

Where Are They Now?

UF Russian Studies Alumni Profile

Alumnus: Peter Spinella (class of '05)

Concentration(s) at UF: (majors) Russian Studies & English; (minor) Music Theory

Current occupation: Moscow correspondent, covering Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union.

Looking back, what aspects of your UF Russian studies proved particularly useful? *The summer study in Moscow, hosted by Professors Alexander Burak and Galina Rylkova, was wonderful. They taught me a great deal about Russian culture.*

With regard to your pursuit of Russian at UF, is there anything you didn't take or get that would have been useful? *I definitely should have done a minor in business. I worked for several years as an editor and translator at a couple of investment banks and a big-four consulting company in Moscow. I was lucky to get the first job; I had to spend a lot of long nights in the office reading up about business concepts.*

What did you do after you graduated? *Immediately after I graduated I moved to Moscow. I studied the language at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU), where I had previously done a summer session coordinated by UF, and I taught English to make a living. About a year later, I got a job as an English editor at a big-four consultancy.*

Are you still using your Russian? *Yes, every day. Thank you.*

What advice might you have for Russian studies students considering Russian as a major? *Don't give up. For native English speakers, Russian is definitely a challenging foreign language. It might take several months of studying before you can feel comfortable. If you stick with it, you'll get it. Know that.*

What advice might you have for Russian studies students on the verge of graduation? *Make sure you can fluently read the Russian press: the three major news agencies TASS, RIA Novosti and Interfax, as well as the business-oriented newspapers Vedomosti and Kommersant, and even the tabloids Life News and Komsomolskaya Pravda.*

In a sentence or two, reflect on your experiences studying Russian at UF and its impact on you personally and/or professionally. *In my experience, the teaching staff at UF was excellent. I took Russian on a whim because I had to fulfill a foreign-language requirement for my major in English. It was a great decision. I remember the first word that Professor Michael Gorham taught on my first day, "zdravstvuyte," with its exotic strings of consonants. It sounded awesome.*

If their interests or trajectories correspond to yours, would you be willing to help individual students with career, post-graduate, and/or networking questions? *Yes, of course. Go Gators!*