

RUSS 1440
IMAGINING MOSCOW:
UTOPIA AND URBAN SPACES IN 20TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN CULTURE

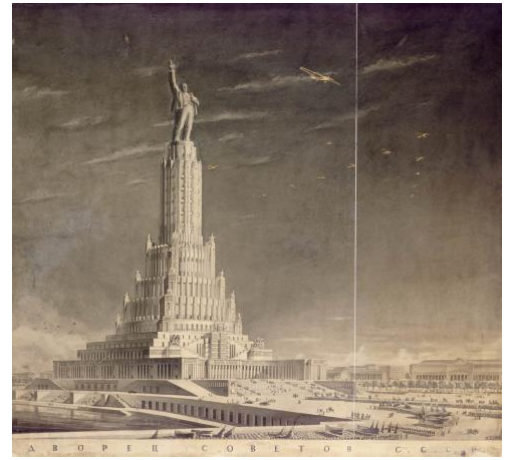
FALL 2023. TTH 1-2:20PM
LOCATION: [SAYLES HALL 300](#)

FABRIZIO FENGHI

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OFFICE: [MARSTON HALL, ROOM 204](#)

OFFICE HOURS: T 2:30-3:30PM OR BY APPOINTMENT, IN PERSON OR ON ZOOM AT THIS [LINK](#)



DESCRIPTION:

The course explores the role of Moscow in the Russian collective imagery throughout the 20th century. We will study how different utopian visions of the city in art, literature, film, and architecture affected the radical transformations of its urban landscape from the October Revolution to the present. We will start with the 1920s and 1930s, when the image of a new Moscow became closely associated with the creation of new socialist ways of life, and conclude with the neoliberal and neo-imperialist facelift of the city in the post-Soviet period, retracing a history of 20th-century Russian culture through its urban imagination. **WRIT; Urban Studies – Complementary Curriculum.**

****All readings and discussions in English, with Russian originals available for interested students****

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

During the course, students will learn to:

- Think critically about 20th-century Russian culture, politics, and society.
- Analyze and think critically about a wide range of texts and materials, including novels, films, artworks, and architecture.
- Formulate and develop an argument and write a well-structured research paper.
- Reflect upon and discuss the complex interactions between cultural production and sociopolitical processes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance, participation, and one in-class presentation: 20%

Regular reading responses (Canvas forum): 20%

Two 5-page essays: 25%

Final term paper (10 pp.): 35%

- Beginning in the second week of class, you will be required to post a short response or a question for discussion on Canvas/Discussions (1–2 paragraphs) based on the readings prior to each Friday session. Please submit your responses every Thursday by midnight. You are allowed to miss up to three online responses without it affecting your participation grade. You will also be required to give one in-class presentation (10-20 mins.) on one of the weekly assignments.
- Film is an important component of this course. Copies of the films in the syllabus will be available in a Dropbox folder shared with the class (students and faculty at Brown have access to unlimited storage on Dropbox for free: <https://ithelp.brown.edu/kb/articles/create-a-brown-dropbox-account>). You are expected to watch these films the day before class (i.e. films are treated like any other assignments). For some of the movies we will have film screenings that you are strongly encouraged to attend. Some of the films that we will be watching are in the public domain and are also available online at the following links: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mosfilm>; <https://sovietmoviesonline.com>.
- **VISIT TO THE DAVID WINTON BELL ART GALLERY. On the week of Nov 7&9 (?) class will take place at the David Winton Bell Gallery (here at Brown), where we will examine original Soviet posters and underground art stored in the gallery's archives. We will agree on the exact times of this week's meetings**

at the beginning of the course.

- Writing assignments in this course are specifically designed to help you improve your writing skills and critical thinking. You will be asked to write two short response papers on materials of your choice from the syllabus. I will then provide you with extensive feedback, both in person and in written form, before you complete your final assignment, a well-structured research paper, in which you will formulate and develop your own original thesis on the topics under discussion.
- For your midterms you will be provided with a few general prompts that you can use as a starting point to come up with your own argument. For the final paper you will be required to come up with a topic and argument on your own. The last week of classes will be devoted to two final paper workshops. During the first workshop you will get feedback from me and your colleagues on an outline draft for your final paper that you will be required to submit the day before class. You will then revise your outline and argument on the basis of the feedback you received and submit a more polished and detailed version of your outline for our second and final workshop on the last day of class.
- Paper format. All papers must use 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spacing, and 1" margins on all sides. All students must include the following information: name, class, title, assignment (first or second mid-term, final paper, etc.), a title, and the date on which the paper was submitted. Students should use either Chicago or MLA citation style consistently in their assignments. For more information on different citation and formatting styles, see: <https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/support/writing-center/formatting-guides>; <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.
- Writing tips. Academic papers should avoid sweeping statements or generalizations. Your argument and claims should be based on a close analysis of the material (primary and secondary sources) and should be substantiated by examples from the material under analysis. Quoting or paraphrasing someone else's work without acknowledging your source (with a footnote or parenthetical citation) is equivalent to plagiarism.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

