The Russian fantastic story is unlike any other: the “blood-curling horror of European ghost stories” is replaced with a focus on the psychological and social complexities of the real world. In this course we will delve into the peculiarly Russian world of fantasy and will read texts by three nineteenth-century giants, – Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Fedor Dostoevsky, - inspired by E.T.A. Hoffmann’s work or, as is the case with Gogol’s early work, by Ukrainian folklore. Gogol’s Viy will surprise you with the abundance of devilish creatures attacking a naïve soul, will tease and satisfy your expectations. Pushkin’s ghost story, Queen of Spades, may be considered the starting point to the Russian tradition of fantastic tales. Gogol’s and Dostoevsky’s Petersburg tales, such as Overcoat and Dream of a Ridiculous Man, introduce Petersburg as a powerful entity, driving its human inhabitants to insanity, a theme these authors develop in diverse and unexpected ways. Screen versions of the stories we read will help us examine the life of these texts beyond one medium. This course will allow you to experience reading Russian literature in the original, to get acquainted with exciting texts by prominent nineteenth-century Russian writers and at the same time to work on your language skills, particularly reading and writing.

Reading and discussion in Russian. Prerequisites: RUSS3050 or RUSS3070 or an equivalent (which has to be discussed with your instructor no later than the first week of the semester).