

**TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE
ON SLAVIC AND EAST/CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES**

APRIL 28, 2018
UCLA

Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Olga Kagan

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1A: TOPICS IN JEWISH AND ROMANIAN STUDIES

Ramona Kline (Portland State University) “A New Day for Russia’s Jews? The Chabad-Lubavitch Jewish Community in Putin’s Russia”

This paper examines the resurgence of Jewish life in Russia under Putin, particularly in reference to Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar, and considers the presence of this growing Jewish community in the larger context of the rise of the Russian Orthodox Church and its traditional associations with Russian antisemitism.

I will first discuss the significant role the Chief Rabbi plays in current revitalization of religious Jewish life in Russia. I will examine Putin’s unlikely friendship with the Chief Rabbi in the context of his background in the KGB, Eurasianist ideology, authoritarian policies, and rhetoric that Russians should return to Russian Orthodox values. Given the history of official uses of antisemitism in Russian politics, it seems significant that the current government’s support for Russian Orthodoxy has not been accompanied by official anti-Semitic policies. However, individual expressions of antisemitism, particularly among influential voices in the Orthodox Church do appear. Nevertheless, the ultra-orthodox Chabad-Lubavitch community is flourishing and experiencing a revival of Jewish culture and religion. The challenge in examining this phenomenon lies in the fact that these events are current and ever-changing, and the factors influencing the status of the Jewish community in Russia are complex and multi-faceted. Therefore, no solid conclusions can be reached in trying to forecast the future of Russia’s Jews. We do, however, have an opportunity to witness an unprecedented and fascinating chapter in the making of Russian Jewish policy.

Yasha Max Hoffman (University of Wisconsin – Madison) “Contemporary musical Culture of Bukharian Jews: Preservation and Performance”

The music culture of Bukharian Jews directly reflects the Uzbek-Tajik traditions in which they were immersed, which in turn contribute to contemporary Bukharian Jewish performance and preservation practices.

Though one of the dominant historical-cultural narratives of Bukharian Jews posits that they were spiritually and culturally isolated from other Jews in the diaspora, my work shows that they excelled in local forms of music-making, engaging with local traditions (often by force or necessity) such as *sozanda* and the *shashmaqom* repertoire. Bukharian Jewish musicians gained prominence in late imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. Now, the majority of Bukharian Jews have emigrated from their native Central Asia to Israel and New York City, and they are faced with the task of preserving their unique traditions. One of the preeminent figures in contemporary performance and preservation is *hazzan* Ezro Malakov. Through an analysis of his work, I will show that the specific choices he made while compiling his “Musical Treasures of the Bukharian Jewish Community” are based in centuries of Central Asian musical practice.

Hannah Catherine Bennet (UCLA) “The Tsar’s Voivode: Dimitrie Cantemir and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern Romania

My paper will discuss the ways in which the life and work of statesman, author, and musician Dimitrie Cantemir were influenced by his multicultural environment. Cantemir was a ruler of Moldavia who allied with Peter the Great of Russia and eventually became a member of the Russian nobility. Although he supported Peter the Great in the Russo-Turkish War of 1710-1711, Cantemir wrote a detailed history of the Ottoman Empire and devised a notation system for Turkish music. He also made significant contributions to Romanian literature. Later, he became Peter the Great’s advisor on Ottoman affairs. He lived at various times in Moldavia, Istanbul, and Russia. I will analyze the ways in which Cantemir’s life presents a microcosm of Romania’s position between great powers in the 17th-19th centuries.

Mason Comtois (UCLA) “A Romanian Influenced Constructed Language”

Creating a constructed language is usually seen as an enjoyable hobby. In recent history, if they provide any sort of utility, it is for adding more authenticity to a fantasy novel or film. Examples of constructed languages that were developed for a specific purpose and provide utility are the languages of Klingon for *Star Trek* and Valyrian for *Game of Thrones*. Moving beyond hobbies and fantasy novels or films, developing a constructed language can be extremely beneficial in expanding how people think of languages and how people understand the actual construction of thoughts.

