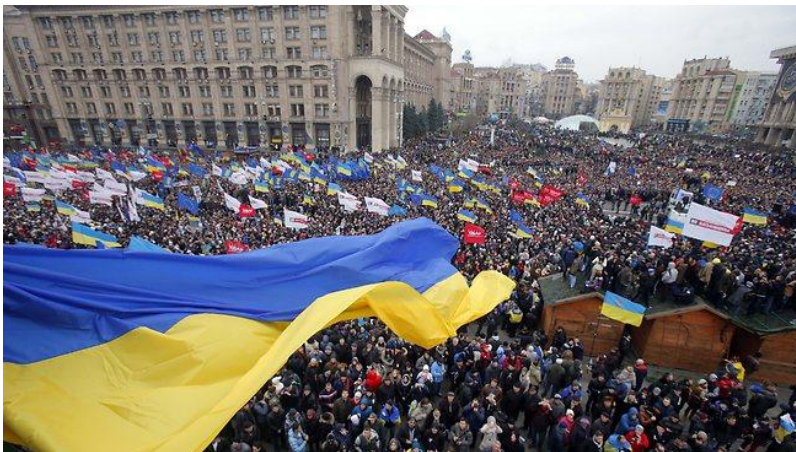




THE PRINCESS DASHKOVA RUSSIAN CENTRE MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER



Protests in Ukraine

The positive face of Russian patriotism was seen in the flamboyant closing ceremony of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, but any feelings of goodwill between Russia and the West have been rapidly eclipsed by the unfolding of dramatic and tragic events in the Ukraine over the last couple of weeks. Now, tensions in the region have risen to such an extent that the situation is being referred to as the most serious European crisis of the 21st century so far. As the Kremlin sends in troops to defend strategic positions in the Crimea and to 'protect' the interest of Russian citizens in the area, and Washington claims that these actions contravene international agreements, Ukraine seems to be poised on the brink of a civil war. While many Ukrainians may have hoped

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for political reform, few among them can have desired the violent collapse of civil order. Every day brings new developments and all we in Scotland can do is to express our grave concern about the unfolding events and to offer our sympathy to all those touched by the tragedy of the violence and to hope for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

January Events

Transatlantic Seminars: The 'Euromaidan' in Kiev and Opposition Politics

An exciting couple of months at the Dashkova Centre began with two joint seminars organised in conjunction with the Edinburgh Politics and International Relations Transatlantic Seminar series.



Dr Sarah Whitmore

The first of these, which took place in the Chrystal Macmillan Building on the 17th January, was a talk by Dr Sarah Whitmore (Oxford Brookes) entitled "Ukraine is not dead yet': Understanding the #Euromaidan uprising'.

This was an all-too timely analysis of the Ukrainian street protest which has since become headline news throughout the world. At the time the talk took place, the protest was still of a broadly peaceful character, with protesters staging mass rallies, occupying state buildings and setting up camp in the centre of Kiev and other cities to articulate a range of political demands. Police action to suppress the demonstration had sparked off occasional riots, but there had not yet been a severe escalation of violence. In view of this, Dr Whitmore offered a fairly optimistic prognosis for the demonstrations, arguing that they could possibly pave the way for non-violent social reform. Examining the character of those taking part in the protests, she emphasised that they came from very different walks of life and could be described as a diverse community united by a single project. As well as students from the Politics and International Relations at Edinburgh, there were several Ukrainian nationals in the audience who raised questions after the lecture concerning extremist Ukrainian nationalism, hinting at a more complex, less rose-tinted view of some of the forces behind the Euromaidan.

