



Professor: Serguei A. Oushakine
Seminar S01: 1:30 pm - 4:20 pm W

COMMUNIST MODERNITY:
Politics and Culture of Soviet Utopia

SLA 420 / ANT 420 / COM 424 / RES 420 (EM)
(EM)

Communism is long gone but its legacy continues to reverberate. And not only because of Cuba, China or North Korea. Inspired by utopian ideas of equality and universal brotherhood, communism was originally conceived as an ideological, socio-political, economic and cultural alternative to capitalism's crises. The attempt to build a new utopian world was costly and brutal: equality was quickly transformed into uniformity; brotherhood evolved into the Big Brother.

The course provides an in-depth review of these contradictions between utopian motivations and oppressive practices in the Soviet Union. By reading major political texts of the period we will trace the emergence and dissipation of revolutionary ideas. Key cultural documents of the time will introduce us to crucial elements of communist modernist aesthetics that have not lost their relevance even today. Through historical documents, fiction and film, the course will present central players of Soviet Utopia: from Vladimir Lenin to Kazimir Malevich; from Joseph Stalin to Sergei Eisenstein.

Requirements:

1. Class participation, *one* class presentation, and *eight* weekly position papers – 35%
2. Midterm paper “*Representing Soviet Utopia*” (~2000 words) – 35%
3. Final Wikipedia project on Communist Modernity – 30%

Film screenings are a part of general assignment; films will be digitized and made available through Blackboard (some are available on youtube).

Please, have copies of assigned texts with you.

To encourage active exchanges in class, I ask you *not* to use your laptops; they tend to distract and alienate.

Week 0: INTRODUCTION

Marshall Berman. “Introduction: Modernity—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow;” “Petersburg: The Modernism of Underdevelopment.” In: Marshall Berman. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1982, pp. 15-36; pp. 173-248

FILM: Dir. Aleksei Uchitel, *Dreaming of Space*, (2005) (in class).

Week 1: MODERNISM, MODERNITY, AND THE MODERN WORLD

Charles Talyor. Two Theories of Modernity. In: *Public culture*, Vol.11, No 1. (1999), pp. 153-174.

Zygmunt Bauman. "Utopia and reality;" "Utopia and the Modern Mind;" The Historical Location of Socialism." In: Z. Bauman. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: Routledge, 1976, Pp.9-18; 18-38; 28-48; 49-65.

Susan Buck-Morss. "Common Sense." In: Buck-Morss S. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, 2000, pp. 98—133.

FILM: Dir. Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (1930).

Optional:

John MacKay, Disorganized Noise: Enthusiasm and the Ear of the Collective. *Kinokultura* # 7, January 2005

Week 2: REVOLUTIONARY TEXTS: MARX AND BAKUNIN

Mikhail Bakunin. The Lectures to the Swiss Members of the International; The Organization of the International; On Cooperation; A Few Words to My Brothers in Russia. In: *The Basic Bakunin. Writings 1869-1871*. Trans. by Robert M/ Cutler. New York: Prometheus Books, pp. 39-65; 136-144; 151-154.

Karl Marx. Theses on Feuerbach (pp.143-146); Manifesto of the Communist Party (pp.469-501); Critique of the Gotha Program (pp. 525-541); After the Revolution: Karl Marx Debates Bakunin (pp.542-548); The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (pp.594-617); On Social Relations in Russia (665-675). In: *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton & Co, 1978.

VISUAL: *Communist Manifestoon.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbTIIJ9_bLP4&feature=youtu.be

Week 3: MODERNITY GONE AWRY

Mark Steinberg, Revolutionary Modernity and Its Discontent. In M. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp.184-223.

Sidney Monas. Driving Nails with a Samovar: A Historical Introduction. In: Shklovsky, V. A *Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917–1922*. Dalkey Archive Press. pp. xxvii–xlvii.

Viktor Shklovsky. A Sentimental Journey. Part One: Revolution and the Front. In: Shklovsky, V. A *Sentimental Journey*, pp.7-61.

Serguei Oushakine. The Flexible and the Pliant: Disturbed Organisms of Soviet Modernity. In: *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 19, No 3 (2004), pp. 392–428.

Optional:

Sheila Fitzpatrick. Introduction; The Setting; 1917: The Revolutions of February and October. In: S. Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*. Second edition. Oxford University Press, 1994. 1-39; 40-68. (notes 173-176)

Marcel Mauss. A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism. In: *The Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss*, ed. by Mike Gane. London: Routledge, 1996, 165-212.

Week 4: WITHOUT THE STATE: LENIN'S THEORY

Robert C. Tucker. Lenin and Revolution. In: *the Lenin Anthology*. Ed. By Robert Tucker. Norton and Co: New York, pp. xv-lxiv.

