
REVIEWS

MOSKOVSKII UNIVERSITET, 1977–1978, UCHEBNIYI PROTSESS: KATALOG-SPRAVOCHNIK. GUMANITARNYE FAKUL'TETY. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1977. 520 pp. 1.94 rubles.

MOSKOVSKII UNIVERSITET, 1977–1978, UCHEBNIYI PROTSESS: KATALOG-SPRAVOCHNIK. ESTESTVENNYE FAKUL'TETY. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1977. 623 pp. 2.17 rubles.

The publication of the complete catalog of courses of Moscow State University in this handsome format enables us for the first time to have a complete picture of the entire curriculum and faculty of the leading center of higher education in the Soviet Union. As we all know from experience in our own colleges and universities, catalogs must be used with caution. Descriptions of programs and courses do not always match reality. Last minute substitutions and replacements can wreak havoc with entire departments. But anyone with a nodding acquaintance with one or two of the faculties at MGU will be struck by the relative stability and continuity of courses and instructional staff, at least at the senior levels. However exact in detail this catalog may be, there is as much to be learned about the structure and educational philosophy of the university from its stated aspirations as from its actual course offerings at any given moment.

A brief and identical introduction to both volumes explains the main function of the fifteen faculties of the humanities and sciences—the preparation of teachers and research specialists for schools of general education, *вузы*, and research institutes. A special faculty designed to improve the quality of teachers of social sciences provides short term retraining courses given during the daytime, evening, and by correspondence. Another “preparatory faculty” exists for foreign students enrolled at Moscow State University. The fifteen regular faculties comprise 274 departments, 360 laboratories, 163 study rooms, 11 research-experimental stations, 4 research institutes, a computer center, botanical garden, and 4 observatories. The teaching and research staff number seventy-five hundred, of whom only about one thousand are doctors and professors, the rest either hold the *kandidat* degree or, in the case of just under half, are still working toward it. Of approximately twenty-seven thousand students, more than seven thousand are enrolled in evening classes or hold full-time jobs, from which they have paid leave in order to complete their education. Instruction is free, and, according to the catalog, the “overwhelming majority” of students receive a government stipend of 40–45 rubles a month. Outstanding students who have opted for careers in research receive stipends, ranging from 15 to 25 percent higher, some of which are “name” scholarships.

The new curriculum was adopted in 1974 and was gradually introduced to each incoming class so that the entire university now operates under this plan. It includes what we would call a core curriculum of seven subjects: the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Political Economy, Scientific Communism, Foundations of Scientific Atheism, a foreign-language requirement, and physical education. The faculties are broken down into fifty specialized fields and each field is subdivided into specializations which total 244 in all subjects. Recognizing the importance of new areas of knowledge, the curriculum reform permits the introduction of new courses or new material in existing ones. For the academic year 1978–79, these various changes affected one hundred sixty courses in science and one hundred courses in humanities faculties.

The number of hours devoted to the core curriculum varies according to the faculty. The greatest variation occurs in the foreign-language requirement, ranging from a low of 140 in philosophy to a high of 1,058 in history. Less variation exists in the scientific communism faculty and (except for history courses) none at all in the history of the party. The core is heavily ideological in content but without a typical student's plan it is difficult to determine just how large a place it occupies in undergraduate education. In the science faculties, where the average student takes two or three required courses and two–four electives a term, at least one and occasionally two of the required courses taken in each of ten semesters is devoted to the core courses. Despite the prominence of the sciences in the university as a whole, there are no science courses in the core; students in the humanities faculty, therefore, never take a university-level course in those fields. Moreover, there are no core courses in literature or the fine arts, so that students of science are not formally exposed to these subjects during their years at the university. The stamp of specialized training, of compartmentalization, marks the entire curriculum. This separation of “the two cultures” resembles an old-fashioned European—but not Russian—approach to education.

The specialized fields within each faculty reflect rather traditional divisions with a few odd placements: in the philological faculty they are Russian language and literature, Slavic languages and literatures, Romano-Germanic philology (that is, Western European), classical philology, and structural and applied linguistics; the biological faculty is divided into zoology and botany, anthropology (!), physiology, biophysics, and biochemistry. The specialized fields within each faculty share a number of general courses above and beyond the core. Presumably, the purpose is to expose the students to introductory courses in related disciplines. This works better in some fields than in others. The reasons for the selections are not always clear, however. For example, the general courses for the specialized fields of history do not include any statistics, computer programming, or even economics, but they do offer archaeology and Latin. In linguistics, there is Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, poetics, and psychology, but no philosophy or anthropology.

