

INTRODUCTION TO SERBIAN/CROATIAN LITERATURE

Course Curriculum Guide

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A 15-Week Semester Curriculum

Two class sessions per week

Contents

General Course Information	3
Assessment Summary	5
Suggested Classroom Activities & Teaching Strategies	7
Sample Lesson Plan Format	9
List of Suggested Literary Works	11
15-Week Course Calendar	13

General Course Information

Course Purpose

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to Serbian and Croatian literature, tracing its development from the earliest written texts to the modern era. Together we will explore a wide range of genres — epic and lyrical folk poetry, folk tales, short stories, novels, and modern poetry — situating each work within its historical, cultural, and linguistic context. By the end of the semester, students should have a solid working knowledge of the major writers, movements, and texts that define the Serbian/Croatian literary tradition, along with strengthened reading, writing, and speaking skills in the target language. Success in this course depends on active engagement: students are expected to take ownership of their learning and to participate consistently in class discussion.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Recognize and analyze the most important genres in target-language literature.
- Identify and discuss key characteristics of the most important literary movements in the target culture.
- Place literature in a meaningful cultural and historical context.
- Improve target-language reading, writing, and speaking skills.

Required Texts

All assigned reading materials will be posted in the course Content Section or emailed to students directly by the instructor. A complete list of suggested literary works for the semester appears later in this guide.

Assessment Overview

Final grades are calculated from five components, weighted as follows. A detailed explanation of each component is provided on the following page.

Assessment Component	Weight
Reading Assignments	30%
Writing Assignments	20%
Presentations	20%
Attendance & Participation	10%
Final Project	20%

Grading Scale

Grade	Percent
A	93–100%
A-	90–92%
B+	87–89%
B	83–86%
B-	80–82%
C+	77–79%
C	73–76%
C-	70–72%
D+	67–69%
D	63–66%
D-	60–62%
E	Below 60%

Assessment Summary

Student performance in this course is evaluated holistically, through a combination of preparation, participation, written work, oral presentation, and a cumulative final project. Each component is designed to reinforce a different set of skills — reading comprehension, written expression, oral fluency, and independent research — so that students leave the course with a well-rounded command of Serbian/Croatian literature and language. The five components of the final grade are described in detail below.

Reading Assignments — 30%

Every week students are assigned a new literary text — a folk ballad, poem, short story, or novel excerpt — which must be read in the target language before the corresponding class session. Reading materials are distributed by the instructor in advance through the course Content Section or by email. In class, students take part in guided discussions covering the main ideas, characters, vocabulary, and historical or cultural background of each text. Reading assignments are assessed through a combination of comprehension questions, in-class discussion participation, vocabulary and historical-background exercises, short written reflections, and occasional voice recordings. Students should come to class prepared to summarize what they read and to raise questions or observations of their own.

Writing Assignments — 20%

Throughout the semester, students write short essays based on the literary works discussed in class. Some writing assignments are completed during class time, immediately following a reading or discussion, while others are assigned as homework and completed independently. These assignments are designed to help students practice organizing ideas in the target language, developing an argument or interpretation, and using new vocabulary accurately. Writing is assessed for content (depth of understanding and engagement with the text), organization, and appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary for the student's level.

Presentations — 20%

Each student gives three presentations in class over the course of the semester. Two presentation topics are assigned by the instructor and relate to the historical background of a literary period, a specific event, or an individual writer; the third presentation topic is chosen by the student, within the theme assigned for that unit. Presentations are evaluated on the accuracy and depth of research, clarity of organization, use of the target language, and overall delivery (pacing, pronunciation, and audience engagement). Detailed presentation guidelines and rubrics are distributed in class ahead of each assignment.

Attendance & Participation — 10%

Regular attendance and active participation are essential to this course, since class time is built around discussion of shared readings. The attendance grade reflects not only presence in class but also the quality of a student's engagement — coming prepared, contributing to discussion, and participating in

pair and group activities. Students who are unable to attend a class session should notify the instructor in advance whenever possible, so that arrangements can be made for completing missed work and catching up before the next class.

