

# Anthropology Colloquia

Winter 2014

## David Ransel

Robert F. Byrnes Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Indiana University

### *They Are Taking That Air From Us*

*The Sale of Russian National Heritage and Recreational Sites to Private Developers and the Emergence of Civil Society Opposition*

The talk will focus on the problems posed by the acquisition of lands in Russia for the construction of private, often luxury, homes. Developers, with the help of their political allies, are taking over sites in Moscow Province that were long considered by local people to be community assets open for the enjoyment of everyone. Among such losses are sites of great historical and cultural interest. Ransel's study grew out of a current project based on interviews with two generations of workers in the industrial suburbs of Moscow. He is also working with archeologists from the Likhachëv Institute and Institute of Archeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences who are trying to stop encroachment by developers on national heritage sites. The takeover of these sites has stimulated the formation of small islands of civil society activity in opposition. Among the threatened sites are the town and surroundings of Radonezh, the boyhood home of the greatest saint of medieval Russia, Sergii of Radonezh (where archeologists and historians had hoped to establish an open-air museum) and the Borodino Battle Field on which the Russian army fought Napoleonic armies in 1812.

**Professor David Ransel** specializes in the history of politics and society in Russia. His contributions include *The Politics of Catherinian Russia* (Yale, 1975), a study of political clienteles. He edited *The Family in Imperial Russia* (Illinois, 1978), the first collection of essays on Russian family life. His second monograph, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, 1988) opened the field of the history of charity in Russia. He followed this with studies of village life, including the reconstruction of an ethnography of peasant women and children, *Village Life in Late Tsarist Russia* (Indiana, 1993) and another monograph, *Village Mothers: Three Generations of Change in Russia and Tataria* (Indiana, 2000), a book based on oral testimony collected from 100 village women throughout Russia. Prof. Ransel then published two further collections, *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, and *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity*. A new monograph by Prof. Ransel appeared in 2009, *A Russian Merchant's Tale: The Life and Adventures of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchënov, Based on His Diary* (Indiana University Press). Prof. Ransel is publishing another volume soon, titled *Everyday Life in Russia, Past and Present* (Indiana University Press, 2014), co-edited with Choi Chatterjee, Karen Petrone, and Mary Cavender. He is the author of several dozen articles on these and related topics. He is currently at work on two projects: a study of two generations of workers in the industrial suburbs of Moscow, and studies of illegal land seizures by developers and their political allies of culturally protected sites in the Moscow region.



Monday, March 3  
3:30-5:00 pm  
261, Social Sciences 1