Slavoj Žižek. **Between Two Revolutions.** In: *Revolution at the Gates. A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917 by V. I. Lenin*. Ed. by S. Žižek. London: Verso, pp.1-15.

Vladimir Lenin. *The State and Revolution*. In: Lenin, Vladimir. *The Lenin Anthology*. Ed. by Robert Tucker, New York: Norton and Company., pp.311-350; 369-384.

- Vladimir Lenin.** The Task of the Revolution. (pp. 124-132) Meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. In: *Revolution at the Gates*, pp.162-164. In: *Revolution at the Gates. A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917 by V. I. Lenin*. Ed. by S. Žižek. London: Verso,
- Vladimir Lenin.** "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government." In: *The Lenin Anthology*... pp. 438-460.
- Alasdair MacIntyre.** How Not to Write About Lenin. In: Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age*. Essays on Ideology and Philosophy. New York: Schocken Books, pp. 42-47.

Optional:

Maxim Gorky. *V. I. Lenin*. http://www.aha.ru/~mausoleu/a_lenin/gorky_e.htm

Week 5. LEARNING TO LIVE: TROTSKY AND A NEW (SOVIET) MAN

- Leon Trotsky.** *Problems of Everyday Life*. New York: Monad Press, 1973 (excerpts).
- Susan Buck-Morss.** "Culture for the Masses;" "Dream and Awakening." In: Buck-Morss S. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, pp.134-172, 178-211.
- Frances Lee Bernstein.** Conserving Soviet Power: Thermodynamics and the Sins of Youth. In: F. L. Bernstein. *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses*. DeCalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007. Pp.128—158 (214-217).
- Mikhail Zoshchenko.** The Bathhouse; A Summer Breather; Baths and People; In: M. Zoshchenko, *Nervous People, and Other Satires*. Ed. Hugh McLean. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 131-133; 162-164; 204-208.
- FILM: Dir. Sergei Eisenstein.** *Old and New (1929)*.

Optional:

- James Goodwin,** Old and New: History and Utopia. In: J. Goodwin. *Eisenstein, Cinema, and History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp.98-120.
- Andrei Platonov.** The Motherland of Electricity. In: A. Platonov. *The Return and Other Stories*. London: The Harvill Press, 1999, pp.3-25.

Week 6. LIFE WITHOUT DIFFERENCE: STALIN'S LENINISM

- René Girard.** Guillaume de Machaut and the Jews; Stereotypes of Persecution. In: R. Girard. *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, Pp.1-23.
- Joseph Stalin.** "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," pp. 44-57; "Strategy and Tactics," pp. 85-103; "The Party," pp. 104-123. In: Stalin, Joseph. *Foundations of Leninism*. New York: International Publishers. 85-123.
- Joseph Stalin.** The Right Deviation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In: Stalin, Joseph, *Leninism: Selected Writings*. New York: International Publishers, pp.88- 133.
- Karl Schlägel,** The Creation of Enemies: The Criminal Prosecution of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center, 19-24 August 1936 (68-90); Chopin Concert and Killing Ritual: Radio and the Creation of the Great Community (215-228); A Miniature of High Society before the Massacre (355-371). In: K. Schlägel, *Moscow, 1937*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. London: Polity Press, 2012.
- FILM: Dir. Grigorii Aleksandrov,** *Circus (1936)*. (<https://youtu.be/YbVTBdx8524>)

Optional:

- Andrei A. Zhdanov.** On Literature. In: Andrei A. Zhdanov. *Essays on Literature, Philosophy, and Music*. New York: International Publishers. 1950, pp. 7-45.
- Boris Groys.** The Art of Totality. In: *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*. Ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003, pp. 96-122.

Week 7. LIVING MACHINES

- Rolf Hellebust.** A Special Material: The Meaning of Metal Imagery. In: R. Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature and the Alchemy of Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp.6-31.
- Hilde Heynen.** Architecture Facing Modernity. In: H. Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity*, Cambridge: The MIT press. pp.8-20.
- Victor Buchli.** The Narkomfin Communal House and the Material Culture of Socialism. In: Buchli, V. *An Archeology of Socialism*. New York: Berg, 1999, pp. 63-76.
- Moisei Ginzburg.** *Style and Epoch*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982, pp. 74-120.
- Ernst May et al.** City Building in the USSR. In: El Lissitsky. *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*. Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1984, pp.188-228.
- Mikhail Ryklin.** The Best in the World": The Discourse of the Moscow Metro in the 1930s. In: *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*. Ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman. Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2003, pp.261-277.
- VISUALS: Z. Troitskaya.** *Moscow's Metro*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955.

Optional:

- Alexei Tarkhanov and Sergei Kavtaradze,** The Style is Found. In: A. Tarkhanov & S. Kavtaradze, *Architecture of the Stalin Era*. New York: Rizzoli, 1992, pp. 44-79.
- El Lissitsky.** *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*. Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1984 (excerpts).
- FILM: Dir. Anna Abrahams** *Sostgorod* (1995).