Selatis, the constructed language that I created, is a partially complete constructed language primarily influenced by Norwegian and Romanian. The construction of Selatis illustrates how basic properties of a language dictate how sentences are constructed and how the speaker must think in order to construct a grammatically correct sentence.

Language, like every communication medium, is incomplete. In fact, some languages are more incomplete than others. Consequently, these less complete languages typically benefit from being more economical, meaning that more information can be communicated in a more condensed time frame. When developing a constructed language, the individual must consider how descriptive he or she would like to make the language and develop a rigorous system in which this information can be communicated.

Throughout this paper, methods are taken in formalizing certain notions that are relevant to developing constructed languages. The fundamental goal of this paper is to provide a useful framework for understanding constructed languages—and all languages, of all types—on a more formal level. Specifically, with respect to their ability to communicate information effectively and their ability to influence thought patterns via the nature of their construction.

PANEL 1B: TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Seoyeon Park (UCLA) “From Seoul to Siberia: How 19th Century Russian Literature Influenced Modern Day Korea”

Korean society has been showing its love for Russian literature in various ways. Pushkin’s poem *Если жизнь тебя обманет* is inscribed on restaurant walls and mirrors. Doctor Zhivago and Anna Karenina are made into musicals and ranked among the Top 5 in this genre. Chekhov is constantly staged in Korean theaters, and Kang Sue-jin, principle dancer of Stuttgart Ballet and one of Korea’s most beloved performers, chose Onegin as the last performance of her thirty-year-long ballet career over Romeo and Juliet or Giselle. In July 1909, translator Choi Nam-Sun published in his magazine “Youth” the first Korean translation of Russian literature: Tolstoy’s *Where Love is, God is*. However, Koreans’ love for Russian literature truly blossomed under the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945).

As Choi, with the help of writer Lee Kwang Soo, continued to translated works of Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Gogol and others, more and more Koreans who were impoverished and exploited under the oppressive colonial rule read them and took these writers to be wise, benevolent figures who expressed love and sympathy for the poor. In their texts, Korean scholars found historic and cultural similarities that gave them comfort during these times of colonial rule. This paper will explore how and why Russian literature became influential in Korea in the historical context of Japanese colonial rule, and examine how it continues to influence modern day Korean culture.

Charlotte Hendricks and Alison Roper (UCSB) “Death and Life in Doctor Zhivago”

Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* is a literary classic that explores the meaning of life in the face of ever-present death. We argue that Pasternak’s primary mission in writing the story of Yuri

Zhivago was to show how the Russian people struggled to find how one can live truly in times of tremendous turmoil and oppression. We believe that Zhivago's life stands as a symbol for the perpetual struggle many Soviet citizens faced between following their passions or giving in to overwhelming expectations. Yuri constantly struggles between following his passion to become a poet and his career as a doctor. The circumstances around Zhivago's death and what lives on as his legacy reveal what truly matters in a life characterized by a constant internal struggle between passions and expectations.

Anna Ivanov (Macalester) "A Monument of Tweets: Toward a Reader-Oriented Analysis of the Akhmatova Canon"

This study is based upon data mined from a code that searched through Twitter to find the most frequently tweeted poems of Anna Akhmatova. Through the collected data, this work attempts to understand Akhmatova's canon in a new way. Anna Akhmatova is known as one of Russia's greatest poets, but although her literary canon is extensive, there exists a disjunction between the works studied in the academic canon and the works enjoyed by readers. Such readers tend to focus upon her earlier love poems, whereas critics, especially those writing after her death, focus upon her political poems, but this project puts forth an analysis of her work from both periods, based upon how Russophone readers receive and understand it. Using Akhmatova's "The Reader" from "Tricks of the Trade" as an entry into the use of reader reception theory in understanding Akhmatova's work, this project proposes a new method to augment our understanding of the Akhmatova canon. Furthermore, this approach enables the study of Akhmatova's work as a cohesive unit by providing insight into the overarching characteristics that attracted readers to both her early and later poetry.

