Sex and Society in Modern Russia:
Gender and Sexualities from 1860s Nihilists to Pussy Riot’s Protests.
An Upper-Division Undergraduate Course Proposal (HST 494)
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The proposed course will be an overview of the development of cultural and social discourses of gender and sex in Russia beginning as early as the 1860s (viz., Chernyshevsky’s novels What is To Be Done and Prologue and Turgenev’s love stories) through the “women’s liberation movement” and Soviet “emancipation of women” and continuing to Pussy Riots and the crackdown on LGBT movements in in present-day, Putin’s Russia.

The main objective of this course is to look at the ways human sexualities have been represented in modernizing Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet culture and understand how these representations are related to utopian and anti-utopian ideologies in Russia. We will watch several movies, documentaries, music videos, read excerpts from novels and short stories, as well as some essays and articles which all tell us a story of how masculinity and femininity, homo- and heterosexuality as well as such phenomena as prostitution, pornography, sexual and domestic violence, paraphilias, sexual harassment, etc. have been historically reflected and expressed in modern and contemporary Russian literature, culture and society.

The students will be expected to attend all classes and pre-read (or pre-watch) the material assigned for the class. Each student will write one critique a week (1 page) and share it with the rest via Blackboard. Each student will make 2 presentations (10 min each) introducing the assigned materials. The final essay on any topic discussed in class will have to be at least 7-8 pages long.

Readings and Other Media
Devstvennost’/Virginity (dir. Vitalii Mansky, screenplay Dmitrii Bykov; Russia, 2008)
Interdevochka/Intergirl (dir. Piotr Todorovsky; USSR, 1989).
Malen’kaya Vera / Little Vera (dir. Vasilii Pichul; USSR, 1988).
Pro urodov i ilyudei / Of Freaks and Men (dir. Aleksei Balabanov; Russia, 1999)