

HISTORY 600 - Seminar 7 - WOMEN IN IMPERIALRUSSIA

I would really, really like it if students had some preparation in either: a) pre-revolutionary Russia; b) women's history; c) nineteenth-century Europe. I also recognize that such preparation does not predominate among our majors. So, if people are interested, they can contact me for a meeting at dmmcdon1@wisc.edu

Thanks,
David

This seminar examines a relatively new topic in Russian history: the experience and forces shaping the identities of women during a long century of gathering transformations that ended in revolution. By looking at women's place and experience in Russian society during this period, participants will gain new perspectives on the peculiarities of Russian history and, it is hoped, on problems of continuity and change as they affect the construction of female identity and attribution of status to women in societies the world over. In pursuing these broader aims, participants will also become acquainted with the highly varied sorts of source literature and methodologies demanded by studying such a diverse population as that of imperial Russia.

The formal requirements of the seminar are straightforward. Since seminars are meant in part to foster learning through critical discussion of shared readings, you are required to attend each meeting. Each session will address a set of assigned readings. Depending on the topic for a given week, such readings might include primary sources, memoirs, novels and historians comments on them. One half of your final grade will derive from your contribution to discussion. It goes without saying that in order to participate in discussion, you must be present at seminar: consequently, attendance is mandatory. In addition, each of you will be asked to prepare a brief (10-15 minutes) oral presentation to serve as an introduction to a topic under the seminars discussion: such presentations should summarize briefly and critically the state of discussion in the area and also raise questions the presenter identifies as important. This presentation will account for 15% of the final grade. Finally, the balance of your grade will be devoted to a longer (app. 20pp.) research paper, the topic of which you will choose in consultation with the instructor.

While the history of women in late imperial Russia has been treated in a broad variety of fashions, this seminar will take a double-pronged approach. Following the social practice of nineteenth-century Russians themselves, our schedule will break Russian society into two larger components: peasant women, whose daughters and granddaughters later moved into cities following the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the advent of industrialization toward the end of the nineteenth century; and women from those parts of society connoted by terms such as noble, and later educated and who made up the female components of the professions and the revolutionary underground during the final years of the Romanov dynasty. Because of the wide variety of social structures and practices with regard to women found in the Russian Empire and due to the paucity of sources on women among other ethnic communities, this seminar will restrict itself

predominantly to the study of those who others identified as ethnically Great Russian or Little Russian/Ukrainian among the peasantry; and those who inhabited Russian-speaking provinces among the elites.

Due to the breadth of the subjects we shall be addressing, and to minimize your expense, there are no assigned textbooks for this course. At the same time, readings will often come from a fairly restricted number of collections. Similarly, students with an interest in Russian women's history, or those who wish to build a library in comparative women's history, might consider some of the following suggestions, as well as those included on the attached bibliography. (The bibliography was compiled as the result of an internet discussion led by Professor Christine Worobec of Kent University in Ohio).

For those who feel a lack of knowledge general Russian history, the most widely available textbook is Nicholas Riasanovskys A History of Russia is a reliable stand-by, as is Hugh Seton-Watson's Decline of Imperial Russia: readers should and will note that both manage almost entirely to omit women from otherwise serviceable overviews. A more recent entrant is John Goodings Rulers and Subjects, which is slightly more inclusive on this score. For books dealing more directly with Russian women's history, the two you will encounter most often in this course (and which you might consider purchasing) are Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation, edited by B. E. Clements, B. A. Engel, and the aforementioned C. Worobec. You will also be reading quite frequently from the volume edited by B. Farnsworth and L. Viola, Russian Peasant Women. Both contain articles on Russian women's history by the leading scholars in the field. There are also some good web sites on Russian women's history and current concerns <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/2533/russfem.html> is a good place to start and on scholarship in women's studies <http://www.iisg.nl/~womhist/index.html> is one resource that offers a broad listing of useful materials.

The fact that you are not required to purchase texts places a greater burden on you individually and collectively to cooperate with your colleagues in securing your weekly readings. You should make use of the email list that will be compiled during the first two weeks of classes, using it as a clearinghouse to determine who is using which sources. When using journal articles, as you will be frequently, be considerate by replacing the volume you've used when you are done with it; re-shelving takes from three days to a week. In emergencies, contact me or try the Petrovich collection in room 212 of Memorial Library.