

# Fern & Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies



## The Legacy of Russian Humanities: From the Perspective of a Professor of Jewish Studies

Dr. Arkady Kovelman, Head of the Department of Jewish  
Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University

**January 24, 2013**

**7:30 p.m.**

**McClung Museum Auditorium**

The Brezhnev Soviet period – usually labeled as the Stagnation period— witnessed, paradoxically, the popularity and flourishing of the humanities in the Soviet Union in which the interpretation of culture effectively served the role of a counter-culture in which humanities scholars used “doublespeak” to “expound” upon classical texts. “Philology” (which united literary criticism with history and philosophy) mutated into secular religion.

In the Post-Soviet era, the scholars who began the new centers and departments of Jewish Studies in Russian universities were primarily Classicists and Hebraists who had been educated outside the borders of traditional Jewish learning, but they combined their newly acquired qualifications with the subversive legacy of the humanities as it had developed in the Soviet era. That legacy included not just perverted “Marxism” but a synthesis of neo-Kantianism and neo-Hegelianism, which makes Russian Jewish Studies unique in understanding the development of Jewish civilization.

Dr. Kovelman is the Head of the Department of Jewish Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University (since 1998, when the Department was founded). In 1975, he graduated from Moscow State University as a classicist. Dr. Kovelman authored seven books including *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Hellenistic and Jewish Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006). Dr. Kovelman is a member of the Editorial Committee of the *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden and Boston). In 2002-2006, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the European Association for Jewish Studies. Dr. Kovelman is one of the founders of the Jewish Studies in post-Soviet Russia and at the Lomonosov Moscow State University.

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