

Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian 101: Beginning BCS I
Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures
Fall 2022

Dobrodošli!!



Days & Time: MTWR, 9:00AM-9:50AM
Location: FLB 1126

Instructor: Alejandra Pires
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Office Hours: By appointment.
Office: FLB 3136

Supervisor: Peter Wright

Email: pqwrigh2@illinois.edu

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to help you develop beginner proficiency in oral expression, listening comprehension, reading, writing, and cultural understanding. The course fosters students' grammar skills in BCS, emphasizing communicative practice in authentic cultural contexts. Cultural audio-visual materials and use of BCS websites help to reinforce the link between language and culture.

Of course, learning about a different culture carries almost inevitably explicit reflections about our own. Through natural and elicited *comparisons* between the two of them, successful students in this course will gain a perspective from which they can consider cultural concepts in a relative rather than absolute fashion.

Detailed schedules of class activities, learning tasks, test, quizzes, and homework assignments will be posted on the course website (Compass/Canvas) for two to three weeks at a time.

For questions about language placement, particularly for heritage speakers, please contact me via email or speak to me after class on the first day.

Course Purpose and Learning Goals. Students completing BCS 102 (the spring semester conclusion to BCS 101) will achieve novice high or intermediate low proficiency in BCS in all modalities: they will be able to hold conversations in BCS in a range of contexts with native speakers of BCS accustomed to speaking with foreigners, will be able to read advertisements and other short texts, will be able to understand announcements in broadcast media and public places (e.g., train station or airport). Students will acquire a basic understanding of some aspects of BCS culture (e.g., greeting and hospitality rituals, geography, broad outline of BCS history, some familiarity with some of the great works of BCS

writers, composers, artists). Students completing BCS 102 will be prepared to take 2nd-Year BCS at U of I (BCS 201) in the fall semester (or the equivalent elsewhere in summer).

Course Expectations. All participants in this course will show mutual respect for each other and me, the instructor. (*Note:* I like to foster a relaxed and casual classroom setting, and students are welcome to refer to me by my first name. However, that does *not* give anyone leeway to be impolite. I expect students to listen to each other and to me respectfully, and to maintain email etiquette when corresponding with me or the class as a whole.) Students are expected to arrive to class on time and be prepared to participate actively in class activities. Students should expect weekly graded homework assignments, in addition to grammar review, studying vocabulary, and preparing for the next class.

You are expected to behave properly in class and to comply with the University Student Code: <http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/>. Improper conduct and language, as well as the use of cellular phones in class without permission, will not be tolerated. (However, students are allowed to use dictionary apps on their phones to look up words they don't know.)

BCS in the Classroom. Most of our class sessions will be conducted in a mix of BCS and English. You will have plenty of opportunities to ask questions in English, but students are encouraged to practice using BCS in class as much as possible. Moreover, grammar explanations will *always* be given in English. However, we will be focusing our class experience on *using* BCS and to do that, we have to speak in BCS. **We will have a lot of pair and group activities when you will be assigned to complete a task in BCS; you are expected to use BCS in these situations, even if you have to work your way around a word or concept you don't know.** (When you go to Bosnia, Croatia, or Serbia, you will have plenty of opportunities to work your way around words you don't know!) Using English in class during activities in which BCS is the expected language of communication will result in a **reduced class participation grade for that class session** (see below).

Succeeding in This Class (Getting a good grade in this class). Grammar is an interesting part of any language and it is certainly a fascinating aspect of the BCS languages. But the study of BCS is *not only* the study of BCS grammar. We will certainly practice grammar as part of our work together in class, but the focus of our work will be on developing communicative skills in BCS. This encompasses not only grammar, but also vocabulary, culture, pronunciation and intonation, and the understanding of texts that you will read and listen to. Students who come to class prepared every day, who try their hardest on their homework assignments, who ask questions, review returned assignments, and study for quizzes and tests will earn good grades in this class. The assignments are carefully measured so that there is not too much work per task, but enough to challenge students; if you keep up, you will stay on top of things and earn a good grade in the course. If you fall behind, it will be difficult to catch up because we will be going forward at a rapid pace. **Class participation and homework, together, are worth 40% of your course grade. If you put in a solid effort, even if you do poorly on quizzes (and even if you do somewhat poorly on tests), you are still likely to get a grade of B in the course.** But if you don't come to class regularly and you don't do your homework, your grades will suffer. Don't get behind.

