Looking Eastward: US-Identity, Western Values, and Russian Vulnerable Bodies

The intersectional discourse analysis investigates US-American discourses around Russia, its citizens and the construction of (national) cultural values, cultural representations, and identities. In recent years, public media in the United States, especially the daily news genre, frequently focused on the vulnerability of Russian women, LGBTs, and people with disabilities vis-à-vis the Russian state, the Orthodox Church, and mainstream society. Mainstream popular culture discovered Russian feminists, queers, and people with disabilities as worthy of its attention: popular figures like singer Madonna spoke out in solidarity with Russian LGBTs and the group Pussy Riot, and TV series (The Americans 2013-) and Hollywood films (Salt 2010) started featuring Russian protagonists. The proposed project asks for the reasons, cultural significance and goals of the increasing interest in Russian subjects and bodies. Building on work on embodiment and vulnerability, it interrogates into the place of Russian vulnerable bodies and citizens against the background of the increasing disassociation of Russia from the US as well as Europe within media reports, tabloids, TV-shows, and popular culture, as well as countercultural discourses.