This lecture examines relations between the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian society, and the Russian state over the last 25 years. Who attends Orthodox services in contemporary Russia? What do the events surrounding Pussy Riot signify? What accounts for the phenomenal success of Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov’s Nesviatye sviatye [Unholy Saints]? What are the social and political roles of prominent ecclesiastical authorities like Patriarch Kirill, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, and Archpriest Aleksei Uminskii?

Maya Kucherskaya is a celebrated Russian literary critic, literary scholar, novelist, biographer, and professor of literary studies at National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Her critically acclaimed, best-selling, and highly controversial Faith and Humor (Russian Information Services, 2011--Sovremennyi paterik in the original Russian, published in 2004) is a collection of stories, aphorisms, anecdotes, dialogues, and adventures that comprises a sui generis encyclopedia of modern Russian Orthodoxy. She joined fellow Orthodox believers in publicly condemning the criminal proceedings undertaken against members of Pussy Riot in connection with the so-called “punk-protest” staged in the Moscow Cathedral of the Savior in February, 2012.

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