

**Irina Meier**

**Dissertation Abstract**

**Tentative Title of Dissertation:**

“Evil Men Have No Songs: The Terrorist and Littérateur Boris Savinkov”

**Abstract:**

This dissertation is a comparative and transdisciplinary study of Boris Savinkov (1879-1925) and his works. Boris Savinkov was the Bin Laden of Imperial Russia: as a member of the Social-Revolutionary Party, he masterminded the notorious assassinations of the Russian Minister of Interior von Plehve (1904) and of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich (1905). But Savinkov was an even more ideologically complex figure than Bin Laden: he was firmly ensconced in the literary milieu of his day, drawing the ethical and philosophical grounds for his terrorist activity and personal convictions from the teachings of leading Russian Intellectuals including Fyodor Dostoevsky and Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, as well as Western thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche. I situate Savinkov in what Mikhail Bakhtin defines as a “chronotope,” a time-space module that label “Revolutionary Apocalypse.” Only in this unique historical and intellectual space could problematized and redefined notions of love, truth, and sacrifice have led to Savinkov’s story. Proclaiming himself a prophet of the Revolutionary Apocalypse, “a Rider named Death,” through his literary works Savinkov tried to negotiate his personal paradoxical double identity of cold-blooded terrorist and suffering Christian martyr. This project strives to fill an intellectual gap in case studies of Boris Savinkov as a historical, literary, and cultural figure of revolutionary Russia. Moreover, given striking similarities between today’s Russia and that of Savinkov, my study will expand the universal body of knowledge in contemporary debates on political legitimacy and on philosophical and ethical issues of terrorism.