



Master of Arts in Regional Studies:
Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe
(MARS-REERS)

Program Guide 2026-2027

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The Harriman Institute

The Harriman Institute, the first academic center in the United States devoted to the interdisciplinary study of Russia and the Soviet Union, was founded in 1946, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, as the Russian Institute. Since its founding in 1946, the Harriman Institute, formerly the Russian Institute, has maintained its position as a leading center for the advancement of knowledge in the field of Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies through the research conducted by its faculty, students, fellows and visiting scholars and the training of scholars and professionals. The Harriman Institute strives to facilitate the effective use of the unique resources it possesses to further the work of the diverse community of scholars in residence, students and the more than 60 faculty members who make up the Harriman Institute faculty. The Harriman Institute, through its programs, conferences, lectures, and publications, seeks to create a forum for intellectual exchange and the further enhancement of our students' education.

MARS-REERS

The Harriman Institute administers the Master of Arts in Regional Studies — Russia, Eurasia and Eastern Europe (MARS-REERS) through the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for those wishing to focus on a multidisciplinary approach to the study of contemporary Russia, Eurasia and Eastern Europe. The program provides intensive exposure to the politics, international relations, modern history, and cultural and social formations of the region, with both a country-specific and trans-regional focus. Applicants should have some prior language training and must exhibit proficiency equivalent to three years of an East European or a Eurasian language in order to graduate.

The program is tailored to meet the needs of persons entering professional careers, mid-career professionals, as well as students preparing for entry into doctoral programs, and those with a professional degree, such as the J.D. or M.B.A., who want to gain regional expertise.

The program can be completed in two to four semesters.

Program Contacts

The MA program advisor, Rebecca Dalton (rld2130@columbia.edu), can assist you with questions regarding program requirements, GSAS policies, and registration.

The MA program director, Professor Elise Guiliano (eg599@columbia.edu), can assist you with questions on courses, thesis topics, research questions, and other academic questions.

Requirements

The Master's degree in Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe: Regional Studies requires completion of two Residence Units and 30 points of graduate-level credit, including a master's thesis and eight courses from a wide range of designated courses in Anthropology, Art History, Business, Economics, History, International Affairs, Literature, Law, Political Science, Sociology, and other disciplines. Advanced proficiency of a regional language must be demonstrated. **A grade average of B+ must be maintained in order to complete the program.**

Coursework

All students must take the core interdisciplinary colloquium, RERS GR8445 (Legacies of Empire and the Soviet Union) offered Wednesdays from 4:10-6:00pm in the fall semester only. In consultation with the program advisor, students select seven additional regional courses (at least two of which are colloquia or seminars), of which at least one must be taught in the Department of History. Regional courses must be drawn from at least three disciplines. Students enrolled in a Eurasian or Eastern European language course at the fourth-year level or above may count up to two semesters of language toward the regional course requirement.

Any graduate-level course (4000-level and above) in any department of Columbia University not included on the Harriman course listing may also fulfill degree requirements with the written approval of the program advisor. In such courses, students must produce an acceptable research paper of direct relevance to Russia, Eurasia or Eastern Europe. A list of approved regional courses may be found on the Harriman Institute website.

Students cannot receive course credit for internships or transfer credits.

Language Requirement

In order to graduate, all students must demonstrate proficiency equivalent to three years of a Eurasian or East European language by taking a proficiency exam or completing coursework of appropriate level at Columbia University. A Russian language placement exam will be offered in late August/early September. To schedule a placement exam for the following languages please contact the professors listed.

Armenian	Professor Charry Karamanoukian (ck2444@columbia.edu)
Czech	Professor Christopher Harwood (cwh4@columbia.edu)
Polish	Professor Christopher Caes (cc4038@columbia.edu)
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	Professor Aleksandar Boskovic (ab3865@columbia.edu)
Ukrainian	Professor Yana Prymachenko (yp2848@columbia.edu)

For all other regional languages, contact Rebecca Dalton to set up a placement exam with the Language Resource Center.

Native Speakers: If you have completed secondary school in a regional language, you do not need to take an exam, but you must present your diploma or additional proof of completed secondary school.

M.A. Thesis

All students must register for a two-semester M.A. Thesis Seminar (RERS GR6998 & RERS GR6999) taught by Professor Elise Guiliano. Students must first enroll in a one-credit seminar, which focuses on conceptualizing and writing a formal thesis proposal. Students will develop the proposal under the guidance of the seminar instructor, and through a process of peer review in which students read and critique each other's work-in-progress. At the end of the semester, the thesis proposal may be shown to potential faculty thesis advisors. Once two faculty advisors are secured, the thesis proposal must be submitted to the MARS program advisor along with a proposal form signed by the faculty thesis advisors. Students will receive a letter grade in the seminar.

