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 Through historical documents, fiction and film, the course will present central players of Soviet Utopia: from Vladimir Lenin to Kazimir Malevich; from Joseph Stalin to Sergei Eisenstein.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
Week 1: MODERNISM, MODERNITY, AND THE MODERN WORLD


Optional:

Week 2: REVOLUTIONARY TEXTS: MARX AND BAKUNIN


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.


Week 3: MODERNITY GONE AWRY


Optional:


Week 4: WITHOUT THE STATE: LENIN'S THEORY


Optional:


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


Optional:


Week 6. LIFE WITHOUT DIFFERENCE: STALIN’S LENINISM


Optional:


Week 7. LIVING MACHINES


Week 8: REFORGING PEOPLE


FILM: Dir. Sergei Eisenstein. Ivan the Terrible, Part 1. (1944)


Week 9: THE OPTIMISM OF NON-OBJECTIVITY


**Week 10: THE IDEOLOGY OF FORM: MONTAGE**


**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.


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

Optional:

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


**Week 11: THAW MODERN: IMAGINARY WEST**


Optional:

