**Course description**

 Much attention has been paid to the public aspects of the “transition” in the post-soviet world.  These recognizably “public” aspects include the democratization of governments, the move to markets, the establishment of the rule of law, the new conceptions of citizenship.  Much less attention has been paid to private life and the way in which it have been changing.  Private life includes, among other things, the system of emotions, the construction of family life, the constitution of subjectivities and the regulation of intimacy. As gender studies specialists, we are concerned with the dynamics of private life and with providing people with the tools to understand the changing dynamics and understandings of what is happening in the private spheres.  The summer school will focus on that problem.

 What are the new private spheres in the post-soviet world? It is hard to understand this without seeing them in conjunction with the changes in public spheres.  Under state socialism, the private sphere was not what it was in capitalist economies, precisely because the public sphere was not a liberal or bourgeois public sphere.  State socialism represented a contamination of the public sphere by official ideologies, along with the devaluation of all forms of public activity.  It was not at all the highest valued arena of life, which idealized portrayals of liberal regimes portray the public sphere as being.  Instead, in the public spaces, people were often what they were expected to be or only what it was safe to be, rather than what they wanted to be or what they might have wanted to stand for.  Under state socialism, one’s job was rarely a source of identity, the way it has often been in capitalist economies.

Under state socialism, citizenship and politics were liabilities (or at best, opportunities for opportunism) rather than something that defined one’s sense of self.  Instead, in the state socialist period, the private sphere was the place where you could be who you really were, with family, with friends, with close social networks, with those whom you trusted.  The private sphere was the only one that mattered, at least as far one’s “real life” was concerned.   The private sphere carried the weights of identity, support, gratification and safety.

 In the literature on the public/private distinction growing out of liberal societies, the public is more highly valued and coded male.  The private is less highly valued and coded female.  But in state-socialist societies the evaluation was, if anything, reversed and the gendered nature of the split less clear -- or at least less studied.  If neither men nor women could realize their highest aspirations in the public sphere, then such things were left to the private places that the regimes would tolerate.   And it was both men and women who inhabited those private spheres.

 The private spheres of friendship and family, loyalty and decency were also affected by the ideologies of the public sphere under state socialism.  In particular, scholarly traditions focusing on these subjects remained underdeveloped in the soviet world.  Psychoanalysis was either officially discouraged or discredited.  Studies of sexuality re-emphasized the traditional lines between acceptable and deviant moralities.   As a number of writers about the state socialist period have noted, the state had plenty of images of the good public man and woman, but few images of the subjectivity within.
 What legacy has this left?  How should we think differently about the public/private distinction once we examine its different dynamics in developing democracies?

 Our course focuses on the way in which private spheres have been conceptualized in social, psychoanalytic, literary and political theory.   We will look at the existing scholarship on these questions, which often does not explicitly note the dynamics noted above since most of it was written under the assumptions of a liberal political regime.  That gives much space for our summer school to begin to define new scholarly agendas in this area.