For rules and principles concerning plagiarism and academic integrity, please refer to Brown University's *Academic Code*: <https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/index.php?q=policies/academic-code>.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

COURSE MATERIALS:

- Mayakovsky. *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry* (Indiana UP, 1975)
- Zoshchenko. *The Galosh: And Other Stories* (The Overlook Press, 2009).
- Bulgakov. *The Master and Margarita* (Vintage, 1996).
- Zamyatin. *We* (Modern Library, 2006).
- Platonov. *Happy Moscow* (NYRB, 2012).
- Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line* (Northwestern UP, 1992).
- *Paperny. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two* (Excerpts).
- *Paperny. "Modernism and Destruction in Architecture." *ARTMargins*. 05 May 2006.
- *Selected futurist poems and manifestoes by Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Burluk. Essays, graphics, photographs, and artworks by Gan, El Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Stepanova, Punin, Tatlin, Malevich, Leonidov.
- *Benjamin. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire;" "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century;" Selections from *Moscow Diary*.
- *Selection of Soviet posters and Moscow architecture from the 1930s; *Selected essays from *The Landscape of Stalinism* (edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman). *Volkov. "The Concept of Kul'turnost: On the Stalinist Civilizing Process." In Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions*. 210-231.
- *Akhmatova. *Requiem*
- *Selections from: *USSR in Construction; Architecture of the USSR*.

- *Smith. "Remaking the Capital Landscape." *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory During the Yeltsin Era*, 102-130.
- *Livers. "Empty Is My Native Land": The Problem of the Absent Center in Aleksandr Zel'dovich's *Moscow*." *The Russian Review* 64 (July 2005), 422-39.
- *Groys. *The Total Art of Stalinism*. Selections.
- Room. *Bed and Sofa* (film, 1927).
- Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (film, 1929).
- Aleksandrov, *Circus* (film, 1936).
- Medvedkin. *The New Moscow* (film, 1938).
- Pawlikowski. *From Moscow to Pietushki: A Journey with Benedict Yerofeyev* (1990) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afWyBJZ37ZU]
- Khutsiev. *July Rain* (film, 1967).
- Zeldovich. *Moskva* (film, 2000).

The underlined titles will be available (used or new) at the Brown bookstore, the library, through Borrow Direct, or online. Other materials will be available to download from the course website on Canvas.

NB: Please make sure to get the translations listed in the syllabus so that we can all work on, and refer to, the same texts.

SUGGESTED SECONDARY TEXTS:

- "Seventeen Moments in Soviet History. An On-Line Archive of Primary Sources": <http://soviethistory.msu.edu>
- Terras, Victor, ed. *Handbook of Russian Literature* (Yale UP, 1990).
- Emerson, Caryl. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2008).
- Wachtel, Andrew Baruch, and Vinitzky, Ilya. *Russian Literature* (Polity, 2009).
- Smorodinskaya (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Russian Culture* (Routledge, 2014).
- Kahn, Lipovetsky, Reyfman, Sandler. *A History of Russian Literature* (Oxford UP, 2018).
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas. *A History of Russia* (Oxford UP, 2010).
- Brown, Edward. *Russian Literature Since the Revolution: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard UP, 1982).
- Balina, Marina and Dobrenko, Evgeny, (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge UP: 2011).
- Lipovetsky, Mark, and Wakamiya, Lisa Ryoko (eds.). *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader, Book II. Thaw and Stagnation (1954-1986)* (Academic Studies Press, 2015).
- Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Verso: 2011)
- Epstein, Mikhail. *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism & Contemporary Russian Culture* (University of Massachusetts Press: 1995).
- Epstein, Mikhail, Genis, Alexander, Vladiv-Glover, Slobodanka. *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Literature* (Berghahn Books, 1999).
- Lipovetsky, Mark. *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (Routledge, 1999).
- Balina, Marina, Condee, Nancy, Dobrenko, Evgeny. *Endquote: Sots-Art Literature and Soviet Grand Style* (Northwestern UP, 1999).

SYLLABUS

All readings and viewings are to be completed before each class. Materials marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on the course website.

UNIT I. POST-REVOLUTIONARY MOSCOW: UTOPIA AND EVERYDAY LIFE.

Th. Sept 7

Introduction to the course. The October Revolution of 1917: avant-gardes, modernist architecture, and new way of life.

- Tue. Sept 12** *Paperny. "Modernism and Destruction in Architecture." *ARTMargins*. 05 May 2006; Paperny. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two*. 1-70 + Selection of constructivist and socialist realist architecture.
- Th. Sept 14** *Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two*. 105-171. Selection of constructivist and socialist realist architecture.
- Tue. Sept 19** *Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two*. 249-257 (Conclusion) + Selection of constructivist and socialist realist architecture.

