

Sample Student Evaluations for José Vergara
Russian 004: Intensive Fourth-Semester Russian
Swarthmore College
Spring 2018 / Spring 2021

“I placed into Russian two last year without having had any actual Russian class or speaking practice. So coming into four, even having had Russian 2 and 3 for the last two semesters, I felt I might’ve been behind, but with Professor Vergara’s teaching it was very easy to catch up and keep up as far as learning the material went.”

“Yes. Because of Professor Vergara’s teaching it was fine, even though it felt like it might’ve been that other students had a more thorough background than I did. Also Vergara is good at teaching the new grammatical material quickly and giving us all the information we need to learn, and then Tsvetelina is very very good at discerning what we need to go over more based on what she can tell we do and don’t have a firm grasp on in class. Vergara is good at that too, but we have less class time with him. All of both of their handouts are also helpful.”

“He had everything planned from the beginning of the semester and kept up with the schedule all semester.”

“Professor Vergara has had the syllabus planned out since the beginning of the semester, and it has barely changed in all that time.”

“He always provided plenty of materials (slideshows, worksheets, games) to help teach the materials, and had the syllabus completely planned a semester in advance with very few changes.”

“His cool grammar powerpoints and handouts. And email reminders.”

“He brought tons of extra resources.”

“It’s a Russian class, so yes, he speaks in Russian the whole time.”

“He also encouraged us to ask our questions in Russian even when we were pretty sure we couldn’t express them. Sometimes it worked.”

“Great! The experience was almost immersive.”

“Definitely--feedback on compositions was especially helpful.”

“Yes, his teaching and assignments were very effective.”

“He is very good at explaining grammar concepts and making clear how and when to use the new

material.”

“This man is unflappable. Our particular group has never been great students, and I honestly don’t know how he hasn’t run screaming yet. Even at our worst, I think all we’ve ever gotten out of him is a raised eyebrow. He makes Russian class a welcome spot of stability in the midst of our turbulent lives. Also, is super helpful both in and outside of class, accommodating and understanding in cases of conflicts/external circumstances.”

“He has a lot of materials and is great at explaining the textbook in simpler words which is incredibly helpful. He also has extremely high expectations when it comes to assignments and quality of work, which pushes us.”

“He cares a lot about us learning and being okay more so than anything else it seems like.”

“He thoroughly explains the concepts and content that are difficult to understand.”

“Additionally the handouts that were available online or given out in class were very helpful.”

“I found it difficult to read the textbook independently and adequately understand the new grammar. That is why it is so important that Professor Vergara is good at breaking down the information in an easier way.”

“Writing long compositions (up to 1000 words) definitely pushed past how much I thought I was able to write, and definitely helped me improve basic grammar and a lot of syntax errors that I made.”

“The video projects and other oral exam assignments were very useful because they allowed us to practice our language skills in more realistic settings.”

“Games! I love playing pictionary and Kahoot with the class to help with quick recall.”

“I really enjoy the grading system, because the focus is more on individual improvement rather than grades. This has relieved a lot of my stress and really encouraged me to enjoy learning.”

“I still found this class effective, even on zoom. Screen sharing powerpoints and other exercises worked well to keep the class focused on the lesson. Having shared google documents was a useful technique to foster collaboration between students. Showing videos was a good technique to present material on the cultural aspects of the class.”

“I found it engaging and motivational when we did read through menus/literary excerpts because I felt more exposed to real-life language usage.”

“I loved his powerpoints with animations that he used to teach us grammar concepts - they really helped me visualize what I was learning. He was also very helpful and always prepared to direct us to any additional resources if we needed them.”

“Professor Vergara always seemed to have a detailed plan of lecture, activities, exercises, and materials prepared for each longer class. I enjoyed the fact that he had many brief, varied activities (such as writing a dialogue, answering grammar exercises as a class, going over review, reading excerpts, going through PowerPoints, writing our own sentences, etc) which kept the class interesting. His explanations of grammar tended to be intuitive and clear. His teaching style facilitated an accepting environment.”

“Professor Vergara was great with using the target language. He would explain vocab words in Russian and eventually we would figure them out without ever having them translated by him to English (most of the time). He was also able to explain surprisingly complex grammar ideas in Russian, which I enjoyed.”

“His explanations and corrections on my homework were very clear and helpful.”

“He forces me to challenge myself when speaking, and he also helps me to figure out the answer myself.”

“Professor Vergara is very organized with his lessons and gives really good explanations of grammar. He is committed to using the target language and good at explaining things in Russian using the limited vocab his students have. He is great at planning activities that are engaging and fun and gives super detailed feedback. It is clear how much effort he puts into every component of his class.”

“Getting feedback on both assignments and exams encouraged us to improve our language skills by looking back and fixing our mistakes. Exams had several different sections which was helpful in developing all pieces of language skills (grammar, reading, listening, writing, vocabulary). Assignments helped reinforce material while it was still fresh in our minds.”

“Working through practice questions, whether for reading or audio, as well as simply conversing about the topics we were learning in Russian were very stimulating. Working through questions with the teacher present let us ask any questions that had arisen immediately, and conversation was a great way to remember new vocabulary and grammar as well as improve

speaking skills.”

“It was stimulating to be able to collaborate with my classmate, so exercises where we focused on questions together were useful. I also liked looking at song lyrics or stories and then answering comprehension questions. It was also fun to practice using grammar in made up scenarios (for example, the dinner guest exercise with declensions of names). Any exercise that is in some kind of context is more interesting than just offering up a correct word for a sentence or to fit a set of criteria.”

“Would you recommend this course to other students?”

- “Yes. Russian is a fun language to learn.” • “Yes, because Russian is underrated as a language and I will advocate for others to learn it until the day I die.” • “Yes! Because it will really help you learn Russian grammar, vocab, and culture, which is the point.” • “Absolutely.” • “Yes, I already have.” • “Yes, I would, because the professors are good at making you feel included, and the learning is highly personal.” • “Yes, this course helped me to improve my language skills in a comprehensive manner and was generally enjoyable. All of the work had a purpose and nothing felt like ‘busy work.’ The professors were approachable and clearly excited about what they were teaching. It was obvious they wanted their students to succeed and provided lots of help.”