Ross Mitchell (UCLA) "Scriabin's Ecstasy: When Poetry and Music Meet"

The Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1872 - 1915) was not only known for his sublime music, but also his evocative poetry. Both his music and his poetry belong to the genre of Russian Symbolism, a fin-de-siècle cultural flowering that produced enigmatic art and poetry that was based on symbols, and were intended to convey messages of profound philosophical and spiritual importance. The influence of Russian Symbolism led him to develop a system of musical symbols that represent various concepts from his philosophy. His endeavors in poetry and music were mostly separate, but his poem "Ecstasy" (1906) and his orchestral tone poem *Le Poème de l'Extase* (The Poem of Ecstasy, 1908) form a particularly interesting case of cross-media expression. In this poem and piece, Scriabin attempted to convey the same tale of a Spirit creating the universe in a moment of sheer bliss. Unfortunately, to this day no scholar has been able to determine which parts of the poem correspond to which parts of the piece. In attempting to fill this gap, this presentation argues that by exploring the parallel evocations of "The Eternal Feminine," "Vertiginous Dance," and "Divine Summons," which are the most pervasive and narratively significant symbols throughout the poem and piece, it becomes possible to determine the links between poem and piece.

PANEL 2A: LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USAGE

Nicole Bugrim (UCLA) “Russian as a Heritage Language: Teaching Methods Based on Linguistic and Cultural Issues”

Focusing specifically on Russian heritage speakers, this presentation examines the differences between heritage language learners and second language learners and how those differences affect teaching methods in American language classrooms. Heritage language learners are students who are exposed to a language other than English at home — their heritage language — but are educated primarily in English. Heritage language learners usually receive little to no formal education in their heritage language, and as a result, they are different from second language learners in terms of their knowledge of the language. Additionally, heritage speakers have a cultural tie to the language. When stepping into a second language classroom, a heritage speaker will therefore likely not benefit from traditional foreign-language teaching methods. Instead, heritage language classrooms should employ a teaching method that can better accommodate the unique needs of these students. Such methods include macrobased teaching, which teaches the language within a context and starts with complex topics and texts, and training teachers to have experience with and knowledge of students’ diverse cultures and the history of the language, which is especially important given the Russian language’s influence on a large and diverse number of cultures. As a result of heritage language learners’ differences from second language learners, language classrooms must be altered to address both linguistic aspects, such as how the language is acquired and which grammatical topics are focused on, and cultural aspects, such as language anxiety and how language defines identity, to better accommodate the unique needs of heritage language learners.

Azura FairChild (UCSD) “Gendered Stereotypes in Russian Language Practice”

For this research paper, I gave a quiz of four questions with a controlled vocabulary list to first-year Russian learners in the classroom at UCSD. Focusing on heritage and non-heritage speakers and the patterns that presented themselves, I analysed the grammatical and cultural answers given on the quiz by students. Part of the paper focuses on previous research done on implicit associations within slavic literature analysis and linguistic papers. Teaching acquisition for the Russian language classroom has in the past included methods through the use of our textbook incorporating gendered stereotypes from a cultural perspective. The last part of the paper will focus on the distinction between поэте́сса and поэт from Soviet and post-Soviet female writers as well.

Yana Kogan (UCSB) “Essentials in Appreciating Анекдоты, a Sector of Russian Humor”

Literally translated as anecdote, анекдоты make up the core of Russian humor and culture. Within Russian humor lies a conceptualized civilization and a subtext of meaning, demonstrated through context and language. In order to be amused by these anecdotes, a foundational comprehension is required. In other words, an individual must develop an understanding of the culture, language, or both to understand the amusing stories that make up Russian – and Soviet – daily life. This discussion will begin with an explanation of the context and language within humor. This will lead into an introduction of Russian anecdotes (анекдоты), followed by an indication of the information necessary for comprehension. It will conclude with a discussion of the possible political and social implications of misunderstanding foreign humor.

