

Presenter: Jacob Lassin

Title: Reading the Canonical News: Current Events and Literature on Russian Orthodox Websites

Abstract:

The Russian Orthodox Church's forays into mass media have enabled it to exert a great deal of influence over the cultural politics in the country. This media push has included television programs and stations, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, and websites. This paper will address how Pravmir.ru, Pravoslavie.ru, and Tsargrad.tv, Orthodox websites that focus on news and current events, use Russia's classical literary heritage in order to appeal to certain distinct publics in an attempt to further nationalist political and theological goals. Russia's literary heritage has long served as a cornerstone for Russian national identity and, as these websites prove, continues to act as such into the present moment.

Each of these websites has a distinct ideological position within the big tent of the Russian Orthodox Church. Through a comparison of how these sites employ and engage with Russia's literary canon, I delineate how Orthodox online media attempts to promote different strands of religiously inflected nationalism to differing publics in the country. This paper will demonstrate how a spectrum of nationalist thought coexists under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church. In addition, it will comment on how the Church aims to be expansive concerning the views it allows in order to garner the widest possible audience.

This paper looks across these different sites at specific events and anniversaries, such as the birth and death dates of canonical authors, to identify the precise strategies that these websites rely upon in order to appeal to their idealized publics. These tactics demonstrate the distinct ways that the literary canon can be utilized in promoting different nationalist political agendas. Ultimately, I argue that this heterogeneity of approaches and the coexistence of multiple Orthodox, nationalist publics ensures an extension and deepening of the Church's influence over Russian society.