March Events List

Thursday, 6th March
The Postgraduate Seminar Series
Aaron Hodgson, From the margins to the mainstream: Joseph Brodsky's canonical status in Russia in the post-Soviet period

Wednesday, 12th March
Dr Ksana Blank, Dostoyevsky's dialectics and the problem of sin

Thursday, 14th March
In co-operation with Transatlantic Seminar
The Ukrainian Crisis - a Roundtable

Thursday, 20th March
Dr Alexander Sherstobitov, The role of social networks in political mobilization and protests in Russia

Thursday, 27th March
The Postgraduate Seminar Series
Cathy Ratcliff, Freedom as development: Seeing Africa in Soviet times, through *Pravda*

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The second seminar, which took place at the same venue on the 31st January, was a talk on 'Russia's political opposition' by Dr Samuel Greene, Founding Director of Russia Institute, Kings College London.



Dr Samuel Greene

Dr Greene argued that the opposition to Putin's regime in Russia is hampered by a lack of coherence and absence of dialogue. At the moment, opposition is polarising into two groups, separated by an ever-widening gulf. These groups, dubbed the 'Bolotnaya' group (so-called after the mass protests in Moscow on the eve of Putin's inauguration to the presidency on May 6th 2012) and the 'Biriulevo' group (so-called after the riots and attacks on immigrants in the Buriulevo area of Moscow in October 2013) do not have a common agenda beyond their resistance to

Putin. Meanwhile, the use of censorship and legislation makes it ever harder to establish a constructive parliamentary dialogue between Russia's government and the political opposition.

February Events

Booker Prizewinner Shishkin defends Culture and Continuity



Mikhail Shishkin

On Thursday 13th February the Dashkova centre had the honour of welcoming award winning Russian writer Mikhail Shishkin to speak for one of the events connected with the 'Russian Word in Edinburgh' annual Dashkova theme. Shishkin is one of the most prominent writers in contemporary Russian literature, and the only writer to have received all three of Russia's most prestigious literary awards: the Russian Booker Prize (2000), the National Bestseller Prize (2006), and the Big Book Prize (2006, 2011).

Before his lecture, Shishkin recorded an interview with staff at the Dashkova centre, in which he talked about his views on the Russian language and his anxieties regarding translation of his work, among other things. (The script of the interview will be available on our website soon).

The lecture, given in English and warmly received by the audience, was entitled 'A contemporary Russian writer: Challenges of aesthetic and political self-definition'. It was a heartfelt defence of the humanising mission of literature, the value of suffering, the power of the Russian literary language and the need to conserve the cultural and moral values enshrined in classical 19th century literature. Shishkin's central premise was that Russian language has for many years enshrined attitudes of brutality and has been used as a means to humiliate, and terrorise. The author argued that it is the task of every writer to



The audience at the Shishkin's Lecture

remake his language anew, to restore the purity and humanity of the Russian language embodied in the discourse, culture and moral attitudes of 19th century classicism.

Honorary Dashkova Lecture 2014: The Use and Abuse of Anti-Extremism



Dr Luke March (left) and Dr Alexander Verkhovsky

On 18th February the Honorary Dashkova Lecture, organised by PIR in collaboration with the Princess Dashkova Centre and supported by CRCEES (Glasgow) and the Lanistown Trust, took place in the David Hume Tower. The speaker was Dr Alexander Verkhovsky, Director of the SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis in Moscow and a leading expert on political extremism. The title of the lecture was 'Russia: The use and abuse of anti-extremism'.

Dr Verkhovsky described how, in response to various security threats faced by Russia and in response to certain high-profile acts of terrorism, the Russian government, with the support of much of the population, created new anti-extremist legislation in the first decade of the 21st century. However, the way this legislation is formulated is so broad that it has generated many unjustified and unreasonable restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms. The problem lies particularly in the government's pursuit of those who perpetrate 'hate speech'. The definition of 'hate speech' is unclear and the risk of prosecution thus makes it very difficult to hold open discussions in internet forums or in the press on certain particularly controversial topics such as nationalism. Effectively, anti-extremist legislation is being used as a method of censorship. Meanwhile, less effort is devoted to prosecuting those guilty of acts of actual 'hate

crime' such as murder and assault. The event was part of included in the programme of the Innovative Learning Week and was very well attended by students.