Kristian Moravec (Bryn Mawr) “Beyond the Classroom: Skill Development through Online Practice”

The way languages are taught is constantly evolving. As technological advances, new teaching methods are developed and perfected, and different learning types are better understood. As a result, languages are more accessible now than ever before. It is therefore all the more important that universities and education programs are equipped with the appropriate variety of resources to accommodate student learning styles and needs. Due to the complexity of the Russian language, it is impossible to deny that current students and other language learners depend on accessible, convenient modes of study and review outside of the classroom. Moreover, Russian demands that learners have accurate, reliable access to irrefutable resources for study. With this in mind, the Department of Russian at Bryn Mawr College has decided to allocate Flagship funding towards the development of an interactive learning site for student use. Two students have since been employed to work closely with professors and faculty to begin gathering materials and brainstorming forums that fit student needs. The goal of this website is to create a structured, interactive study tool that allows students to master grammar and vocabulary and the potential for professors to work with students and monitor their progress. The website will make standard language drills more enjoyable for students by building vital content into online games and other interactive forms. The content provided through the games will be developed and maintained by professors to ensure that students are accessing appropriate materials for their language acquisition.

PANEL 2B: ARCHITECTURE, CINEMA, AND LITERATURE

George O’Hara (Haverford) “Hopelessness in the Russian Family Hearth: Cinematographic Reflections of the Failure of the Mother-Child Relationship in Contemporary Russia”

A wave of films sponsored by the Cinema Foundation of Russia over the past decade underscores currents of social discord in Russia. In these films, directors Vasily Sigarev, Andrei Zvyagintsev and Kirill Serebrennikov portray individuals with severe character imbalances in

order to lay bare the social factors underlying moral desolation and emotional desperation in a cross-section of Russian society. These characters appear predisposed to passive, aggressive and self-destructive behaviors as a means of externalizing their internal anger and avoiding their lived reality. Instead of looking into themselves as the first direction toward changing their unfavorable reality through active betterment of the self, these characters passively shun responsibility for their condition. At the same time, characters project their unhappiness and anger onto their loved ones through acts of aggression. This cyclic behavior is self-destructive and isolating because it exacerbates interpersonal difficulties and erodes any basis for reconciliation or empathy. This strife is exacerbated by the family's relationship to institutions that exist to uphold societal integrity in Russia today, such as the workplace, the government system and the Russian Orthodox Church. Parents struggle to grapple with their powerlessness against corrupt interests that are entrenched in these institutions. In failing to cope with reality, partners and parents shun their familial responsibilities and resort to alcohol abuse, obsessive use of technology, and suicide to escape their reality. The resulting failure of mother-child relationships amidst the passivity or total absence of father figures perpetuates hopelessness for the children of these struggling families in contemporary Russia.

Kathryn Hunt (UCSB) “A Timeless Notion of Identity and Spirit:’ Tea and the Samovar in 19th Century Russia”

This presentation will focus on tea and the samovar in the Russian Empire. Several aspects of the development of tea culture will be explored, both positive and negative. Tea and the samovar came to represent Russian identity in the nineteenth century and united diverse people. By examining how tea arrived in Russia, the writings and art work of the elite, the ways tea spread to the lower classes, and the ways tea morphed into a woman's responsibility, we can see why tea and the samovar are important figures in the minds of Russians. The establishment of tea and the samovar as important cultural symbols has allowed Russians to cement them into their national and spiritual consciousness. Despite some of the problems surrounding tea, such as the lower class's later access and gender issues, tea stands as a loved and cherished beverage in Russia, one that unites different sections of the Russian people. The topic of tea allows us to look more closely at history, literature, and art in an entertaining and “refreshing” (no pun intended) way, while also letting us learn about complex issues in 19th century Russian society.

Rebekah Livermore (UCLA) “An Inorganic Madness: Reassessing Ivan’s ‘Brain Fever’ in The Brothers Karamazov and Bakhtin’s Theory of the Polyphonic Novel”

Much has been written about the polyphonic in regards to Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels, famously theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin. The Brothers Karamazov can be interpreted as one such novel, where characters with numerous fully-developed yet conflicting philosophies enter into contention both dialogically and through the specific events of the work. However, Ivan's descent into madness presents multiple issues for this theory. First, it is used as a discrediting tactic, arguably even as a punishment for his – in Dostoevsky's world – moral failure and overreliance on human reason. Secondly, he is only one of many characters who embodies an alternative ideology and subsequently meets an untimely fate. While his madness is arguably the

most dramatic and prolonged example of this, it is far from a one-off occurrence. Rather, it evidences a larger pattern in which all positions outside the author's ideological bounds are systematically eliminated.