Students must register for the two-credit M.A. Thesis Seminar (RERS GR6999) in the semester in which they plan to submit their thesis. In this second section students will work independently with their faculty thesis advisors while writing their thesis. The advisors will assign a final grade to the thesis that will serve as the grade received in this course.

*For students who are planning to complete the program in 2 semesters, you must register for the thesis seminar class in the fall.

Writing at the Graduate Level

Students concerned about their ability to write at the graduate level should consult with the MARS program advisor regarding on-campus resources. [The Writing Center](#) is available to all Columbia students by appointment. More information can be found on their [website](#). [The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Writing Studio](#) is located in Lehman library and offers one-on-one thesis support and workshops. In partnership with GSAS, the American Language Program will offer a 6-week course entitled, [“Thesis Writing for International GSAS MA Students.”](#) This course is designed for non-native speakers of English, and will be available in both Fall and Spring semesters.

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Policies and Procedures

Grading

The Graduate School's grading system is as follows: A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, passing but poor; F, failure. Plus and minus letter grades are also used. All courses to be credited toward the degree must be taken for a letter grade.

A letter grade is given to a student who has completed the required work in a course, including the final exam or paper, and it is expressed on a student's transcript by the letter grades A, B, C, D, or F. The grade of F is a final grade and is not subject to reexamination. Students should seek advice from the director of graduate studies in their department if they wish to take a course Pass/Fail or for R credit. Courses taken for R-credit or Pass/Fail may NOT count towards the degree.

R Credit

The mark of R is awarded in place of a letter grade. Students who wish to be given R credit for a course must receive written permission from the instructor that specifies the instructor's expectations within the standard course-change period. After the first two weeks of the semester, students should send a single email to BOTH registrar@columbia.edu AND the instructor in order to request R credit. The deadline to submit the form is the same date as the deadline to request to take a course Pass/Fail.

A course that has been taken for R credit may not be repeated for a letter grade.

A student who has been approved to take a course for R credit is not required to take the final examination but is required to meet any other requirements established by the instructor of the course. It is assumed that the student will meet all course requirements other than the final examination unless the instructor states otherwise in writing when the permission for R credit is granted. **R credit courses do not count towards your degree.**

P/F (Pass/Fail)

Students who wish to be given a P/F grade for a course offered on a letter-grade scale must request the grade of P/F through the Office of the Registrar, not by direct request to the instructor. To submit a request, complete the Add/Drop form and submit it to the Student Service Center in 205 Kent Hall.

The deadline for requesting to take a course P/F in the fall or spring semesters is given on both the GSAS Academic Calendar and the University Academic Calendar. Decisions to take a particular course Pass/Fail or for R credit are not reversible after this date, nor will requests to take a course Pass/Fail or for R credit be granted. The grade of F is a final grade and is not subject to reexamination. The number of points of P/F credit acceptable for a degree is set by each program in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Courses taken for R-credit or Pass/Fail may NOT count towards the degree.

Incompletes

The mark of IN is given to a student who has satisfactorily met all the requirements of a course except for the completion of certain assigned papers or reports or the final examination, which the student has been compelled to postpone for reasons that are 1) beyond his or her control and 2) satisfactory to the instructor. For a course in the Arts and Sciences, if the student does not submit the outstanding work by the deadline specified below, the mark of IN will be changed to an F, which will not be subject to a change at a later date.

For Incompletes earned in the fall semester, the deadline for students to submit their outstanding work is the June 30 that immediately follows. For Incompletes earned in the spring semester or summer term, the deadline for students to submit their outstanding work is the December 30 that immediately follows. Departments and instructors may set an earlier deadline for completion of the outstanding work; in such cases, that deadline will supersede the GSAS deadline.

Leaves of absence approved by GSAS stop the clock on Incomplete deadlines. If a student is granted a Leave of Absence from the University during the grace period of an Incomplete, the grade of Incomplete will remain on the student's transcript while the student is not enrolled, and the time of the leave will not count against the student's grace period.

Registration

In order to register for classes you must log on to Columbia's Student Services Online at ssol.columbia.edu. Registration can only be done during your scheduled registration appointment times. Appointment times are posted approximately two weeks prior to the registration period. You may view your registration appointment times by logging in to SSOL. Each course at Columbia is given a call number, which is available in Vergil. The call number is used to reference the course on SSOL. Please write down the call number, as this is the easiest way to add courses to your schedule during your registration appointment.

Cross-Registration at SIPA

You may want to register for a course offered by the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). SIPA core courses are not open to non-SIPA students. Most SIPA courses will require instructor permission. In order to register for these classes you must: Step 1. Add your name to the course waitlist in SSOL. If additional documentation is required students will receive notification while submitting your name to the waitlist. Step 2. Instructors will approve students from the waitlist. Step 3. Students who apply will be notified of the instructor's decision via email. If a student is selected for the course, they will be automatically registered for the course.

