

SLI Program in Pittsburgh and Moscow for Russian Heritage Speakers

This SLI program is open to Russian heritage speakers on the junior or senior undergraduate level or the graduate level, who are interested either in K-12 or college teaching careers in foreign language or area studies, or in applying their international knowledge to other fields such as government, the professions or international development. The term “heritage speaker” or “heritage learner” refers to a person who has grown up in the U.S. in an informal Russian-language environment, usually at home, without attaining full Russian language proficiency or a native Russian’s complete educational background and cultural awareness.

All seminar participants will receive intensive advanced Russian language training for five weeks at the University of Pittsburgh, immediately followed by five weeks at Russia’s most prestigious educational institution, Moscow State University. In each location, the seminar will provide both regular language instruction at the appropriate level (covering material typically presented in a fourth-year Russian course), as well as individualized tutoring and mentoring to address heritage speakers’ specific needs across the wide range of differences in literacy and fluency encountered among such speakers. The Moscow portion of the seminar will utilize local instructors, carefully designed cultural excursions, and other in-country resources to maximize the expansion of participants’ linguistic and cultural knowledge.

A unique feature of this program will be *Individualized Cultural Excursions*. In addition to group cultural excursions that will be organized for all classes in the Russian SLI to sites of general interest in Moscow (e.g., the Kremlin, Red Square, the Tretyakov Gallery), individualized cultural excursions will be arranged for the heritage learners. These excursions will be designed to provide each student with exposure to the use of specialized Russian vocabulary in his/her primary field of academic interest, which may or may not be directly related to the student’s research project that each student will complete during the seminar. For example, a visit could be arranged to a museum dedicated to a specific Russian writer (for a student majoring in literature), artist or musician (for a fine arts or music major), or historical period (for a history major). In each case, a Russian language-only tour of the site will be provided by a local tour guide, and sites featuring written information for visitors in Russian only will be given first priority. Our staff will assist all seminar participants in acquiring background information about their excursion sites in advance, so that this preparation will help them to attain the greatest possible gains in linguistic and cultural knowledge from their site visits.

A 10-15 page paper written in Russian will be required at the end of the program. All applicants for this program will be interviewed by phone and will be required to submit a writing sample, showing current level of writing ability in Russian.