Week 8: REFORGING PEOPLE

- Michel Foucault.** The Hermeneutic of the Subject. In: Foucault, M. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. By Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, pp. 92-106.
- Jochen Hellbeck.** Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlybnui (1931–1939). In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 44 (1996), pp.344–373.
- Stepan Filippovich Podlubny.** Diary. In: Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds. *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*. New York: The New Press, 1995, pp. 291-332.
- Maksim Gorky,** ed. *Belomor: an Account of the Construction of the New Canal between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea*, Part I.
- FILM: Dir. Sergei Eisenstein.** *Ivan the Terrible*, Part 1. (1944)

Optional:

- Charles Taylor.** "Modernity and Identity." In: *Schools of Thought: Twenty Five Years of Interpretative Social Science*, ed. by Joan Scott and Debra Keates. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 139-153.
- Cristina Vatulescu.** "Secret Police Shots at Filmmaking: The Gulag and Cinema." In: C. Vatulescu. *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010, pp.123-161.

Week 9: THE OPTIMISM OF NON-OBJECTIVITY

- Kazimir Malevich** *The Non-Objective World*. Trans. Howard Dearstyne. Chicago, P. Theobald, 1959 (excerpts)
- Vasilii Rakitin.** The Optimism of a Nonobjectivist. In: *Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism. A Catalogue of the Exhibit*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2003, pp.60-78.
- Christina Kiaer.** "The Socialist Object;" "Everyday Object." In: Christina Kiaer. *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005, pp.1-40; 41-89.

John Milner, The Monument to the Third International. In: J. Milner. *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, pp.151-180.

Optional: Vladimir Sorokin. *The Queue*. London, 1985.

Week 10: THE IDEOLOGY OF FORM: MONTAGE

Lev Kuleshov. The Task of the Artist in Cinema. (pp.41-43); Americanism. (pp.72-74). In: *The Film Factory. Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*. Ed. by Richard Tylor. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Sergei Eisenstein. “The Montage of Attractions” (pp.33-38); The Montage of Film Attractions (pp.39-59); The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form (59-64); Beyond the Shot (138-151); The Dramaturgy of Film Form (161-180). In: *S. Eisenstein. Selected Works, Vol.1. Writings 1924-34*. Ed. by Richard Taylor. London: BFI Publishing. 1988.

Varvara Stepanova. Photomontage. In: *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. by Christopher Phillips. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989, pp.234-237.

Gustav Klutsis. The Photomontage as a New Kind of Agitation Art; Photomontage as a Medium for Agitation and Propaganda. In: *Gustav Klutsis, Valentina Kulagina. Posters. Book Graphic Arts. Magazine Graphic Arts. News photomontage. 1922-1937*. Moscow: Kontakt-Kultura, 2010, pp.246-260.

FILM: Dir. Dziga Vertov, Man with the Movie Camera (1929).

Optional:

Belá Balazc, “The Future of the Film;” **Sergei Eisenstein**, “Belá Forgets the Scissors.” In: *The Film Factory* Pp.114-149.

Vsevolod Pudovkin. On the Principle of Sound in Film. In: *The Film Factory* pp.264-267.

Margarita Tupitsyn. *Gustav Klutsis and Valentina Kulagina: Photography and Montage after Constructivism*. Steidl: International Center for Photography, 2004, pp. 15-27, 37-41, 61-67.

Week 11: THAW MODERN: IMAGINARY WEST

Arjun Appadurai. Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket. In: Appadurai A. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 89-113.

Alexei Yurchak. Imaginary West: The Elsewhere of Late Socialism. In: Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until It was no More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton, 2006, pp.158-207.

Vassily Aksyonov. *In Search of Melancholy Baby: A Russian in America*. Trans. M. H. Heim and A. Bouis. New York: Vintage Books, 1987, pp.3-22.

Susan E. Reid. “Our Kitchen is Just as Good”: Soviet Responses to the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959. In: *Cold War Modern Design, 1945-1970*. Ed. by David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, London: V&A Publishing, 2008. pp.154-162.

Asif A. Sidiqi. Gagarin. In: Asif A. Sidiqi. *Sputnik and the Soviet Space Challenge*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000, pp. 243-299.

FILM: Dir. Valerii Todorovskii, Hipsters (2008).

Optional:

Georg Simmel. Fashion. In: G. Simmel *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Chicago, 1971. pp. 294–323.

Djurджа Bartlett. The Cold War and the Fashion War. In: D. Bartlett. *FashionEast: The Spectre That Haunted Socialism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 137-181.

David Crowley. Thaw Modern: Design in Eastern Europe After 1956. In: *Cold War Modern Design, 1945-1970*. Ed. by David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, London: V&A Publishing, 2008, pp.129-153.