SIPA courses will be blocked for GSAS students until cross-registration opens. Please write the professor directly and let them know you are interested in the course and will attend the first class. If you are interested in a SIPA course, GO TO THE FIRST CLASS and SPEAK TO THE INSTRUCTOR.

History Seminars

Some seminars are open to all, while some require permission from the instructor. All seminars that require instructor permission will include a note in the [History Department's Directory of Classes](#) that states: PERMISSION REQUIRED: EMAIL INSTRUCTOR. Students must first register for the seminar, then email the instructor. If selected, the instructor will move the student from the waitlist into the course. Again

if you are interested and on the waitlist you should email the instructor and attend the first class.

Residence Units

In addition to registering for individual courses, students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are required to register for Residence at the University. A Residence Unit is used to determine billing for GSAS per semester. You must sign up for a Residence Unit each semester in order to be enrolled in GSAS. You do so by adding the appropriate Residence Unit course through SSOL. According to MA requirements, you must complete two full Residence Units. A typical student will register for full time Residence Units in the first two semesters. In the third and fourth semesters they often register for extended Residence Units, which are considerably less costly.

Two Residence Units are required for the free-standing Master of Arts degree. A full-time student must register for a Residence Unit or Extended Residence (see below) each semester.

- A student who is registered for a Residence Unit may register for no more than 20 credit points.

With the exceptions listed below, part-time students in free-standing M.A. programs may register for quarter or half Residence Units.

- A student who is registered for a half Residence Unit may enroll in no more than three courses.
- A student who is registered for a quarter Residence Unit may enroll in one or two courses.

Full and partial Residence Units are calculated using courses taken for a letter grade, Pass/Fail, or for R credit. After completing the appropriate number of Residence Units, students are required to register for Extended Residence for any term in which they are completing a degree requirement such as coursework or language.

Fall 2026 1 Full Residence Unit Morningside Campus GR0001 Call Number 10301
A student may register for up to 20 credit points

Fall 2026 Half Residence Unit Morningside Campus GR0002 Call Number: 10302
A student may register for 3 courses or less

Fall 2026 Quarter Residence Unit Morningside Campus GR0003 Call Number: 10303
A student may register for only one or two courses

Fall 2026 Extended Residence Morningside Campus G0001 Call Number: 10298

Please note that students holding a visa must register for either a full Residence Unit or for Extended Residence to maintain their visa status.

Directory of Classes

The Harriman Institute publishes a list of regional courses which fulfill degree requirements.

You can use Vergil to confirm course details and to search for additional courses before you register. The directory is updated frequently, and should be visited often. Each listing will have a course name and number. A course number of 4000 or above indicates that it is a graduate-level course. The time and location are also listed; please check this information before your first class as it does often change before the start of classes. Please note the letter R refers to Thursday, and some courses only meet for part of the semester. It is strongly recommended that students do not enroll in more than four courses each semester.

Please refer to Vergil for the latest information.

GSAS Academic Policies

While completing your MA degree, you must remain in good standing according to GSAS policies. In GSAS good standing involves two components: academic good standing within the student's department and administrative good standing in the Graduate School.

Good Academic Standing

To be considered in good academic standing, students must make satisfactory academic progress as determined by their department. Satisfactory progress for M.A. candidates includes, but is not limited to:

1. Acquiring an advisor
2. Meeting time-to-degree requirements for the M.A. degree
3. Completing degree requirements and maintaining superior quality of work
4. Meeting with the program advisor in the first two weeks of each semester to complete the registration approval form.

5. Maintaining a B+ average.
6. Registering for no more than 5 courses a semester. You must get approval from the program advisor to register for 5 or more classes.
7. Taking no more than one incomplete a semester. All coursework must be completed by the following deadlines or IN will change to the grade of F.
Deadlines are June 30th for fall courses and December 30th for Spring and Summer courses.

Good Administrative Standing

Additionally, students are expected to remain in compliance with all applicable administrative policies and procedures of the University such as those of the Columbia Libraries, University Housing, etc. Consequences for failing to make academic progress or adhere to applicable administrative policies and procedures may include academic or administrative warning, probation, suspension, or dismissal.

Academic Dishonesty

Students should be aware that academic dishonesty (for example, plagiarism, cheating on an examination, or dishonesty in dealing with a faculty member or other University official) or the threat of violence or harassment are particularly serious offenses and will be dealt with severely under Dean's Discipline.

Graduate students are expected to exhibit the high level of personal and academic integrity and honesty required of all members of an academic community as they engage in scholarly discourse and research. Scholars draw inspiration from the work done by other scholars; they argue their claims with reference to others' work; they extract evidence from the world or from earlier scholarly works. When a student engages in these activities, it is vital to credit properly the source of his or her claims or evidence. Failing to do so violates one's scholarly responsibility.