Pitch Perfect: Football and Poetry

The last event to take place in the Dashkova centre in February was a fascinating research seminar on the subject of 'The representation of Russian and British football in Russian modernist poetry'. The lecture was delivered (in Russian) by the Oleg Lekmanov, Professor of Journalism and Literary Criticism at the Moscow State University and Senior Researcher at the Institute of World Literature, to a select but enthusiastic audience.



Dr Oleg Lekmanov

Lekmanov has authored over two hundred articles on modern Russian poets, is currently working on a book about how changing everyday phenomena and social realia find reflection in poetry. He has selected the subject of football as a test case for his theory and has studied how early Russian 20th century poetry reflected the way football was seen in society at large, from a faddish curiosity associated above all with Britain, to a more respectable and mainstream subject. Osip Mandelstam and Valerii Bruiusov were among the poets discussed.

Postgraduate Seminars



PhD Student Andrea Liebschner

The Dashkova Centre continues its research programme with a new series of Postgraduate Research Seminars.

The first of these by Andrea Liebschner, a PhD student in Russian, German teacher at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh former DAAD lecturer at the Northern Federal University in Arkhangelsk, took place on Wednesday, 26th February at the Dashkova Centre. 'Hanging by a thread: Linguistic connectivity in Russian social network communication' was an analysis of postings on the public wall in 'VKontakte' groups, with particular attention paid to the linguistic and non-linguistic connections between postings.

Two further postgraduate seminars are planned for March:

Aaron Hodgson, 'From the margins to the mainstream: Joseph Brodsky's canonical status in Russia in the post-Soviet period'

Date: Thursday, 6th March, 5: 10 pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

Cathy Ratcliff, 'Freedom as development: Seeing Africa in Soviet times, through *Pravda*'

Date: Thursday, 27th March, 5: 10 pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

Other Events in March

Book Presentation

Dr Ksana Blank, 'Dostoevsky's dialectics and the problem of sin'

Date: Wednesday, 12th March, 5: 10 pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place



Dr Ksana Blank

On 12th of March, there will be a presentation of a book by Ksana Blank: 'Dostoyevsky's dialectics and the problem of sin'.

Dr Ksana Blank is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Princeton University.

Her scholarly and teaching interests have focused on two major fields: language (advanced Russian, the history of Russian literary language, stylistics, Russian language pedagogy) and literature (Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Bulgakov, and Nabokov).

Ksana Blank's book represents a fascinating contribution to the understanding of Dostoyevsky's theology and worldview. Her book analyses the antithetical and multifaceted nature of the world as perceived by the writer. Blank argues that Dostoyevsky's philosophy as implied in his fiction is deeply antithetical and dialogic in its core.

'The Ukrainian Crisis' - a Roundtable

Date: Friday, 14th March, 5: 10 pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

Thursday, 14 March, a roundtable will take place on a topic issue of Ukrainian Crisis. The event is organised in collaboration with Transatlantic Seminar. Venue: Chrystal Macmillan Bldg, seminar room 2.

Dr Alexander Sherstobitov, 'Social networks and political protest'

Date: Thursday, 20th March, 5: 10 pm

Venue: The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, 14 Buccleuch Place

Another exciting forthcoming event for March will be a talk by Dr Alexander Sherstobitov – 'The role of social networks in political mobilization and protests in Russia'.

Sherstobitov is Associated Professor of Politics at the University of St-Petersburg and in March, will take a position of a Dashkova Visiting Fellow. His research interests include Political networks, public politics, political communication and political management.



Dr Alexander Sherstobitov

Other News from the Dashkova Centre

Partnership with Milan University

The Dashkova Centre has signed a collaboration agreement with Milan University and from January 2014, we were delighted to welcome Giorgia Cima as our first Erasmus postgraduate trainee. Giorgia will spend four months in the Centre.

English Language Assistantship in Russia Programme

In partnership with the Scotland-Russia Forum, the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre takes part in the Language Assistantship in Russia programme. Interviews for the programme's placements will take place in the Dashkova Centre in March. We would like to wish good luck to all applicants to the programme!



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