Elizabeth Culp (Haverford) “Обращение к архитектуре Герценовского Университета как путь познания российской педагогической традиции (в сравнении с Американским Университетом Хаверфорда)”

Богатая архитектурная история Российского государственного педагогического университета имени А. И. Герцена позволяет сравнивать его с подобными комплексами университетов других стран, одним из них является университетом Хаверфорда, находящимся во восточной Пенсильвании. Следует сказать, что здания РГПУ не имеющие аналогов в истории строительства учебных заведений в России. Изучая его, можно проследить эволюцию петербургской архитектуры на протяжении столетия - от барокко до позднего классицизма. В планировке комплекса учебного заведения сохранилась система, свойственная ранним петербургским усадьбам. Такое сочетание территорий нескольких старинных усадеб в современной градостроительной системе не встречается больше нигде в мире. Сочетание на одной территории зданий с разной художественной характеристикой, выполняющих родственные функции, также является уникальным. Чтобы получить представление о том, насколько необычным был путь Герценовского университета к его современной архитектурной композиции, в работе будет сделана попытка сравнить архитектуру РГПУ и университета Хаверфорда. Цель этой работы - изучить архитектуру Герценовского университета, обращаясь к российской педагогической традиции, и попытаться сравнить их с американским университетом Хаверфорда. Несмотря на то, что эти учебные заведения возникли в совершенно разных формах образовательных организаций, мы можем найти много общего как в архитектуре, так в академической традиции. Во время усиления напряжённости между нашими странами, необходимо подчеркнуть, что они разделяют общую философию в педагогической, культурной и научной деятельности. Именно этот факт, обуславливает актуальность нашей работы.

**PANEL 3: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Karine Harutyunyan (UCLA) “Outcasts of Russian Society: Homosexuality in Russian Federation”

As the world becomes more accepting of homosexuality it seems that the Russian Federations is not ready to accept homosexuals as part of their society. There are many reasons behind Russia's intolerance towards homosexuals has its roots dated back pre-Soviet and Soviet era. After the collapse of Soviet Union, discrimination against homosexuals decreased, however, with current

laws such as the Propaganda Law, homosexuals still cannot live in peace. According to the Pew Research center only 16% of Russian population accepts homosexuality. This leaves 84% of the population being intolerant towards the LGBT community. The Russian government masked its intentions of banning homosexuality by imposing laws that banned only propaganda in order to protect children from unnecessary non-traditional influence.

Yana Demeshko (UCLA) “Outside the Ballot Box: A Case Study on Youth Political Activity During the Putin Administration”

Vladimir Putin began to consolidate his power ever since he became president in 2000 and Russia began to struggle economically and politically as a result of policies that Putin has implemented. Youth political activity during the time that he has been in power and after his reelection in 2018 has been largely supported by the Russian government and by opposition. This case study will focus on state-supported youth groups and opposition groups led by 2018 presidential candidate Alexei Navalny. First state-funded youth group called Nashi or Ours appeared in 2005, which many compared to soviet era Komsomol and Hitler Youth. It was subsequently shut down in 2012 due to growing controversies over some of its practices, especially the ones directed against Putin’s opposition. However, it was swiftly replaced by a new state-sponsored group called Set’, which has been less involved in controversial actions and continues to involve pro-regime youth to this day. On the other side, youth began to be mobilized in 2011 by Alexei Navalny, who has been successful amongst them due to high use of social media, particularly YouTube. He has been able to involve thousands of youth members across the country, who are still fighting with him for Russia without Putin.

