Socialist and Post-Socialist Cities of Eurasia
HSSL/HSEA W4xx
Tuesday 2:10 – 4:00
Spring, 2014

Instructors:
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Description:
Beginning with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the reorganization of urban life was a central goal of Marxist-Leninist state socialism. Despite its claim to be making a radical break with the past, however, this new vision of the city was realized in practice through interaction with earlier urban forms, and the legacy of socialist urbanity continues to be felt in the physical spaces and daily lives of current post-Soviet and post-communist metropolises. This course examines the “socialist city” from its origins in the early USSR, through its transformations across time and space in Eastern Europe and East Asia, down to the present day. Our definition of “Eurasia” therefore extends beyond the former Soviet space to include cities in socialist and post-socialist societies such as China, East Germany, Poland, Mongolia, and North Korea. The course will also venture as far afield as Havana, Brasilia, Mexico City, and New York, considering the socialist city as an experiment in urban living carried out in various times and places well outside the former socialist “bloc.” These cities will be studied through a variety of sources across several disciplines, including history, literature, film, art and architecture, anthropology and geography. The spring course continues with the Global Scholars Program Summer Workshop 2014, “Contemporary Cities of Eurasia: Berlin, Moscow, Ulan Bator, Beijing.” Students are expected to enroll in both courses.

Assignments:
10% class attendance and participation in online and class discussions
45% one essay on a particular city text or texts (10-12 pages each in length)
45% final exam

Required texts: The books listed below are available for purchase at Book Culture (536 West 112 St., between Broadway and Amsterdam). Whether you buy or borrow, please use the editions of the books listed below. The rest of the readings will be posted on www.courseworks.columbia.edu

Walter Benjamin, Moscow Diary (Harvard University Press, 1986)
Andrei Platanov, Happy Moscow (NYRB Classics, 2012)
Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (University of Chicago, 2005)
Lao She, *Rickshaw Boy* (Harper Perennial, 2010 [1937])
Ma Jian, *Beijing Coma* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008)

**Columbia College Honor Code**

The Columbia College Student Council, on behalf of the whole student body, has resolved that maintaining academic integrity is the preserve of all members of our intellectual community—including and especially students.

As a consequence, all Columbia College students will now make the following pledge:

We, the undergraduate students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor.

In addition, all Columbia College students are committed to the following honor code:

I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.

**Course Outline**

**January 21. Introduction: What is/was the Socialist City?**

Lewis Mumford, “What is a City?” and “Introduction” to *The Culture of Cities*
George Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
David M. Smith, “The Socialist City,” in Gregory Andrusz et al eds, *Cities after Socialism*

**January 27. The Socialist City in Time and Space**

Films: Bed and Sofa (1927)
   The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks (1924)

**February 4. Moscow: The Proletarian Capital**

Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*
Karl Schlogel, *Moscow 1937*, chapter 2 “Moscow as a Construction Site: Stalin’s General Plan in Action,” and chapter 31, “America, America: The Other New World”

Visit to New York City Hall and Rockefeller Center

**February 11. Beneath the Socialist City**

Platanov, *Happy Moscow*

Film: Happy Moscow

**February 18. The Postwar City**

Konrad, *The City Builder*

February 25. *Lviv*

Guest lecture by Tarik Amar
Reading TBA

**March 5. Beijing: Remaking the Imperial City**

Wu, *Remaking Beijing*, chapters 1 - 3
Simon Leys, *Chinese Shadows* (excerpts)
Lao She, *Rickshaw Boy*

Film: The Blue Kite (1993)

**March 11. Berlin: Divided City of the Cold War**

Broadbent and Hake, *Berlin Divided City*

Film: Divided Heaven (1963)
March 17: SPRING RECESS

March 25: Pyongyang: The Last Totalitarian City?


March 31: Revolutionary Havana

Searpaci et al, Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis, chapters 3 – 6

April 2: Beyond the Bloc: The (Post-) Socialist City as a Global Project

Guest lecture by Reinhold Martin
Reading TBA

April 8: The Collapse of Communism and the Post-Socialist City

Peter Marcuse, Missing Marx (excerpts)

Ivan Szelenyi, “Cities under Socialism – and After,” from Cities after Socialism


April 16. Beijing and Shanghai after 1989: Contradictions of Communist Capitalism

Wu, Remaking Beijing, chapters four and five
Ma Jian, Beijing Coma

Film: Beijing Bicycle (2001)

April 22. Astana and Ashgabat: The New Post-Soviet Cities of Central Asia
Saparmurat Niyazov, *Rukhnama: Reflections on the Spiritual Values of the Turkmen* (excerpts)

April 29. Course Conclusion – Moscow Revisited

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, chapter 8: “Moscow, the Russian Rome”
Bruce Grant, “New Moscow Monuments, or, States of Innocence
[http://as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2407/2001--grant--monuments.pdf](http://as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2407/2001--grant--monuments.pdf)

**Film: Shpion (2011)**

Discussion of Summer 2014 final papers