UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures  
RUSS 2117: Russian Speculative Philosophy

Tuesdays 2.30-5.15  
CL 236  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Russian speculative philosophy and philosophical culture have tended to confound existing markers familiar to analytic and continental philosophical systems. On the one hand, they have produced a radically materialist line, culminating in Leninism. On the other hand, they have retained features of an enduring mysticism, with only grudging concessions to the vexation of secular life. These oddly compatible systems exist as declaredly philosophical thought, but have also been integrated into other cultural texts—the major novels, poetry, visual arts—where claims to "philosophical thinking" dominate to a greater extent than in Western culture. The course will move from Radishchev and the Decembrist crisis through the nihilist and populist thought, Solov'ev and Berdiaev, Lenin and Stalin, to the recent writings of Mamardashvili and Ryklin.

ATTENDANCE
Students are expected to attend all classes. More than two unexcused absences will affect the final grade. More than three will result in failure, regardless of the student’s prior standing. Excused absences, such as illness or death in the immediate family, must be documented. Absent students are responsible for acquiring relevant class notes and handouts from fellow students. Work assigned in a student’s absence will not be given a later deadline without prior agreement with the instructor.

EVALUATION
Participants will be graded on the basis of written work (50%) and seminar contribution (50%), which may include quizzes or in-class writing assignments, given without notice.

COURSE METHODOLOGY
1. Emphasis will be on primary texts; some secondary texts provided as an initial orientation. Participants are strongly encouraged to read additional material as needed.
2. In order to facilitate independent reading, the core assignment will not exceed 150 pages a week. The instructor is interested in evidence of outside reading.
3. Participants will provide one-page handouts to augment their own short (5-7 minutes maximum) commentaries, organized around research questions formulated in advance. In the 15 weeks, ten such one-page handouts will be generated. At first, recommended research questions are provided; gradually, participants will initiate their own research questions in advance of the class.
4. Two implicit queries of our common reading are a.) comparative differences and similarities within sets and b.) historical stages of thought in individual thinkers. Participants are strongly encouraged to track more global, recurrent questions—the relationship to the West (and which West?); the changing relationship to Hegel (and which Hegel?); the status of individual consciousness in a tradition of collectivity and state-enforced compliance; the relationship between the intelligentsia and narod; the mutual impact of metropole and periphery; the suitability of autocratic power; geography and consciousness; the philosophy of action; elite leadership of the peasantry (or its contrary); the locus of revolutionary change; legal and illegal political agitation; the ethical value of violence; the necessity of elite, secret cadres, etc.

DISABILITY POLICY
If a student has a disability that requires special teaching, testing accommodations, or other classroom modifications, he or she must notify the instructor and the Office of Disabled Student Services (DDS) no later than the Add/Drop date (Friday, 5 September). The student may be asked to provide documentation of the disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify DDS, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 216 William Pitt Union.

TEXTS (items marked * are of primary importance)
Reserve list (on 2-hour and overnight reserve at Hillman Library):


For consultation (not on reserve):

1. General texts:

2. Specialized texts (specific author, historical period, etc.)

**SCHEDULE**

**(assignments due on the date indicated)**

**WEEK 1**: Tuesday, 26 August. Gentry as intellectual resource

Syllabus

Context: Gentry Conservatives and Revolutionaries (Karamzin, Radishchev, the Decembrists)

**WEEK 2**: Tuesday, 2 September. Enlightenment revolts: "political" change vs. "social" change


Excerpts from Decembrist documents. Riha II: 295-302 (7)

Bogatov, Vitaly. "The Decembrists." Kuvakin I: 103-112 (9)
Chaadaev, Petr (1794-1856). *Philosophical Letters* (Letters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8). Edie I: 106-54 (48).
---. "Apology of a Madman." Riha II: 30 (1)
  • Walicki. "Petr Chaadaev." 81-91 (10)  

**WEEK 3: Tuesday, 9 September. Russian Hegelianism**

---. "Society and the Individual." Edie I: 300-303 (3)
---. Letters to Botkin. Edie I: 304-311 (7)
---. Letter to Gogol'. Edie I: 312-20 (8)
  • Firsov, Viktor. "Vissarion Belinsky." Kuvakin I: 207-218 (11)
  • Walicki. "The Russian Hegelians: From 'Reconciliation with Reality' to 'Philosophy of Action.'" 115-34 (19)
  ---. "Belinsky and Different Variants of Westernism." 135-51 (16)
  ---. "The Petrashevtsy." 152-61 (9)  

**WEEK 4: Tuesday, 16 September. Slavophilia**

Aksakov, Ivan (1823-86). "A Slavophile Statement (Address to the St. Petersburg Benevolent Slavic Committee)." Riha II: 378-82 (4)
Aksakov, Konstantin (1817-60). "On the Internal State of Russia." Raeff 230-51 (21)
Khomiakov, Aleksei (1804-60). "On Humboldt." Raeff 209-229 (20)
  • Kuvakin, Valery. "Khomyakov" Kuvakin I: 189-206 (17)
  • Serbinenko, Vyacheslav. "Slavophilism." Kuvakin I: 140-62 (22)
  • Walicki. "The Slavophiles." 92-114 (22)  

