.)

Readings A:

1. Anne Coombes, *Belarus*. London : Kuperard ; New York, NY, 2008.
2. Nigel Roberts, *Belarus*. Chalfont St. Peter : Bradt Travel Guides, 2007.

<http://www.belarusguide.com>

Readings B:

1. Zaprudnik, Jan, *Belarus : at a crossroads in history* . Boulder : Westview Press, 1993.
2. *Contemporary Belarus between democracy and dictatorship*, edited by Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson, Rosalind J. Marsh. Routledge, New-York, NY, 2003.
3. Ryszard Radzik, " Is Belarus Part of Europe?" *in Annus Albaruthenicus: Poetica, Prosa, Critica, Translatio, Descriptio*. Krynki: Press, 2009, 25-38.

Week two: General Introduction of Belarus.

- Several conceptions of the name and the ethnic Belarusian land in a different historical periods;
- National and historical Belarusian symbols;
- Belarusian Diaspora in a Northern America.

Readings:

1. Jan Zaprudnik, "The Name of Byelorussia," in *East Europe* Vol. 24 (July 1975), pp. 12-15.

2. Vitaut Kipel, "Byelorussians in the United States" in *Ethnic Forum*, Volume 9, Nos. 1-2, 1989, pp. 75-90.
3. *The History of the Belarusian Nation and State*, Minsk, 2007.

Week three: Genesis and Development of the Belarusian Language.

- History of old Belarusian language;
- Formation of modern literary language;
- Different types of orthography (Cyrillic and Latin).

Readings:

1. Zaprudnik, Jan, *Historical dictionary of Belarus*, Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
2. Barbara Tornquist-Plewa: Language and Belarusian Nation-Building in the Light of Modern Theories on Nationalism in *Annus Albaruthenicus: Poetica, Prosa, Critica, Translatio, Descriptio*. Krynki: Press, 2005, 109 -119.
3. R. G. A. de Bray, "Grammatical Changes in Modern Literary Byelorussian" in *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. I, No. 3.
4. P.J. Mayo, "The Alphabet and Orthography of Byelorussian in the 20th Century" in *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 1.
5. English-Belarusian Dictionaries on-line:
<http://www.belarusguide.com/dictionaries/index.html>

Part II. History of the Belarusian Nation and State (6th-21st centuries)

Week four: The Genesis of Belarusian History (6th-12th centuries).

- Slavization on the territory of Belarus, existence of the tribal unions of the Kryvičs, Dryhavičs and Radzimičs;
- Principalities on the territory of Belarus in the 9th-12th centuries.

Readings:

1. Zaprudnik, Jan, *Historical dictionary of Belarus*, Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
2. *Byelorussia : historical outline* / historical materials collected, reviewed and prepared for publication by Ivan Kasiak, London: Byelorussian Central Council, 1989.
3. *The History of the Belarusan Nation and State*, Minsk, 2007.

**Week five: The European Period of Belarusian History
(13th century to the first part of 16th century).**

- Creation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania;
- Belarusian Renaissance;
- Reformation and Counter-Reformation;
- Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Readings:

1. Vitali Silitski, Jan Zaprudnik, *Historical Dictionary of Belarus*. Scarecrow Press, Incorporated, 2007.
2. *Byelorussia : historical outline* / historical materials collected, reviewed and prepared for publication by Ivan Kasiak, London: Byelorussian Central Council, 1989.
3. *The History of the Belarusan Nation and State*, Minsk, 2007.

**Week six: The European Period of Belarusian History and its
Conclusion (second part of 16th to the 18th centuries).**

- Lublin Union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland into the Consideration the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth;
 - Moscow's most bloody and devastating war against Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1654-1667);
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- Tadeusz Kosciuszko and the 1794 Uprising against the occupation by the Russian Empire, 1791- First Constitution in Europe;
- Three partitions of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between Russia, Austria and Prussia.

Readings:

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1. Vitali Silitski, Jan Zaprudnik, *Historical Dictionary of Belarus*. Scarecrow Press, Incorporated, 2007.
 2. *Byelorussia : historical outline* / historical materials collected, reviewed and prepared for publication by Ivan Kasiak, London: Byelorussian Central Council, 1989.
 3. *The History of the Belarusan Nation and State*, Minsk, 2007.

Week seven: Belarus Under Occupation by the Russian Empire (from the beginning of 19th-century to 1918).

- Two Belarusian Uprisings of 1830-31, 1863-64;
- New Belarusian Literature of XIX c. and formation of Belarusian national movement;
- First World War on the Belarusian lands.

Readings:

1. Snyder, Timothy, *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2004.
 2. Arnold B., McMillin, *A History of Byelorussian Literature: From its Origins to the Present Day*, Herausgegeben von Hans-Bernd Harder und Hans Rothe, Band 6, by Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag; Giessen, W. Germany; 1977.
 3. Arnold McMillin, "A Conspectus and Bibliography of Belarusian Literature in the XIXth Century", in *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 3.
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4. Aliaksandar Smalianchuk, "Belarusian National Idea in the Early Twentieth Century" in the *Annus Albaruthenicus: Poetica, Prosa, Critica, Translatio, Descriptio*. Krynki: Press, 55 -68, 2007.
5. Pavel Tserashkovich, "Social Preconditions of National Revival of the Peoples in the East of Central Eastern Europe in the 19th - early 20th Centuries (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians)" in the *Annus Albaruthenicus: Poetica, Prosa, Critica, Translatio, Descriptio*. Krynki: Press, 69-111, 2007.

Week eight: Soviet period 1918-1991.

- Enunciation of the Belarusian Democratic Republic;
- Building of soviet nation in Belarusian Soviet Socialistic society;

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1. Ryszard Radzik, The Identity of Belarussians at the turn of the 21st century, presented in Conference 'History and Contemporary State of Eastern Studies, Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw, October 26-28, 2008 (in print).
 2. Adam Maldzis, The building on an unstable historical ground (An Essay) in the *Annus Albaruthenicus: Poetica, Prosa, Critica, Translatio, Descriptio*. Krynki: Press, 2002.
 3. Byelorussia : historical outline / historical materials collected, reviewed and prepared for publication by Ivan Kasiak, London : Byelorussian Central Council, 1989.
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Part III. Republic of Belarus.

Week nine: The Current Political situation in Belarus.

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- Declaration of the independence of Belarus;
 - Regime of the current President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.
 - **Struggle against regime of the “Last Dictator of Europe.”**
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Readings:

1. *Democratic changes and authoritarian reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova / edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 1997.*
2. *Independent Belarus: domestic determinants, regional dynamics, and implications for the West / edited by Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem, Lisbeth L. Tarlow. Cambridge, Mass.: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute and Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University, 2002.*
3. *Contemporary Belarus between democracy and dictatorship, edited by Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson, Rosalind J. Marsh. Routledge, New-York, NY, 2003.*

Week ten: Belarusian Culture and Traditions.

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- Customs and traditions, ceremony and ritual: *Hukannie viasny-* “Call of Spring”;
 - Belarusian Music and Traditional Dishes. (Listening and dancing music, cooking and eating).
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Readings:

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1. Survilla, Maria Paula, *Of mermaids and rock singers : placing the self and constructing the nation through Belarusian contemporary music*, New York : Routledge, 2002.
 2. Alexander Bely, "The Belarusian Cookbook", Minsk, 2008.
 3. *Byelorussia : historical outline / historical materials collected, reviewed and prepared for publication by Ivan Kasiak*, London: Byelorussian Central Council, 1989.
 4. *The History of the Belarusian Nation and State*, Minsk, 2007.
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