

Studies in Literature and the Other Arts

The Russian Avant-Garde

CSLC 545, 22072, Spring 2013, Tuesdays, 2:00-4:50 pm, VKC 260

The focus of the course is on the constellation of artists and writers who constituted what is now called the Russian avant-garde; while the time-frame is ca. 1890-ca. 1935, the emphasis is on the years just before and after WWI. The course is synthetic and advances by examination of particular ideas and isms as well as by familiar names and masterpieces. While, inevitably, certain individuals and concepts remain central (e.g. Kandinsky and abstraction, Malevich and Suprematism. Rodchenko and Constructivism), the course also treats of subjects not generally investigated in surveys of this kind (e.g. material culture, experimental dance, Theosophy). Every attempt will be made to place the Russian achievement within an international context, e.g. vis-à-vis French Cubism and Italian Futurism.

A primary aim is to undertake comparative analyses which pertain to the disciplines of painting, poetry, and performance during the period ca. 1890-ca. 1935. Students, therefore, will be expected to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the avant-garde and to manipulate formal methods which can take account of both poetical and painterly experiment. To this end, most lessons will accommodate a concrete parallel, a member of the class having been invited to present his or her findings regarding a pre-assigned, relevant topic.



Alexander Rodchenko, *Kino-Eye* film poster (1924).

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