

'West Coast Seminars'
on
Economic and Social Change in Russia and Eastern Europe
(Glasgow, West of Scotland [Paisley campus] and Strathclyde Universities)
Sixteenth Annual Series 2009-2010

***'From the Soviet to the Post-Soviet Russian Press:
Democracy and the Elusive Public Sphere'***

Dr Rutger von Seth
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**Wednesday 19 May 2010
at 5.30 pm**

University of Glasgow, CEES Seminar Room, 8-9 Lilybank Gardens

Tea and coffee will be available from 5.00

All Welcome

Abstract: One often overlooked aspect in studies of democratization processes is the cultural function of the public sphere - as opposed to legal questions of freedom of speech, ownership, and economic regulations for the media, etc.

The structure of media language can change dramatically during times of social upheaval, both mirroring the social and in itself affecting society. Such discursive changes may have certain implications for how the readership will perceive of social roles in society - and in particular their own roles. This, in turn, may have implications for democracy: to what extent are the readership addressed as competent and active citizens, with the right to information and able to draw their own conclusions, and participate in opinion making and decision-making?

The seminar will focus on certain linguistic dimensions of newspaper language as they are represented in broadly defined news articles and opinion piece commentaries in *Pravda*, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and *Izvestiia*, during the critical time period of transition from totalitarianism to democracy: 1978-2003.

The linguistic aspects that shall be dealt with are: pragmatics, style and modality; transparency - as manifested in the presence or absence of explicit agency in texts, and modes of argumentation.

The results appear, against the background of unfavourable societal developments, both unexpected and promising.

Dr Rutger von Seth (42); PhD at the Department of Slavonic Studies (2008), University of Gothenburg.
Licentiate thesis: on the problem of continuity and change in the Russian political history from ca 800 - 2000;
doctoral dissertation: on developments in the Russian and Soviet public sphere - especially as mirrored in changes in press language in key dailies (*Pravda*, *Komsomolskaia pravda*; *Nezavisimaia gazeta* and *Izvestiia*), between the years 1978-2003;
article: on changes in pragmatic, and modality aspects that have taken place in newspaper discourse, and which have implications for the readership's perceived citizen roles, between the years 1978-2003. To be published in Scandinavia's leading journal on media research - *Nordicom*.