Louis Conan Bethge (UCLA) “Putin it All Together: Unraveling the Rise of Russia’s Newest Tsar”

Vladimir Putin has risen to become one of the, if not the, most powerful leader in the world. This presentation examines how he ascertained this level of power and influence during his tenure in the Kremlin. Specifically, it focuses on Putin’s use of intimidation in the first years of the 21st century to recentralize power within the Russian government and to deny opposition the opportunity to challenge his authority. When Vladimir Putin took power on the final day of the 20th century, Russia was a country in pieces, having barely survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. Intent on returning Russia to its former glory under Soviet rule, Putin manipulated the system to exchange strong regional governments for a more powerful federal system. Simultaneously, Putin targeted wealthy oligarchs and prominent news channels who stood to oppose his new strategy or techniques. This presentation further examines how those who supported Putin and his efforts emerged unscathed, yet those who continued to oppose the new Russian President were forced to give up their wealth and recede from Russian politics. The presentation concludes with how President Putin continues to wield this power in modern day politics.

PANEL 4A: SOVIET ERA GENDER STUDIES

Leslie N Ro (UCLA) “Woman v. Women: The Shift from a Woman’s Role to the Women’s Movement in Kazakhstan”

This presentation will examine the various factors in Kazakhstan’s history that led to the transition from women being mostly wives and mothers to the burgeoning women’s movement of the twenty-first century, which includes women representatives in politics and government as well as in business dealings and in the economy. Similar to the other republics of the Soviet Union, in Kazakhstan a history of Russian influence previous to the Soviet Union and the legal, political, and social pressures of the communist party during the twentieth century helped shaped women, so that they would have to perfect their roles as wives and mothers. However, the local pressures of religion and the national Kazakh identity separate Kazakhstan’s women from those of other republics, as Kazakhstan has a largely Islam-based culture and is shaped by its history as a somewhat-dissenting colony of the Russian Empire. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to instability in all areas of society, including in politics and economy and allowed for women to become leaders of innovation and progress. With the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a level of instability that allowed for an in the influence of female leaders in Kazakh government and politics as well as Kazakh business and economy, which is the result of local factors, such as religion and sense of national Kazakh identity as opposed to the Soviet one.

Sonia Ter-Saakyan (UCSD) “Hammer, Sickle, Mop, and Missile: The Effects of World War II on Soviet Women”

The course of the second World War drastically affected the lives of millions of Soviet women. During World War II, nearly a million women fought in the Soviet army. Svetlana Alexievich states, “Даже возникла языковая проблема: у слов «танкист», «пехотинец», «автоматчик» до того времени не существовало женского рода, потому что эту работу еще никогда не делала женщина. Женские слова родились там, на войне...” (У войны не женское лицо), indicating that women’s participation in WWII had an affect on Soviet society, language, and culture. However, not all women were on the front lines. Domestic roles still remained, and were essential for daily Soviet life. There were, of course, women who stayed at home, waiting for their boyfriends, husbands, brothers, and cousins to return home so that their lives may continue as before. The film *Летят журавли* explicitly expresses this idea. The main character, Veronika, is the perfect representation for Soviet women who were on the other side of this war. This paper will explore the dichotomy between these two groups of women: warriors and those who remained at home. Through the analysis of films and literature from the time period, the experiences of these women will be brought to light. The question of how the war affected the lives of each of these groups will be addressed. The roles these women fulfilled in society will be explored, as will the impact of this war, and women’s involvement in it, on various aspects of Soviet society.

Rebecca Van Vliet (UCLA) “Hearts and Beatings: An ‘Engaged’ Comparative Political Theory Debate on Intimate Relations in Kollontai, Lenin and Modern Russia”

As a genre of political theory, comparative political theory seeks to extend the publication and study of political theory beyond thinkers from the traditional Western canon. As a discipline, comparative political theory seeks to shed light on political theorists oft ignored by academia, who are usually from non-Western backgrounds. Andrew March, a comparative political theorist, hypothesizes that the best way to integrate texts often not given the light of day, relative to canonical Western texts, is through evaluating a work of political theory from a thinker descending from a non-canonical tradition as potentially perfect, and from this reflective study and analysis, determine which ideas are “best” for the global community. This method, in comparing texts from different temporal and cultural contexts falls short, because as a modern academic it is nearly impossible to evaluate a text’s meaning exactly as it was written, due to translation, cultural barriers, and distance in time from the work’s publication.