Final Project — 20%

At the end of the semester, students complete a final project on a topic of their choosing related to Serbian/Croatian literature. The project includes both a written component and an in-class oral presentation, giving students the opportunity to research a subject in depth and share their findings with the class. A detailed project description, including a proposal deadline and grading rubric, is posted as a separate assignment description and reviewed together in class well before the due date.

Suggested Classroom Activities & Teaching Strategies

The activities below may be used throughout the semester to reinforce reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural understanding. They are grouped by function; instructors are encouraged to select and adapt activities based on each week's literary focus, and the weekly course calendar references several of them directly under "Possible Assignments/Homework."

Warm-Up & Engagement

- **Karaoke:** Listen to popular Serbian/Croatian songs while the lyrics are displayed on screen; analyze and try to translate them.
- **Language Games:** Play word games such as crosswords or word searches built around literary vocabulary and cultural or historical themes.

Reading & Vocabulary

- **Reading Comprehension Practice:** Students read excerpts from assigned Serbian/Croatian literary works and answer comprehension questions in the target language.
- **Vocabulary Building:** Build vocabulary lists from the assigned text, focusing on literary terms, historical references, or cultural concepts.
- **Translation Exercise:** Translate a passage from Serbian/Croatian literature into the students' native language, or vice versa, with attention to nuances in meaning and structure.

Analysis & Discussion

- **Character Analysis:** Students choose a character from the assigned work and describe their characteristics, motivations, and development.
- **Group Discussion / Pair Work:** Hold a class discussion about the themes and moral lessons of a story or poem.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Compare a Serbian/Croatian work with a similar work from another culture, focusing on theme, structure, and character.
- **Analyzing Poetic Devices:** Identify and explain the use of metaphor, simile, and other poetic devices in the assigned poems.
- **Literary Debate:** Organize a debate on a controversial theme found in the literature (e.g., freedom vs. duty, tradition vs. modernity).

Creative & Expressive Work

- **Creative Writing:** Students write a continuation or alternate ending to a folk tale or story.
- **Writing a Letter:** Students write a letter as if they were a character from the assigned work, expressing that character's thoughts and feelings.
- **Role Play:** Students act out scenes from the assigned literature, practicing pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- **Serbian/Croatian Folklore Exploration:** Discuss the elements of local folklore found in literature, then have students create their own folklore story or myth.

Research & Presentation

- **Literary Timeline:** Students research and create a timeline of major Serbian/Croatian writers and their works, highlighting historical and cultural context.
- **Author Study:** Students choose an author, research their life and works, and present their findings to the class.
- **Cultural Presentation:** Students present on a specific aspect of Serbian/Croatian culture — traditions, holidays, or historical events referenced in literature.
- **Historical Context:** Discuss the historical events referenced in the assigned literature and how history shapes the literary work.

Reflection & Extension

- **Literary Journals:** Keep a class journal in which students write short reflections on assigned readings, integrating new vocabulary and ideas.
- **Folk Song Analysis:** Listen to traditional folk songs and analyze their lyrics, exploring the cultural values they express.
- **Cultural Film Screening:** Watch a film adaptation of an assigned literary work and discuss how it compares to the original text.

Sample Lesson Plan Format

Each 75-minute class session in this course follows a consistent five-stage lesson structure — Warm-Up, Present, Practice, Produce, and Wrap-Up — built around a Can-Do objectives framework. This structure keeps class time balanced between instructor-led presentation of new material and active, communicative use of the target language. The template and stage breakdown below can be adapted to any week's literary focus.

Lesson Plan Template

CAN-DO Statements / Objectives	What students will know or be able to do by the end of the lesson.
Vocabulary	New words drawn from the assigned readings, audio, or video for the week.
Grammar Structures	The grammar point reinforced or introduced during the lesson.
Materials	Texts, audio/video links, handouts, and slides used in the lesson.

