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Russian Scholars Visit Campus for International Colloquium

Sept. 7, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University will welcome a delegation of scholars from Russia as part of “Childhood & Globalization: An International Colloquium” from Sept. 13-17.

The colloquium will consist of readings and discussions with scholars principally from Illinois Wesleyan, Illinois State University (ISU) and the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) in Moscow. Several sessions are free and open to the public. The event is sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan’s Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures Department (MCLL), the International Studies program at IWU, the Isaac Funk Foundation and the ISU Department of English.

Altogether, eight scholars from Russia will take part in the colloquium, which will focus on children’s literature and politics of childhood around the globe. The Russian scholars are from RGGU and St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts. Co-organizers for the colloquium are Illinois Wesleyan faculty members Isaac Funk Professor of Russian Studies Marina Balina and Associate Professor of French and Italian Scott Sheridan.

“United by a desire to investigate such a multifaceted subject as childhood around the globe, our colloquium attempts to address many different aspects of this issue – from the politics of childhood and its historical context, to literary production and various cultural practices and depictions of children in different forms of media,” said Balina.

The sessions open to the public, which will be at Illinois Wesleyan and ISU, include:

Monday, Sept. 13

2-3:30 p.m., Beckman Auditorium of The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington). Film viewing of *First Squad: The Moment of Truth* with an introduction by Svetlana Leont’eva of St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts.

5:30-7:30 p.m., Beckman Auditorium. A session titled “Theoretical Approaches to Childhood.” Presenters will be Professor of English Roberta Seelinger Trites of ISU and Professor of English Karen Coats of ISU with “Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Literature for Youth”; Illinois Wesleyan Associate Dean of Faculty Irv Epstein with “Issues of Embodiment and the Commodification of Childhood in the 21st Century: Some Preliminary Observations”; Larissa Rudova of Pomona College of California with “Fairest of Them All: Beauty and Feminine Identity in Post-Soviet Girl Fiction”; and Anna Ozhiganova of RGGU with “Alternative Childhood: Contemporary Utopian Projects and the Construction of ‘Superior Human.’” The moderator will be Coats.

Tuesday, Sept. 14

3:30 p.m.-6 p.m., Beckman Auditorium. A session titled “Childhood and Political Action.” Presenters will be Professor of Russian and East European Literature Anja Tippner of the University of Salzburg, Austria, with “The Making of a Global Soldier: Soviet Children’s Literature on World War II”; Senior Lecturer of Contemporary Russian Literature Olga Rosenbloom of RGGU with “Adaptation of Children of Forced Migrants in Megapolis: The Case of Moscow”; and Associate Professor of Anthropology Maria Tendriakova of RGGU with “Childhood at the Crossroads: Between Family Tradition and State Politics.” The moderator will be Associate Professor of Anthropology Rebecca Gearhart of IWU.

Wednesday, Sept. 15

6:10-8:30 p.m., Schroeder Hall 236, ISU. A session titled “Childhood in Image and Sound” with presentations by Associate Professor of German and Eastern European Studies Sonja Fritzsche of IWU with “Once Upon a Heimat: Fairy Tale Films as East German Heimat”; Gearhart with “Changing Notions of Childhood among the Swahili of Coastal Kenya”; and Associate Professor of Cultural Studies Oksana Gavrishina of RGGU with “Images of Childhood in the 20th Century Photography.” The moderator will be Professor of English Jan Susina of ISU.

Friday, Sept. 17

9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m., Beckman Auditorium. The closing session titled “Globalizing Childhood and New Approaches.” Presenters will be Vitaly Bezrogov and Galina Makarevich of RGGU with “Sovietism, Russianness, and Globality in the Concept of Childhood: Analyzing Cover Pages of Elementary Schoolbooks in Russia from 1976 through 2006”; April Schultz of IWU with “Duty and Desire: Children and Domestic Ideology in Classic Hollywood Film”; Leont’eva with “Life after Death: Depiction of Soviet Young Pioneers in Contemporary Cartoons”; Susina with “Globalizing Childhood through Children’s New Media”; and Balina and Sheridan with “Globalizing Childhood through Translation: French Authors for Russian Children.” The moderators will be Tippner and Oksana Gavrishina.

According to Balina, in this intellectual exchange, collaboration between the American and Russian institutions is as important as the topic. “We all share a common goal: to understand and describe both our diverse history and the current realities of the childhood experience in a rapidly changing, global existence,” she said. “Our colloquium provides those scholars participating with a unique opportunity for the immediate exchange of ideas on this important subject, and this exceptional intellectual climate will foster future collaboration that will continue long after this initial dialogue is over.”

For more information on the colloquium, contact Balina or Sheridan at the MCLL Department at (309) 556-3044.

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