However, I found a way to utilize March’s proposed framework in a productive, unencumbered fashion. In comparing canonical and non-canonical Soviet political theory, through the writings of Lenin and Kollontai assuages the issues of losing meaning in translation, over time, and through cultural barriers, considering Lenin and Kollontai were contemporaries, and at one time, Soviet co-revolutionaries. Furthermore, they represent different traditions, although they were both supporters of the Russian revolutionary cause, thus still aligning with March’s proposed comparative political theory paradigm.

My foray in comparative political theory with Lenin and Kollontai does the following; first, it analyzes Lenin and Kollontai’s proposals for how intimate relations and marriage should operate for the new Soviet person. I then examine the challenging, marital reality of strained finance that came from the partial application of Kollontai’s theory of love-comradeship and the full application of Lenin’s easy divorce proposal. I then survey the modern ramifications of financial dependency between Russian spouses in a reflective study of domestic violence in Russia today, following Kremlin rollbacks on punishments for abusive spouses. I hypothesize that today’s issue of financial dependency in Russian marriages, namely abusive ones, is so partially because of the application of ideas set forth by Kollontai and Lenin. I conclude that neither thinker, canonical or non-canonical, prescribed what was “right” for the Russian people, particularly women.

PANEL 4B: TOPICS IN SOVIET POLITICAL POLICIES

Michelle Angela McKenzie (Ohio State University) “From Vernacularization to Assimilation: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Language Planning, 1922-1972”

By the turn of the nineteenth century, over one hundred languages were spoken natively by inhabitants of the Russian Empire (Demoskop Weekly). Early Bolshevik policy was designed to restore the ‘freedom and equality of language’ through the implementation of a nativization framework known as korenizacija (‘nativization’ or ‘the process of putting down roots’) (Comrie 1981: 21). Later policies under Stalin, however, ultimately prioritized a unified Soviet state over maintaining ethnic identity and sovereignty (Grenoble 2003).

To model language growth and vitality over time, I examined the native speaker totals from 14 languages and the availability of a public education in these languages. By 1939, Russian had become the predominant mother tongue of Soviet citizens; most other languages (69%) had suffered a decline in native speakers, a pattern that continued to an even greater extent between 1939 and 1970. The average highest level of minority language education offered in 1958 was 7.7 years; by 1972, this had fallen to 5.6 years.

From 1922 to the late 1930s, the overall growth of Soviet minority languages was slowly deteriorating. After 1939, both the rapid decline of native speakers and the deterioration of native language education can be attributed the reversal of the Soviet government’s commitment to the integration of minority languages in public life (see Comrie 1981). The analysis of historical data and past approaches to language planning is the first step in determining what is effective, what isn’t, and how to encourage the survival and prosperity of the thousands of minority languages that exist worldwide.

Kennedy Lee (University of Wisconsin – Madison) “The Importance of Sports Diplomacy in the Brezhnev Era”

This work details Soviet diplomatic strategies and relations during the tenure of General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and argues that sport and international competition played a vital role in proving the legitimacy of the Soviet Union during Brezhnev’s rule. This proposal includes multiple examples of ingenious use of sports diplomacy by the Brezhnev administration and outlines how this method played an instrumental role in proving the Soviet Union an equal counterpart to the United States during the Cold War.

Examples of events include the 1972 hockey Summit Series between the Soviet Union and Canada, the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games, and the 1969 World Ice Hockey Championships. This research also explains the personal importance of hockey to Brezhnev and how he used his favorite sport as a pillar of his détente foreign policy platform. Additionally, this proposal describes how events such as the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were tied to or created consequences in sport and international competition.

Overall, this research provides compelling evidence that the Soviet Union would not have achieved recognition as an equal counterpart to the United States if it weren’t for the USSR’s success in international competition and Brezhnev’s calculated use of sport in the international realm. Furthermore, it describes how as détente decreased tensions between the Soviet Union and Western countries in the military sphere, a new battlefield was found in the sports arena.