Course requirements and policies:

Required textbook:

Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian: A Textbook With Exercises and Basic Grammar by Ronelle Alexander and Ellen Elias-Bursac, second edition, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, 2010. (I recommend acquiring a hard copy of the book, but I understand that some students prefer electronic copies.)

Optional materials:

English-Serbo-Croatian Dictionary by Morton Benson, or any other Croatian/ Bosnian/ Serbian dictionary that you may find useful.

Suggested Materials:

These are not required, but highly recommended:

- Index cards (in different colors) to cut up into flashcards
- A notebook for taking notes
- A folder for printed handout, and/or an electronic folder on your computer for saved handouts

Course website. The course website (Canvas) will be regularly updated with useful information: unit test study guides, links to interesting websites, and relevant course materials. Indeed, almost everything will be on Compass/Canvas.

Attendance. Regular attendance is crucial for mastering a foreign language. **Students with 8 or more unexcused absences will receive an F in the course.** An unexcused absence is an absence I don't know about. In other words, if I'm not informed beforehand that you won't be in class, then the absence is unexcused. **If something comes up and you won't be able to come to class, simply inform me ahead of time.** You don't need to give me excuses, you just need to *communicate with me*. I'm more than happy to work with you in unexpected circumstances and be amenable, but you HAVE to communicate with me. **You still won't receive participation points for the days you're absent, even if you inform me beforehand, but these absences won't be counted toward your 8 unexcused absences.** In rare circumstances, you may be asked to obtain a letter from the Emergency Dean:

300 Turner Student Services Building
610 East John Street
Champaign, IL 61820
(217) 333-0050

Course Grades. Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

97% - 100% = A+	83% - 87% = B	70% - 72% = C-	Below 60% = F
93% - 96% = A	80% - 82% = B-	68% - 69% = D+	
90% - 92% = A-	78% - 79% = C+	63% - 67% = D	
88% - 89% = B+	73% - 77% = C	60% - 62% = D-	

Course grades will be based on the following components, each of which is explained below:

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| 1. Preparation and class participation | 20% |
| 2. Homework | 20% |
| 3. Quizzes | 15% |
| 4. Tests | 15% |
| 5. Oral Exams (including presentations) | 15% |
| 6. Final exam | 15% |

1. Class participation. You must come to class on time and *prepared* even if you were absent at the previous class. **You should bring your textbook to class every day. NO EXCEPTIONS.** Your detailed course plan has all the information on the material covered on each particular day and the assigned homework. Your daily participation will be graded on a 5 point scale:

5 points	Present, on time, fully prepared, actively and thoughtfully participating in class discussions and activities (this doesn't mean you answer every question correctly, merely that you are ready to try to answer every question), staying in BCS in pair and group activities when this is assigned
4 points	Present, on time, partially prepared, minimally participating in class discussions and activities and/or using English when BCS is required
3 points	Present, on time, partially prepared, not participating in class discussions and activities and/or using English when BCS is required
2 points	Present, on time, unprepared, minimally participating in class discussions and activities
0 points	Absent

A one-point penalty will be imposed on the class participation grade for each 10 minutes you are late for each class.

Your final attendance/participation grade will be greatly affected by the quality of your participation and the level and consistency of your preparedness. You must always have your textbook with you. You should also always have your course plan/weekly syllabus at hand in case I announce any changes to the plan. I also strongly recommend that you **have a notebook handy and take handwritten notes** (even while our class is online). This may seem repetitive, but it will help you learn the material better. You can also write on your book if you have a hard copy or take notes electronically. (Though I think handwritten notes work best.)

