Serguei Oushakine

WORLDS OF FORM:
*Russian Formalism and Constructivism*

SLA 547
Monday @ 1:30 pm - 4:20 pm

By reading key texts written by Russian formalists and constructivists, we will trace how these thinkers and practitioners of art and literature problematized the role and importance of form in their writing. The seminar is structured as a combination of three main blocs: first, we explore systemic views, paying especial attention to the role of structure (and deconstruction). Then, we investigate the links between materiality and form. And, finally, we will see how these three components – form, texture, and system – are localized in particular artistic and/or historical contexts.

This is an interdisciplinary seminar, and during the semester we will move back and from literature to cinema, and from architecture to painting. Texts will be supplemented with films (available on BB).

No Russian language skills are required.

**Requirements:**
Class Participation and one in-class presentation - 40%
Weekly Position Paper (no more than 250 words) - 20%
Final Paper (3000-3500 words) - 40%
Week 0. **INTRODUCTION**


Week One. **DEVICES & CONSTRUCTIONS**


**Victor Shklovsky**, Regarding Art and Revolution (21-53); Parallels in Tolstoy (73-79); The Art of the Circus (86-88); The Old and New (pp.96-97); Regarding Merezhkovsky (98-100); Eating Fish by Cutting it With Knife (111); A Thousand Herrings (112-114). In: *Viktor Shklovsky, Knight’s Move* (1923), trans. Richard Sheldon, Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005.

Week Two. **PLOTLESS PROSE**


Week Three.  

**GRAMMAR OF POETRY**


Optional:


Week Four.  

**TEXT-MAKERS**


Optional:


Week Five.  

**RHYTHM & ANALYSIS**


Week Six. TECTONIC SHIFTS


Films: Selected issues of Kinopravda.

Week Seven. FROM NON-OBJECTIVITY TO REAL THINGS


Optional:

Week Eight.  
**THE CULTURE OF THE THING**


Boris Arvatov, Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question). *October*, Vol. 81 (Summer 1997), pp. 119-128


Optional:

Week Nine.  
**KINO-PRAVDA & KINO-THINGS**


Films: TBC.

Optional:
**Week Ten.  **

**PLASTIC ELEMENTS**


Optional:


**Week Eleven.  **

**MAN, OBJECT, & REVOLUTION**


Optional:

**Norbert Lynton,** Ch.7. “Form and the Figure” (133-155); Ch.8. “Constructivism in Inverted Commas” (156-190). In: Norbert Lynton, *Tatlin’s Tower: Monument to Revolution.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.