WED. SEPT 20: FIRST READING RESPONSE DUE BY 11:59PM

- Th. Sept 21** *Selected futurist poems and manifestos by Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Burlin. Essays, graphics, photographs, and artworks by Gan, El Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Stepanova, Punin, Tatlin, Malevich, Leonidov (Canvas folder). Poems from: Mayakovsky. *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry*.
- Tue. Sept 26** *Vertov. *Man with a Movie Camera* (film, 1929);
*Eisenstein and Vertov. Assignments (Canvas folder).
- Th. Sept 28** Zoshchenko. *The Galosh: And Other Stories*. Focus in particular on the following short stories: "A Thief," "A Speech About Bribery," "A Victim of the Revolution," "Classy Lady," "A Forgotten Slogan," "Electrification," "Domestic Bliss," "A Bathhouse," "Nervous People," "Paris – Рачис," "The Benefits of Culture," "A Hasty Business," "The Tsar's Boots," "The Galosh," "Of Lamp-shades," "Foreigners," "An Unpleasant Story," "The Pushkin Centenary Celebrations," "In Praise of Transport," "The Photograph."
- Tue. Oct 3** *Benjamin. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire;" "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century;" Selections from *Moscow Diary*; Mayakovsky. "The Bedbug," in *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry*, 241-303.
- Th. Oct 5** *Room. *Bed and Sofa* (film, 1927).

[Mon. Oct. 9 – Indigenous Peoples' Day]

- Tue. Oct 10** Zamyatin. *We*. 3-100.
Th. Oct 12 Zamyatin. *We*. 101-203.

SUN. OCT 15: FIRST PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM. PLEASE UPLOAD TO: CANVAS>ASSIGNMENTS>FIRST MIDTERM. ACCEPTED FORMATS: DOC; DOCX; ODT.

UNIT II. THE STALINIST TRANSFORMATION OF SPACE.

- Tue. Oct 17** *Selection of Soviet posters and Moscow architecture from the 1930s;
*Selected essays from *The Landscape of Stalinism* (edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman); *Volkov. "The Concept of Kul'turnost: On the Stalinist Civilizing Process." In Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions*. 210-231.
- Th. Oct 19** *Akhmatova. *Requiem*;
*Aleksandrov, *Circus* (film, 1936).
- Tue. Oct 24** Platonov. *Happy Moscow*. 7-101.
Th. Oct 26 Platonov. *Happy Moscow*. 101-157.
*Medvedkin. *The New Moscow* (film, 1938).
- Tue. Oct 31** Bulgakov. *The Master and Margarita*. 3-254. In particular, chapters I-VIII; XII; XIV; XVI-XVIII.
- Th. Nov 2** Bulgakov. *The Master and Margarita*. 255-335. In particular, chapters XIX-XXVII; XXXI; Epilogue.

**SUN. NOV 5: SECOND PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM. PLEASE UPLOAD TO:
CANVAS>ASSIGNMENTS>SECOND MIDTERM. ACCEPTED FORMATS: DOC; DOCX; ODT.**

UNIT III. THE OTHER MOSCOW

Tue. Nov 7 Original architectural fantasies, Soviet political posters, and conceptualist art;
Groys. *The Total Art of Stalinism*. Selections.

Th. Nov 9 Ibidem.

[TENTATIVE: VISIT TO THE DAVID WINTON BELL ART GALLERY. On the week of Nov 7-9, class will take place at the David Winton Bell Gallery (here at Brown), where we will examine original Soviet posters and underground art stored in the gallery's archives. We will agree on the exact times of this week's meetings at the beginning of the course.]

SUN. NOV 12 REPORT ABOUT THE VISIT AT THE DAVID WINTON BELL ART GALLERY (UPLOAD TO CANVAS BY 11:59PM).

Tue. Nov 14 Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*. 12-111.
Th. Nov 16 Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*. 111-164;
*[Optional] Pawlikowski. *From Moscow to Pietushki: A Journey with Benedict Yerofeyev* (1990)
[Documentary on Venedikt Erofeev. Online:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afWyBJZ37ZU>].

Tue. Nov 21 Khutsiev. *July Rain* (film, 1967).

[Th. Nov 23: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS]
[WED. NOV 22 – SUN. NOV 26— THANKSGIVING RECESS]

[Th. Nov 30: NO CLASS: Instructor at CONFERENCE (ASEEES)]
[ASEEES in Philly: Nov 30-Dec 3]

Tue. Dec 5 Zeldovich. *Moskva* (film, 2000).
Th. Dec 7 *Smith. "Remaking the Capital Landscape." *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory During the Yeltsin Era*, 102-130.

Tue. Dec 12 FINAL PAPER WORKSHOP

**TH. DEC 21 FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59pm. PLEASE UPLOAD TO:
CANVAS>ASSIGNMENTS>FINAL PAPER.
ACCEPTED FORMATS: DOC; DOCX; ODT.**

READING PERIOD: Dec 8 – Dec 12
EXAMINATION PERIOD: Dec 13 – Dec 21