2. Homework. Your detailed course plan includes daily suggested homework assignments and **weekly graded homework assignments. ALL WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE WRITTEN IN CYRILLIC.** You have the choice to either write assignments by hand OR type the assignments. (If you choose to type your assignments, they **MUST** be typed in Cyrillic.) If you choose to write assignments by hand, please write neatly and legibly, and skip lines. (I would strongly recommend that you write assignments by hand in Cyrillic.) Homework will be graded by completion. In other words, if you do the entire assignment, you will get full credit, even if you've made mistakes in your work. I will provide feedback if I see recurring mistakes or other issues. ***Late homework will not be accepted!*** Your homework will be graded on the following 5-point scale:

- 10 points: complete and on time
- 6 points: partially incomplete
- 0 points: not submitted



Note: While the daily suggested homework assignments will not be graded, I strongly encourage students to look over them, think about them, and perhaps even write them out. It's very likely that we'll go over these exercises in class, and it helps to expedite the process if you've already thought about them.

3. Quizzes. During the course of the semester we will have **three (3)** vocabulary quizzes. Ordinarily, these quizzes will consist of a written portion and a dictation/spelling test portion.

4. Tests. During the course of the semester we'll have **two (20)** unit tests. The tests will be taken in class. They can be written in either the Cyrillic or Latin alphabet. **If you have to miss class on the day of the test, please let me know beforehand so that we can reschedule.**

5. Oral Exams. Oral exams will be informal and consist of conversations between student and instructor. They will only be conducted on an as-needed basis, if I see that students need practice conversing.

6. Oral presentations. Each of you will be required to give 2 brief 5-minute presentations on an aspect of BCS culture of your choice. Your presentation will be in English. More detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas.

7. Final Exam. The final examination will be a short, typed essay that you write on your own time. More detailed instructions will be handed out once we get closer to the end of the semester. **No late final exams will be accepted.**

About Quizzes, Tests, Oral Exams and the Final Exam. I will not accept late work, but please always communicate with me if something comes up and prevents you from being in class for an exam or quiz. As I've mentioned, I can be amenable, but you have to communicate with me first.

Policy on Religious Holidays. I treat religious holidays the same way I treat any other absences: communicate with me beforehand and inform me that you won't be in class and I'll treat it as an excused absence. If you simply don't show up to class without informing me, I'll have no choice but to mark it as an unexcused absence.

Academic Integrity. Cases of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to university policy. Please read the note on Academic Dishonesty very carefully: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/>.

For your homework assignments you should feel free to consult your textbooks, dictionaries, grammar books, or notes that might help you. **You may NOT seek outside assistance** (e.g., friends, family, native speakers, etc.) for completing graded assignments, including homework. While I encourage students to discuss the language and cultures with friends and family, and to seek help clarifying difficult grammar points, there is a VERY BIG DIFFERENCE between these activities and having someone else do your work for you. You are also **not allowed to use computer-assisted translators or online translating programs.** (In other words, don't type a sentence into an online translation program and transcribe it onto your homework. And don't ask your dad or cousin or whatever how to say something. I can almost ALWAYS tell when students have used outside "help" – you will get caught.)

Extra Credit

At the end of each semester I will distribute a prompt for an optional extra credit assignment. **This is meant as a boost for students who have been working hard all semester, and not as a replacement for diligent work.** Occasionally, smaller extra credit opportunities will present themselves, such as departmental lectures, movie nights, and BCS conversation hour.

A Final Note on Class Etiquette: It's my goal, now and always, to foster an atmosphere of respect and understanding in the classroom and to ascertain that the learning needs of all students are met. Thus, I intend to work towards an environment of inclusion with regards to gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

All people have a right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity. Please feel free to indicate the name and pronouns that you prefer to use. For example, my preferred pronouns are "she/her/hers." While Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is a gendered language, I'm happy to work with students to find appropriate means of identity expression.

Learning a new language is like discovering a new world to explore. While it's exciting and fun, we often find ourselves inadvertently stepping into minefields of cultural misunderstanding. This is especially true with regards to gender, race and ethnicity, and other forms of identity. By fostering this environment of respect and understanding, it's my hope that we can help each other navigate the minefield together.

As we're all dealing with the lingering effects of the pandemic, we'll all have to be extra mindful of each other's personal space and boundaries. This includes taking sick days, if you happen to fall ill (with covid or otherwise). Your health and the health of the community is more important than attendance! That said, I'm confident that we can foster a strong and friendly language-learning community.

