History 371

The Russian Intelligentsia In the Late Imperial Period

Thematic content

This course explores aspects of Russian intellectual history during the 19th and early 20th century through a close reading of a variety of primary texts of social, literary, and political commentary. We examine the self-conceptions of the Russian intelligentsia and the ways in which they located themselves in the process of social and political change. Among the questions we address are the following: How did various writers understand their relationship to “the people?” How did they live with the contrasts of poverty and privilege? How did issues of identity – European, Russian, Eurasian – shape their social and political philosophies? How did they conceptualize the challenges of “modernity?”

Course Objectives, Requirements, Goals

The fundamental project of the seminar will be the development of an intellectual community in which we all work together to reach an understanding of an important set of historical issues. It will be the responsibility of each member of the seminar to read the assigned materials for each session and bring his/her ideas and perspectives to the metaphorical table. Attendance is therefore mandatory and active participation in the exchange of ideas is expected.

The seminar seeks to develop critical thinking skills though a close reading of primary texts and the practice of exploratory writing. To this end, each student will prepare a short "working paper" (1-2 typed pages) for each class session. These papers should articulate the major issues raised by the readings, define the author's point of view, draw out points of comparison between the week's readings, and include questions to be discussed in class. The papers will constitute an essential part of the written work for the course and will also help to structure the weekly discussions. The
papers will be due by noon each Wednesday and will be read briefly by the instructor prior to the session. They will be returned in class so that students may draw on their questions for the discussion. The papers will then be read carefully by the instructor, returned the following week, and graded with a √+, √, √-. After completing the first three working papers, students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss their progress on this assignment.

Each student will write two more formal papers (each approx. 5 typed pages). These essays will be based on an aspect of the course readings and discussions; they will not require additional reading or research. I will suggest a few topics, but you may pursue your own interests provided I approve in advance. The first essay will be due no later than noon, Oct. 16 and the second will be due no later than noon, Dec. 11. Working papers will not be required for the week in which the essay is due, but thoughtful preparation of the week’s reading will be expected.

Sharpening critical thinking skills through exploratory writing and oral argument is the key goal of the seminar. This work is designed to be challenging, hopefully fun, but definitely not for those who wish to sit on the sidelines and observe.

Students should feel free to meet with me during office hours or by appointment to discuss any aspect of the semester’s work.

**Readings:**

The following books have been ordered at the Bookstore; they have also been placed on Reserve. Articles and excerpts will be available on BlackBoard or ERRes.

Turgenev, *Fathers and Children*
Dostoevsky, *Notes From Underground*
Gibian, *The Portable 19th c Russian Reader*
Raeff, ed. *Russian Intellectual History, An Anthology*

For those who would like a quick overview of the period or need to brush up on the basic context, I recommend Freeze, *Russia, A History* Chs 6-7 on regular reserve for History 107. A more detailed text is C. Evtuhov, et. al. eds., *A History Of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, also on reserve for History 107.
A final note: Please turn off cell phones, pagers, beeping watches and the like for the entire class period; once class has begun, please refrain from taking breaks and leaving the room until the designated break for everyone half way through the session.

Sept. 2: Introduction

Sept. 9: Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia


Figes, Natasha’s Dance pp. 72-118 [Bb and book on reserve; the scan begins on p. 62 for some reason, please ignore and begin on p. 72.]

Malia, “What is the Intelligentsia?” Daedalus, vol. 89, no. 3 (Summer 1960), 441-458. [Bb]

September 16: Emerging critiques of pre-reform Russia


September 23: Slavophiles

Kireevskii, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia" in Raeff, Russian Intellectual History, An Anthology, pp. 174-207. [1852]

September 30: Belinsky and Herzen

“Belinsky and Herzen” in Leatherbarrow and Offord, eds. *A Documentary History of Russian Thought*, Pages 111-159 have been scanned as one document in Bb: please read the following:
- Introduction, 111-116
- Menzel, Critic of Goethe, 117-123

Belinskii, “Letter to N. V. Gogol” in Raeff, Russian Intellectual History. An Anthology, pp. 159-173. [Written in 1847] [NB: Please read this version, not the excerpted one in the Leatherbarrow.]

“Belinsky and Herzen” in Leatherbarrow and Offord, eds. *A Documentary History of Russian Thought*,
- A. I. Herzen
  - The Russian People and Socialism, 147-48
  - Robert Owen, 149-159

Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts* “My Father”, “The University” pp. 74-137. [Bb]

October 7 Dilemmas of change

Turgenev, *Fathers and Children* [1862] (entire)

October 14 What Is To Be Done?


Fall Break
October 28: Dostoevsky's Emerging Critique of the Intelligentsia

Dostoevsky, *Notes From Underground* [1864] (entire -- Parts I and II)

November 4 To the people: Populism and Terrorism in the Aftermath of the Great Reforms

“Revolutionary Populism” in Leatherbarrow and Offord, eds. *A Documentary History of Russian Thought*, Pages 247-293 have been scanned as one document in Bb; please read the following:

- Introduction, pp. 247-252
- Lavrov, p. 261-277
- Bakunin, p. 278-285

Excerpts from the memoirs of Figner and Zasulich in Engel and Rosenthal, eds. *Five Sisters: Women against the Tsar*, pp. 3-94. [Bb]

November 11 Discovering the Industrial Working Class: a different ‘narod’?

Zelnik, “Workers and Intelligentsia in the 1870s: The Politics of Sociability” in *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections* [Bb]

Gorky, "Chelkash" [Bb]


November 18 Conservative Thought


Dostoevsky, “Geok-Tepe: What is Asia to Us?” from *Diary of a Writer* pp. 1043-1052. [ERES]

**November 25**  
**Tolstoy’s confrontation with Modernity**  [next day is Thanksgiving]


**December 2: New Identities, Reassessing values?**

Preface to the first edition of *Landmarks, At Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia, 1909*  Ed. By Boris Shragin and Albert Todd  [Handout]


Mikhail Artsybashev, Excerpts from “Sanin” in *Entertaining Tsarist Russia*  [1908]  [handout]

**December 9   --- Last Class**