In practical terms, students must not cheat on examinations, and deliberate plagiarism is of course prohibited. Plagiarism includes buying, stealing, borrowing, or otherwise obtaining all or part of a paper (including obtaining or posting a paper online); hiring someone to write a paper; copying from or paraphrasing another source without proper citation or falsification of citations; and building on the ideas of another without citation. Students also should not submit the same paper to more than one class. This information is adapted from the material published by Purdue University's Online Writing Lab.

Graduate students are responsible for proper citation and paraphrasing, and must also take special care to avoid even accidental plagiarism. The best strategy is to use great caution in the handling of ideas and prose passages: take notes carefully and clearly mark words and ideas not one's own. When in doubt, consult your professor. Failure to observe these rules of conduct will result in serious academic consequences, which can include dismissal from the university.

Students engaging in research must be aware of and follow University policies regarding intellectual and financial conflicts of interest, integrity and security in data collection and management, intellectual property rights and data ownership, and necessary institutional approval for research with human subjects and animals.

Funding Opportunities

There are many academic year fellowships available for the second year of study. There are also many opportunities to fund summer language study in the region as well as field research and internships. Please visit the Harriman website to learn more about available graduate student support.

Students are encouraged to discuss funding opportunities with the program advisors.

Life at Columbia

Housing

Columbia University Housing is extremely limited. However, MARS students can apply online for University Housing. In order to apply, you will need the Sign Up Code and your personal identification number, or PID. Additionally, Columbia offers assistance with finding non-University housing. For more information, please visit the Off-Campus Housing Assistance (OCHA) website. International House is located just north of campus, to learn more about I-House and to apply please visit the I-House website.

Columbia Health

Health Insurance

University policy requires all registered full-time students to have acceptable health insurance coverage. Columbia University offers the Columbia Student Medical Insurance Plan, which provides both Basic and Comprehensive levels of coverage. The

Columbia Plan is administered by Aetna Student Health and is underwritten by Aetna. Full-time students and students living in Columbia housing are automatically enrolled in the Basic level of the plan and billed for the insurance premium in addition to the Columbia Health Fee.

Immunizations

Columbia University requires that each student provide documentation of immunity to Measles, Mumps, and Rubella before the start of their studies. Please refer to the Columbia Health website for details on how to document immunity.

New York State public health law requires that university students receive information from their institutions about meningococcal meningitis and the vaccine that protects against most strains of the disease that occur on university campuses. Columbia University students must certify their meningitis vaccination decision on the Columbia Health website. Students must use their individual University Network ID (UNI) and password to provide this certification, which must be completed before registration for classes is permitted.

Resources on Campus

Area Resources and Study Centers

Russian, Eurasian & East European Languages Library Collections.

These library collections at Columbia contain about 750,000 volumes.

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/global/slavic.html>

Columbia University is in the process of hiring a regional librarian, who will be available for individual consultations and reference assistance in all areas of Russian, Eurasian & East European studies. Students, faculty and advanced researchers can receive advice on bibliographic tools, indexes in print and strategies for getting the most out of CLIO and other electronic resources available at Columbia and elsewhere.

Bakhmeteff Archive

The Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture is the second largest repository of Russian émigré materials in the United States. For more information contact Tanya Chebatorev, tc241@columbia.edu

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/rbml/units/bakhmeteff.html>

New York Public Library

Taken together, the collections of Columbia and the New York Public Library add up to the single largest concentration of Russian language materials in the country.

Study Spaces

The library in the International Affairs Building is located on the third floor. Library locations and hours can be found on the Columbia library website. The Harriman Institute also has study spaces on the 12th floor. The Harriman reading room and the Harriman student lounge are located in Rooms 1201 and 1202 IAB.

Health Services

Health service offices are located on the 3rd and 4th floor of John Jay. These offices house a number of doctors as well as an urgent care facility. For a list of services and to make an appointment please refer to the health services website.

Counseling and Psychological Services are located on the 8th floor of Lerner Hall. They are available Monday-Thursday from 8:00am-6:30pm and Fridays from 8:00am-4:30pm.

The Office of Disability Services is located in Wien Hall, Suite 108A, and can assist students with a range of disabilities. You must first register your disability before receiving appropriate assistance. Please note: If you have any issues with ADHD, anxiety, or learning difficulties, please consider registering your issue with ODS.

Career Development

[GSAS Compass](#) is the career and professional development hub in GSAS that offers a variety of career development services tailored to master's and doctoral students, including career development workshops, employer events, networking opportunities, and [one-on-one advising](#).

Fitness

[Dodge Fitness Center](#) is accessible to all full time graduate students. Fitness and wellness classes are available for registered users, personal training is also available. Please see the Dodge Fitness Center website for more details.