The specializations within each field offer a wide variety of courses in most faculties. The choices in the humanities faculties appear to be less systematic and comprehensive than those in the science faculties. For example, in the history faculty, the specialization in the medieval period lists no courses on the Holy Roman Empire and only one on Byzantium, but offers two rather specialized topical courses on Spanish towns and the foreign policy of Navarre, Castille, and Leon from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. More surprising, the specialization in history of the USSR includes two courses on the Fourth Duma but none on the Revolution of 1905 and none on 1917! To be sure, there are courses on the history of the party which cover these events in its own context, but that is not quite the same thing. In the history of the South Slavs there is only one course on Yugoslavia from 1919 to 1941 and one on Poland in the period of socialist construction, but there are four courses on Bulgaria. By contrast, the specialty of modern and recent history (of Western Europe) offers a comprehensive set of broad surveys of national histories of Britain, Germany, France, Italy, the United States, Latin America, and Canada, followed by more specialized courses on such topics as Gramsci, Weimar parties, the Popular Front in France, and so forth. In literature the idiosyncracies also show up more in Russian and Soviet literature than in West European or Slavic literatures. A few mild surprises surface in Russian literature. Leskov can be studied for more than four semesters (136 hours), while Mayakovsky is offered for two semesters of 68 hours and shares another course with Gorky. Two special courses are devoted to Blok, but there is no special course on Sholokhov. With the exception of Mayakovsky, Gorky, and Esenin, Soviet literature is taught according to periods or styles rather than individuals.

In certain cases, the inclusion or omission of particular topics and figures is clearly a reflection of accidental factors—that is, the talents and specialties of the teaching staff. In other cases, the motives are less evident, but there are instances, such as the 1917 Revolution and the history of Yugoslavia after 1941, where the subject simply must have become too controversial to be taught by one individual in a specialized course.

Ideological considerations appear to have vanished completely from most of the science faculties. The range of specialized courses in physics, according to some of my colleagues who are competent to speak on the field, is extensive and impressive. Along the same lines, it is noteworthy to compare the participation of members and corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences in the humanities and science faculties. As might be expected, the disproportion is great. In the geology faculty, academicians head seven out of fourteen departments; in the radiophysics section and the nuclear physics section of the physics faculty, they head three out of six and five out of seven departments, respectively. In history, the proportion is down to four out of fifteen, in philology, one out of fifteen, and none at all in the philosophy faculty. These proportions are not out of line with those in the same fields within the Academy itself, but, along with other indicators, they serve as a reminder of the relative status of intellectual areas at all levels of Soviet education.

Another such indicator is the number of courses and faculty members in the sciences and the humanities. Science takes the lead in both categories by 12–15 percent. Even this figure is somewhat misleading because of the considerable amount of duplication within the humanities faculties. The core courses (physical education excepted) are all humanities, but they are taught by special departments, one set for the humanities faculties and another set for the science faculties. The same courses are also taught, though presumably at different levels, by departments within individual humanities faculties. For example, there is a Department of the History of the Communist Party in the humanities faculty, and one for the science faculty. But the history faculty has its own Department of the History of the Communist Party, as does the institute for raising the qualifications of teachers of the social sciences, thus making four such departments in the university. The same functional overlap is evident in the areas of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and of political economy.

To conclude on a more positive note, over the past two decades the university has been developing its international ties to the point where it can legitimately claim a world-wide network of scholarly and research-oriented relations. In 1976–77, over seventeen hundred foreign students were enrolled, and about the same number of faculty and students from the university studied abroad. The university catalog expresses pride in its many agreements with foreign universities and gives special prominence to the exchange of undergraduates with the State University of New York. Every year approximately twelve hundred language teachers from forty countries take part in the university's ambitious program of encouraging the study of Russian. This has been, at least up to now, the most mutually rewarding and successful exchange.

For students of Soviet society the catalogs will no doubt repay closer study, particularly in a comparative context, both with respect to other educational systems and, over the years, as changes in curriculum occur within Moscow State University. For prospective participants in cultural exchanges under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education, the catalog will serve as a valuable source of pertinent information, often elusive in the past, about the current teaching interests and responsibilities of individual scholars. It is therefore unfortunate that the edition has been limited to two thousand copies, which will make it a bibliographical rarity.

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