75-Minute Lesson Flow

Stage	Description	Time
Warm-Up	Short activity to activate prior knowledge and engage students (e.g., karaoke, a discussion question, a language game).	~5 min
Present	Instructor introduces the writer, historical background, and new material through short readings, audio, or video.	~25 min
Practice	Guided, often collaborative practice with the text — e.g., a jigsaw reading activity, paired discussion, or comprehension task.	~30 min
Produce	Students independently produce language based on the lesson — a short written summary, spoken reflection, or discussion contribution.	~10 min
Wrap-Up	Brief review of key points and a reminder of the homework assignment for the next class.	~5 min

Illustrative Example — Week 11: Ivo Andrić

Lesson Title	Ivo Andrić (Serbian-Croatian writer and Nobel Prize winner) <i>Instructional Time: 75 minutes – Week 11</i>
CAN-DO Statements / Objectives	- Students will learn the basic biographical facts about Ivo Andrić, including his life, historical context, and major works. - Students will be able to read and discuss the assigned excerpt in class, identifying main ideas and supporting details. - Students will be able to write a short summary of the ideas discussed in class and share their own insight.
Vocabulary	New words drawn from the biography, video, audio recording, and Nobel Prize speech excerpt (e.g., nagrada – prize/award, pripovedanje – storytelling, zavičaj – homeland, domovina – homeland/native land, priznanje – recognition/acknowledgment). Full list distributed in class.
Grammar Structures	Past tenses – reinforced through biographical narration (Andrić's life and career) and through summarizing what was read and discussed.
Materials	- Slides: short biography of Ivo Andrić (life, historical context, Nobel Prize in Literature, 1961). - Video (4 min): Ivo Andrić speaking about his love of books and writing – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoOBTRv71iA - Audio recording (6 min): Ivo Andrić's essay “Mostovi” (Bridges) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3P77i8Z6GI - Handout: jigsaw excerpt packet from Andrić's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, divided into sections; homework reminder slip.
Warm-Up (~5 min)	Karaoke: a Serbian/Croatian song of the students' choice, with lyrics displayed on screen, to activate the target language and ease students into class.
Present (~25 min)	Short overview of the biography of Ivo Andrić: his life, historical and cultural context, and major works. Short video (4 min): a recording of Ivo Andrić speaking about his love of books and writing. Audio recording (6 min): Ivo Andrić's essay “Mostovi” (Bridges), followed by a brief comprehension check.
Practice (~30 min)	Nobel Prize acceptance speech – jigsaw activity: each pair of students is assigned a portion of the speech to read and discuss (main ideas, supporting details, unfamiliar vocabulary). After preparing their section, each pair shares what they learned with the rest of the class, so that together the class reconstructs the full speech.
Produce (~10 min)	Students have ten minutes to write a short summary of the main ideas from the assigned readings (biography, audio essay, and speech excerpt) and to share their own insight or reaction.
Wrap-Up (~5 min)	Brief recap of the day's main ideas about Andrić and Na Drini Čuprija, followed by a reminder of the homework assignment for the next class.

List of Suggested Literary Works

The following works, organized by genre, form the core reading list referenced throughout the weekly course calendar. Original titles are given in italics, followed by an English translation.

Romani (Novels)

1. Ivo Andrić, *Na Drini ćuprija* – The Bridge on the Drina
2. Petar Petrović Njegoš, *Gorski vijenac* – The Mountain Wreath
3. Branko Ćopić, *Orlovi rano lete* – Eagles Fly Early

Epske narodne pesme (Epic Folk Ballads)

1. Marko Kraljević i vila – Marko Kraljević and the Fairy
2. Oranje Marka Kraljevića – The Plowing of Marko Kraljević
3. Smrt Marka Kraljevića – The Death of Marko Kraljević
4. Zidanje Skadra – The Building of Skadar
5. Uroš i Mrnjavčevići – Uroš and the Mrnjavčević Brothers

Lirske narodne pesme (Lyrical Folk Poems)

1. Srpska devojka – The Serbian Maiden
2. Riba i devojka – The Fish and the Maiden
3. Nadžnjeva se momak i devojka – A Young Man and a Maiden Compete in Reaping
4. Sunce se devojkom ženi – The Sun Marries a Maiden
5. Bog, sunce i sirote – God, the Sun, and the Poor
6. Vila zida grad – The Fairy Builds a Town

