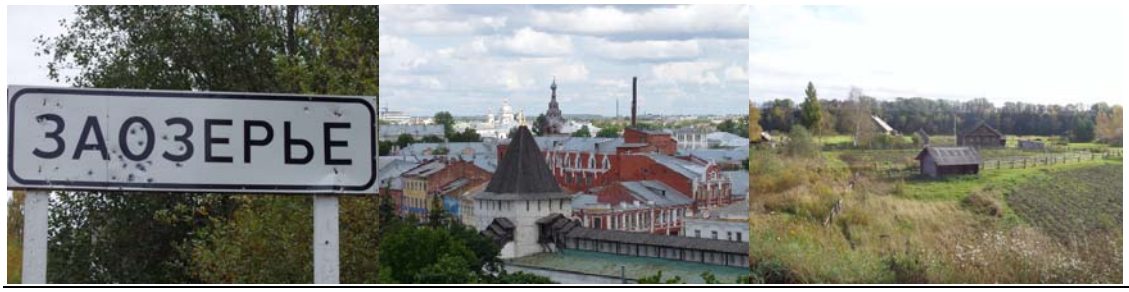
Russian 499
Advanced Seminar in Russian

MWF
Winter Term, 2009
MW 10—11.30 am
2010 MLB
Images of the "Provincial" in Russian Culture



In Russia the “provinces” begin at the edges of Moscow and St Petersburg – everything beyond the two “capitals” is “provincial” in the world’s largest country. Thus the vast majority of Russians live in the “provinces”, although the country’s culture (as its economy and politics) is dominated by the two capitals. The geographical extent of Russia, the inaccessibility of even major centers of population, a very centralized institutional structure, obvious economic imbalances, and many other factors go into sustaining the sense that “provincial” Russia is remote, backward, and homogeneous. At the same time, opposite claims are often heard: that here is the “real” Russia, uncontaminated by non-native influences, unchanged by time, pure, and beautiful – a model from which the capitals have deviated to their own detriment.

This course will examine a series of images of the “provincial” in Russian culture, using readings not only from fiction, poetry, and travel narratives, but also from beyond the realm of *belles lettres* (there will be significant use of Internet resources, for example). In a series of course modules we will explore how the Russian provinces have

been imagined, presented, and distorted by those who inhabit them, by those who mythologize them, by those who dread them, and by those who love them.

Two short papers, a final presentation, and a term paper will be required. The course is taught in Russian, with participation in discussions required. All assignments are in Russian. Students will be asked to bring to most classes notes on questions assigned for the class, those notes will be used to guide their participation in discussions and will be submitted at the end of the class.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

JANUARY

W7 Introduction to class. Requirements, expectations. Some basics on the provinces.

M 12 Pick a place (students investigate and then report on a chosen location).
W 14 Classic literary statements – Nikolai Gogol' and the provinces; *Revizor*

M 19 MLK DAY (no classes).
W 21 *Revizor*, conc.

M 26 The provinces in prose. Saltykov, *Gubernskie ocherik*
W 29 conc.

FEBRUARY

M 2 Leskov, "Grabezh", chapters 1-8.
W 4 "Grabezh", chapters 9-17.

M 9 The Russian Modernists look at the provinces – Sologub, *Melkii bes* (extracts)..
W 11 conc.
F 13 **DRAFT OF FIRST PAPER DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

M 16. Pil'nyak, "Nizhegorodskii otkos"..
W 18 conc. **FIRST PAPER DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

MID-TERM BREAK

MARCH

M 2 The provincial village answers back -- the “new-peasant” authors -- Klychkov, “Chertukhinskie nebylitsy”

MEETINGS THIS WEEK TO SELECT TOPICS FOR FINAL PAPER AND CLASS PRESENTATION

W 4 Klyuev and the end of the Russian village. Klyuev and the Russian provinces

M 9 Russian literature today and the provinces – Aleshkovskii, “Stargorod’

W 11 conc..

F 13 **DRAFT OF SECOND PAPER DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

M 16 Russian Ethnography – Maksimov in Kem’, and others

W 18 conc.

SECOND PAPER DUE.

M 23 The provinces of “Holy Russia” – pilgrims travel then and now.

MEETINGS THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS PROGRESS ON FINAL PAPER

W 25 Cinema and the provinces.

M 30 Cinema and the provinces conc..

APRIL

W 1 The provinces in the press today.

M 6 The provincial press today

W 9 Travelling through the Russian provinces today – guides, tales, means.

DRAFT OF FIRST HALF OF FINAL PAPER DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISISON.

M 13. Russians paint the provinces

DRAFT OF PRESENTATION DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

W 15.**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS.**

M 20 **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS.**

F 24 **DRAFT OF ENTIRE FINAL PAPER DUE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

T 28 **FINAL PAPER DUE.**

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MW 2.30-3.30, or by appointment