The talk describes women’s involvement in the Russian press during the formative period in its development. Routinely neglected by cultural historians, Avdotia Panaeva, Evgenia Tur, Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia, and many others contributed significantly to the output of Russian thick journals. Their prose had centrally addressed women’s emancipation, “the rehabilitation of the flesh,” and free love well before these issues gained cultural prominence at the turn of the 1860s. While tracing the cultural influence of women’s writing, the talk turns to the creation of the “Community of Women Translators” in the early 1860s as a watershed moment in the history of women’s involvement in the press. Even as the Community aimed to support women’s work, it symbolically marked the devaluation in the status of women writers: if previously they had been viewed as authors of variously distinguished literary texts, after the turn of the 1860s they increasingly served as anonymous labor— as translators, compilers, copy-editors, and producers of routine journalistic content. Highlighting the precarity of women’s involvement in the press industry, the talk argues that women’s writing made a profound impact on the Russian cultural tradition, in particular by way of influencing such canonical literary texts as Chernyshevsky’s What is to Be Done?, Dostoevsky’s The Idiot, and Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina.

About the speaker:

Konstantine Klioutchkine is Associate Professor of Russian at Pomona College. He works on nineteenth-century Russian cultural history and has published on Dostoevsky, Nekrasov, Chernyshevsky, Chekhov, and Rozanov. His talk is part of a book project on the history of the Russian cultural economy in the context of developing print capitalism between 1840 and 1880.