Narodne priče (Folk Stories/Fairytales)

1. Ero s onoga svijeta – Ero from the Other World
2. Baš Čelik – True Steel
3. Biberče – Little Pepper
4. Aždaja i carev sin – The Dragon and the Emperor's Son
5. Zlatna jabuka i devet paunica – The Golden Apple and the Nine Peahens

Kratke priče (Short Stories)

1. Radoje Domanović, *Vođa* – The Leader
2. Branko Ćopić, *Ježeva kućica* – The Hedgehog's House

3. Stevan Raičković, *Bajka o dečaku i Mesecu* – The Tale of the Boy and the Moon
4. Stevan Raičković, *Bajka o zrnu peska* – The Tale of a Grain of Sand
5. Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, *Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića* – The Marvellous Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice
6. Stefan Nemanja, *Zavještanje o jeziku* – The Legacy of the Language

Moderna poezija (Modern Poetry)

1. Miroslav “Mika” Antić – *Plavi čuperak* (The Blue Forelock); *Divna pesma* (Wonderful Song)
2. Duško Radović – *Plavi zec* (The Blue Rabbit); *Strašan lav* (The Fearsome Lion); *Tužna pesma* (Sad Song)
3. Ljubivoje Ršumović – *Deca su ukras sveta* (Children Are the World’s Ornament); *Išli smo u Afriku* (We Went to Africa)
4. Branko Radičević – *Pevam danju, pevam noću* (I Sing by Day, I Sing by Night)
5. Desanka Maksimović – *Strepnja* (Anxiety); *Krvava bajka* (Bloody Fairy Tale); *A i tebe to molim* (And I Ask This of You, Too); *Čovek* (Man); *Verujem* (I Believe)
6. Vladislav Petković Dis – *Možda spava* (Perhaps She Sleeps); *Među svojim* (Among His Own)
7. Jovan Jovanović Zmaj – *Ala je lep ovaj svet* (Oh, How Beautiful This World Is); *Kaži mi, kaži* (Tell Me, Tell Me); *Pesma o pesmi* (A Song About a Song); *Dete i leptir* (The Child and the Butterfly); *Žaba čita novine* (The Frog Reads the Newspaper)
8. Dobrica Erić – *Zrno sna* (A Grain of a Dream); *Nije ona jedina na svetu* (She Is Not the Only One in the World)
9. Tin Ujević – *Svakidašnja jadikovka* (Everyday Lament)
10. Dobriša Cesarić – *Slap* (The Waterfall); *Jesen* (Autumn)

15-Week Course Calendar

The course meets twice weekly (Monday and Wednesday). The calendar below outlines the lesson topic and suggested literary works for each class session, along with possible assignments or homework drawn from the activities described earlier in this guide. Instructors may adjust pacing as needed to fit the group's progress.

Wk	Lesson Topic & Suggested Literary Works	Possible Assignments / Homework
1	Course Introduction & Orientation Class 1: Welcome, syllabus and course expectations overview; warm-up karaoke activity. Class 2 : History and development of the Serbian/Croatian language; introduction to the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets.	● Review the syllabus and course calendar ● Vocabulary preview: key literary terms
2	Medieval Literature & the Oral Tradition Class 1: Historical and cultural context of medieval Serbian literature. Stefan Nemanja, Zavještanje o jeziku – The Legacy of the Language. Class 2: Introduction to the oral epic tradition: the guslar performance tradition and the structure of epic verse.	● Reading comprehension questions on Zavještanje o jeziku ● Historical context research: medieval period
3	Epic Folk Ballads I – The Marko Kraljević Cycle Class 1 : Marko Kraljević i vila – Marko Kraljević and the Fairy; Oranje Marka Kraljevića – The Plowing of Marko Kraljević. Class 2: Smrt Marka Kraljevića – The Death of Marko Kraljević; Zidanje Skadra – The Building of Skadar.	● Character analysis: Marko Kraljević ● Vocabulary list: epic poetry terms
4	Epic Folk Ballads II Class 1 : Uroš i Mrnjavčevići – Uroš and the Mrnjavčević Brothers. Class 2 : Comparative discussion: heroism and honor across the ballad cycle; short review quiz.	● Creative writing: an alternate ending to a ballad of your choice ● Prepare discussion questions on themes of loyalty and honor
5	Lyrical Folk Poems I Class 1: Srpska devojka – The Serbian Maiden; Riba i devojka – The Fish and the Maiden. Class 2: Nadžnjeva se momak i devojka – A Young Man and a Maiden Compete in Reaping; Sunce se devojkom ženi – The Sun Marries a Maiden.	● Translation exercise: translate a short stanza ● Group discussion prep: gender roles in folk poetry
6	Lyrical Folk Poems II Class 1 : Bog, sunce i sirote – God, the Sun, and the Poor; Vila zida grad – The Fairy Builds a Town. Class 2 : Analyzing poetic devices in the lyrical tradition: metaphor, personification, and repetition.	● Poetic devices worksheet ● Literary journal entry: reflection on a favorite poem