**WEEK 5: Tuesday, 23 September. Hegelian Westernism and Russian Socialism**

Herzen, Aleksandr (1812-70). "Young Moscow" (from *My Life and Thoughts*). Riha II: 321-31 (10)
  • Walicki. "The Origins of Russian Socialism." 162-82 (20)  

---. "God and the State." Edie I: 415-24 (9).
  • Walicki. "Anarchism." 268-89 (21)  

**WEEK 6: Tuesday, 30 September. Enlighteners of the 1860s**

  • Maslin, Mikhail. "Nikolai Chernyshevsky." Kuvakin I: 238-47 (9)

Dobroliubov', Nikolai (1836-61). "The Organic Development of Man in Connection with His Mental and Spiritual Activities." Raeff 263-287 (24)
  • ---. "What is Oblomovism?" (excerpts). Riha II: 332-43 (11)
  • Bogatov, Vitaly. "Nikolai Dobrolyubov." Kuvakin I: 248-58 (10)

Pisarev, Dmitrii (1840-68). "The Realists" (excerpts) Edie II: 79-96 (17)
---. "Thinking Proletariat." Edie II: 97-108 (11)
  • Byelenkova, Lyubov. "Dmitry Pisarev." Kuvakin I: 259-68 (9)  

**WEEK 7: Tuesday, 7 October. Populism and the 1870s**

Mikhailovskii, Nikolai (1842-1904). "What is Progress?" (excerpts). Edie II: 177-87 (10)
---. "Three Stages of History" (excerpts). Edie II: 188-98 (10)
  • Alexeyev, Vladimir. "Nikolai Mikhaiovsky." Kuvakin I: 325-35 (10)
  • Walicki. "Populist Ideologies." 222-67 (45)
**WEEK 8**: Tuesday, 14 October: no class (Fall Break)

**WEEK 9**: Tuesday, 21 October: Literary prophecy and reaction

Dostoevski, Fedor (1821-81). "Pushkin: A Sketch (1880)." Raeff 288-300 (12)


---. "The Meaning of the Russian Revolution." Raeff 323-57 (34)


**WEEK 10**: Tuesday, 28 October. Messianism and apocalypse


- http://www.isfp.co.uk/russian_thinkers/vasily_rozanov.html

Bulgakov, Sergei (1871-1944)

- Kuvakin, Valery. "Sergei Bulgakov." Kuvakin II: 621-38 (17) [70]

**WEEK 11**: Tuesday, 4 November. Metaphysical idealism

Solov'ev, Vladimir (1853-1900). Lectures on Godmanhood. Edie II: 62-84 (22)

- Kuvakin, Valery. "Vladimir Solov'ev." Kuvakin II: 436-54 (18)


Shestov, Leon (1866-1938). "Kierkegaard and Dostoevskii." Edie III: 227-247 (20) OR
---. In Memory of a Great Philosopher: Edmund Husserl." Edie III: 248-76 (28)

- Zakydalsky, Taras. "Lev Shostov and the Revival of Religious Thought in Russia." Scanlan 153-64 (9)
- http://www.isfp.co.uk/russian_thinkers/lev_shestov.html [110-18]

**WEEK 12**: Tuesday, 11 November. The Russian Idea

Berdiaev, Nikolai (1874-1948). *The Russian Idea*

- http://www.isfp.co.uk/russian_thinkers/nikolay_berdyaev.html [260]

**WEEK 13**: Tuesday, 18 November. Dialectical materialism

---. "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death." Edie III: 366-67 (1)
---. "Materialism or Kantanism" (excerpts). Edie III: 382-86 (4)
---. "Fundamental Problems of Marxism" (excerpts). Edie III: 387-89 (2)

---. From *Philosophical Notebooks.* Edie III: 437-54 (17)

- http://www.isfp.co.uk/russian_thinkers/vladimir_lenin.html

WEEK 14: Tuesday, 25 November: Eurasianism

WEEK 15: Tuesday, 2 December: Late Soviet debates
Zweerde, van der, Evert. "Philosophy in the Act: The Socio-Political Relevance of Mamardashvili's Philosophizing." *Studies in East European Thought* 58:3 (September 2006): 179-203 (24) and other articles in this special issue online at http://www.springerlink.com/content/j49777223p41/?p=a38516e0964e4c69bd408e5c77f739b3&amp;pi=6
http://www.isfp.co.uk/russian_thinkers/merab_mamardashvili.html
Scanlan, James. "Interpretations and Usages of Slavophilism in Recent Russian Thought." Scanlan 23-30 (7)

WEEK 16: Tuesday, 9 December. The "return" of Russian philosophy? Choose among these texts: