

THE FUTURE IS NOW: REVOLUTION AND UTOPIA IN EARLY SOVIET CULTURE

Princeton Global Seminar in St. Petersburg, 15 June – 24 July 2009

Prof. Serguei Oushakine and Prof. Devin Fore

Description:

The political revolution of 1917 was not the climax of the Bolshevik agenda, but only a point of departure for a more radical program to completely restructure social relations and modes of human experience. Out of this crisis emerged a period of cultural experimentation that was unprecedented in the modern era. This course examines a variety of the utopian projects that flourished in this period. At the same time that we will study the famous artistic avant-gardes whose influence continues to the present day—Futurism, Suprematism, Constructivism, Production Art, and early Soviet Cinema—we will also investigate the everyday contexts that gave sense to these movements: the establishment of communal life, the modernization of experience and sensation, the reorganization of the relations between the sexes, the creation of new codes of conduct, the explosion of the mass media, promethean construction enterprises, the Stalinization of culture, and other topics. Motivating all of these inquiries will be a single question: How can we understand the experiences and self-definition of the new Soviet subject? Our inquiry will be supplemented by excursions into the city of St. Petersburg, a weekend trip to Moscow, and a trip to the Solovki island, the place where the Gulag Archipelago started.

Provisional schedule of the day:

9:00-10:30 - Russian language

11:00-1:00 - Lecture

2:00pm - Film showings, as needed; possible community service on Thursdays.

Requirements:

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| 1. Class participation | 30% |
| 2. Weekly response papers | 30% |
| 2. Final project due September 2009 | 40% |

Syllabus

WEEK 1

THE END OF EMPIRE (Oushakine)

Katerina Clark, "Imperial Petersburg, 1913," in Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution*.

Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, "The Desacralization of the Monarchy: Rumours and the Downfall of the Romanovs," in Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917*.

Ronald Suny, "The Imperial Legacy" and "The Double Revolution," in Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*.

Film: Agony (Dir. Elem Klimov, 1984).

City tour: St. Peter and Paul Fortress: graves of the last Russian tsar.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FUTURE (Fore)

Roman Jakobson, "The Newest Russian Poetry: V. Khlebnikov," in Jakobson, *My Futurist Years*.

V. Khlebnikov, "The Word as Such" and "The Letter as Such," in Khlebnikov, *Collected Works*, vol. 1.

Sergei Tret'iakov, "From Where To Where?," in *Russian Futurism Through Its Manifestoes*, ed. Anna Lawton.

Boris Arvatov, "Language Creation," in *Russian Futurism Through Its Manifestoes*.

THE POWER OF UTOPIA (Oushakine)

Vladimir Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert Tucker.

Vladimir Lenin, "The Task of the Revolution," in *Revolution at the Gates. A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917 by V. I. Lenin*, ed. S. Žižek.

Leon Trotsky, *Russian Revolution* (excerpts).

Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, "The Symbolic Revolution," in Figes and Boris, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917*.

City tour: Smolny (the headquarters of the revolution); the cruiser *Aurora*.

THE MODERNISM OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT (Oushakine)

Marshall Berman, "Petersburg: The Modernism of Underdevelopment," in Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*.

Mark Steinberg, "Revolutionary Modernity and Its Discontent," in Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925*.

Vladimir Lenin "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," in *The Lenin Anthology*.

Randi Cox, "'NEP Without Nepmen!': Soviet Advertizing and Transition to Socialism," in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman.

WEEK 2

ORGANIZING SPACE (Oushakine)

Victor Buchli, "Revolution and the Restructuring of the Material World," "Soviet Hygiene and the Battle against Dirt" and "Petit-Bourgeois Consciousness," in Buchli, *An Archeology of Socialism*.

Katerina Gerasimova, "Public Privacy in the Soviet Communal Apartment," in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid.

Huns Günter, “‘Broad is My Motherland’: The Mother Archetype and Space in Soviet Mass Song,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman.
Katerina Clark, “Grigorii Aleksandrov’s *Volga-Volga*,” in *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities*, ed. Igal Halfin.

Film: Volga-Volga (Dir. G. Aleksandrov, 1936).

City tour: visit a kommunalka

TRANSFORMING CULTURE (Oushakine)

Katarina Clark, “High Stalinist Culture,” in Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as a Ritual*.
Trofim Lysenko, “Two Trends in Genetics,” in Lysenko. *Agrobiology: Essays on Problems of Genetics, Plant Breeding and Seed Growing*.
Maksim Gorky, ed. *Belomor: an Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea*.

Film: TBA

0.10: MALEVICH AND TATLIN (Fore)

Christina Lodder, “Non-Utilitarian Constructions: The Evolution of a Formal Language,” in Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*.
Margit Rowell, “Form/Faktura: Tatlin,” in *October* no. 7 (Winter 1978).
Kasimir Malevich, “From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism” and “The Question of Imitative Art,” in *Essays on Art: 1915-1933*, ed. Troels Anderson.
Maria Gough, “Faktura: The Making of the Russian Avant-Garde,” in *Res* no. 36 (Autumn 1999).

FORMALISM IN SEARCH OF MOTIVATION: RODCHENKO (Fore)

Christina Lodder, “Towards a Theoretical Basis: Fusing the Formal and the Utilitarian,” in Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*.
“1921” and “1928,” in *Art Since 1900*, ed. Hal Foster et al.
S. O. Khan-Magomedov, “The Composition-Construction debates,” in *Art Into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932*.