Wk	Lesson Topic & Suggested Literary Works	Possible Assignments / Homework
7	Folk Stories & Fairytales I Class 1: Ero s onoga svijeta – Ero from the Other World; Baš Čelik – True Steel. Class 2: Biberče – Little Pepper; Aždaja i carev sin – The Dragon and the Emperor's Son.	● Reading comprehension questions ● Vocabulary building: fairytale motifs and archetypes
8	Folk Stories & Fairytales II Class 1: Zlatna jabuka i devet paunica – The Golden Apple and the Nine Peahens. Class 2: Serbian/Croatian folklore exploration: motifs, symbols, and values in the fairytale tradition.	● Creative writing: compose an original folk tale or myth ● Comparative analysis: a Serbian fairytale vs. one from another culture
9	Short Stories I Class 1: Radoje Domanović, Vođa – The Leader. Class 2: Branko Ćopić, Ježeva kućica – The Hedgehog's House.	● Reading comprehension questions ● Character analysis: the protagonist of Vođa
10	Short Stories II Class 1: Stevan Raičković, Bajka o dečaku i Mesecu – The Tale of the Boy and the Moon; Bajka o znu peska – The Tale of a Grain of Sand. Class 2 (Wed): Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića – The Marvellous Adventures of Hlapić the Apprentice.	● Literary journal entry ● Vocabulary quiz on the short-story unit
11	The Novel I – Ivo Andrić Class 1: Biography of Ivo Andrić; introduction to Na Drini ćuprija – The Bridge on the Drina; assigned excerpt reading. Class 2 (Wed): Nobel Prize acceptance speech jigsaw activity; continued discussion of Na Drini ćuprija.	● Read the assigned excerpt of Na Drini ćuprija ● Write a short summary of the Nobel speech discussion and share your own insight
12	The Novel II – Ćopić Class 1: Branko Ćopić, Orlovi rano lete – Eagles Fly Early: excerpt discussion and comparison Class 2: Orlovi Rano lete-Eagles fly early: historical background and excerpt discussion.	● Reading comprehension questions ● Presentation preparation: author study (Njegoš or Ćopić)
13	Modern Poetry I Class 1: Jovan Jovanović Zmaj – selected poems; Desanka Maksimović – selected poems. Class 2: Branko Radičević – selected poems; Vladislav Petković Dis – selected poems.	● Poetic devices analysis ● Memorize and prepare to recite a short poem of your choice
14	Modern Poetry II & Literature in Culture and History Class 1 (Mon): Miroslav Antić, Duško Radović, Ljubivoje Ršumović, and Dobrica Erić – selected poems. Class 2 (Wed): Tin Ujević and Dobriša Cesarić – selected poems; discussion of literature's role in shaping culture, society, and historical memory.	● Literary timeline project (major writers and works) ● Reflection paper: literature and historical context

Wk	Lesson Topic & Suggested Literary Works	Possible Assignments / Homework
15	Review & Final Presentations Class 1 (Mon): Semester review; open discussion and Q&A; study guide distribution. Class 2 (Wed): Final Student Presentations.	● Final project due ● Prepare and rehearse your final presentation