WEEK 3

IN-CORPORATING ART: LISSITZKY (Fore)

El Lissitzky, “A. and Pangeometry,” “Proun Room” “Exhibition Rooms,” in *El Lissitzky: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer*.
Yve-Alain Bois, “El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility,” in *Art in America* (April 1988).
Benjamin Buchloh, “From Faktura to Factography,” in *October* no. 30 (Fall 1984).
Leah Dickerman, “El Lissitzky’s Camera Corpus” in *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow*, ed. Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES (Fore)

Victor Burgin, "Photography, Phantasy, Function"

Osip Brik, "From the Painting to the Photograph" and "The Fixation of Fact," in
Photography in the Modern Era, ed. Christopher Phillips.

Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Against the Synthetic Portrait, For the Snapshot" and "The Paths of Contemporary Photography," in *Photography in the Modern Era*.

SOVIET VALUES: THE BASICS (Oushakine)

Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life: Creating the Foundations for a New Society in Revolutionary Russia* (selections).

David Hoffmann, "Acculturating the Masses," in Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity (1917-1941)*.

Susan Buck-Morss, "Common Sense," in Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*.

PRODUCTION ART AND THE CULTURE OF THE OBJECT (Fore)

Boris Arvatov, "Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing," in *October* no. 81 (Summer 1997).

Christina Kiaer, "Rodchenko in Paris," in Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*.

Maria Gough, "The Death of the Object," in Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution*.

Christina Lodder, "The Object and the Constructivist Micro-Environment," in Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*.

Weekend trip to Moscow.

WEEK 4

FROM PRODUCTION TO REPRODUCTION (Fore)

Sergei Tret'iakov, *I Want a Baby*

Eric Naiman, "Introduction" and "'Let Them Penetrate,'" in Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*.

EMBODIED SOCIALISM (Oushakine)

Frances Lee Bernstein, "Disciplining the Sex Question in Revolutionary Russia" and "Conserving Soviet Power: Thermodynamics and the Sins of Youth," in Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses*.

Lylia Kaganovsky. "How the Soviet Man Was (Un)Made" and "What Does Woman Want?" in Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasies and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin*.

Film: Hammer and Sickle (dir. Sergei Livnev, 1994).

BIOMECHANICS (Fore)

Toby Clark, "The 'New Man's' Body: A Motif in Early Soviet Culture," in *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, ed. Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor.

Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre* (selections from chapter 5 on biomechanics), ed. Edward Braun.

Edward Braun, "Biomechanics and Constructivism," in Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre*.

Mikhail Iampolskii, "Kuleshov's Experiments and the New Anthropology of the Actor," in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie.

Film: The Magnanimous Cuckold (1983 reconstruction of Meyerhold production)

SOVIET SUBJECTIVITY: CREATING A NEW SELF (Oushakine)

Serguei Oushakine, "The Flexible and the Pliant: Disturbed Organisms of Soviet Modernity," in *Cultural Anthropology* 19, no. 3 (2004).

Anton Makarenko. *Road to Life (An Epic of Education)*(selections).

Jochen Hellbeck, "The Diary of a New Man: Leonid Potemkin," in Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing Diary Under Stalin*.

WEEK 5

THE PROSTHETIC EYE: DZIGA VERTOV (Fore)

Dziga Vertov, "On the Significance of Nonacted Cinema," "The Birth of Kino-Eye," "Kino-Pravda and Radio-Pravda," "Kino-Eye" and "From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye," in *Kino-Eye*, ed. Annette Michelson.

Paul Virilio, "Dromoscopy" and "The Driving Within," in Virilio, *Negative Horizon*.

Film: Man With A Movie Camera (dir. Dziga Vertov)

FILM LANGUAGE: SERGEI EISENSTEIN (Fore)

Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film-Attractions" in Eisenstein, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1; "The Unexpected," "The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram," "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," "The Filmic Fourth Dimension" and "Film Form: New Problems" in Eisenstein, *Film Form*; "Notes on Capital" in *October* no. 2 (1976).

Film: Battleship Potemkin (dir. Sergei Eisenstein)

REVOLUTION AS RITUAL (Oushakine)

Joseph Stalin, "The Right Deviation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" and "The Results of the First Five-Year Plan," in Stalin, *Leninism: Selected Writings*.

Karen Petrone, "Celebrating Civic Participation: The Stalin Constitution and the Elections as Rituals of Democracy," in Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin*.

Vladimir Tolstoy, Irina bibikova, and Catherine Cooke, *Street Art of the Revolution: Festivals and Celebrations in Russia 1918-33* (selections).

THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED (Oushakine)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ending the Revolution," in Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*.
Evgenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlworld* (pp. 1–115).

Tour: the Solovki island (the place where the first Gulag camps were established).

WEEK 6

CULTS OF PERSONALITIES (Oushakine)

Karen Petrone, "A Double-Edged Discourse on Freedom: The Pushkin Centennial of 1937" and "Anniversary of Turmoil: The Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution," in Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*.
Jeffrey Brooks, "The Performance Begins," "The Economy of the Gift: 'Thank you, Comrade Stalin for a Happy Childhood!'" and "Literature and the Arts: 'An Ode to Stalin,'" in Brooks. *Thank you, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture From Revolution to Cold War*.

Film: *Ivan the Terrible* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein).

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR (Fore)

Viktor Shklovskii, *The Third Factory*.
Boris Tomashevskii, "Literature and Biography," in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska.

THE SOCIALIST ARCHIPELAGO (Oushakine)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich*.
Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (selections)

REALISM AFTER THE AVANT-GARDE (Fore)

Boris Groys, "The Birth of Socialist Realism Out of the Spirit of the Avant-Garde," in *The Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment*, ed. John Bowlte and Olga Matich.
Evgeny Dobrenko, "Socialism as Will and Representation" in Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*.