

Queens College CUNY
Department European Languages and Literatures
Russian 285 The Russian Silver Age and *Avant-Garde*

Section 01: Class Meetings: M/W, 10:15AM-11:50AM
3 hours, 3 credits
Prereq.: ENGL 110.
Queens Hall 245G

Professor Svetlana Cheloukhina
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Office hours: MW, 12:00PM-1:00PM
or by appointment

Course Description

An introduction to some of the works of the most important Russian writers, poets, artists, and cultural activists of the beginning of the twentieth century. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of literary and cultural trends, such as Symbolism, Acmeism, Formalism, Futurism, and *Avant-Garde*.

This course will study an outstanding time period in the history of Russian twentieth-century literature, culture, and arts (approx., late 1890s - late 1920s), known as the Silver Age and the Russian *avant-garde*, as its continuation. From the *fin de siècle* until the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Silver Age had produced a constellation of brilliant names known for their incomparable literary and artistic creations. Manifested in many creative forms and in numerous spheres of artistic activity, including literature, visual arts, theatre, music, architecture, and cinema, the Silver Age and the Russian *avant-garde* have both made a long-lasting impact both in Russia and outside its borders. The goal of this course is to examine the most known examples of the literary and artistic works related to this time from both theoretical and practical angles, in order to define the importance of this period and to determine its influence on Russian and the world culture. This will be done by reading and analyzing a variety of literary and critical texts and by looking at the most profound examples of visual arts, as well as theatrical productions, musical, and cinematic masterpieces, and in order to examine their aesthetic, social, historic, and psychological values. Placing these works within historical and cultural context will allow students to comprehend in full the events and personalities and to relate them to the epoch. The goal is also to help students understand Russian literature and culture as a discipline, as well as to provide them with a general orientation in the Russian studies.

Readings, discussions, exams and essays will be in English. This course will be taught online, asynchronously, via the Blackboard.

The course satisfies the LIT requirement of the QC option for the PATHWAYS. It also counts towards the requirements for the major or minor in Russian.

Required Textbooks

Ordered at the QC bookstore, also available on Amazon.com:

Bowlit, John E. *Moscow and St. Petersburg: Art, Life and Culture of the Russian Silver Age*. The Vendome Press, NY, 2008;
_____. ed. and transl. *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934*. Thames and Hudson, 1988.

Required Readings

Abstracts from the following books and articles will be posted in the *Course Materials* as electronic copies (E):
Kahn, Andrew; Lipovetsky, Mark; Reyfman, Irina, and Sandler, Stephanie. *A History of Russian Literature*. Oxford, 2018;
Terras, Victor. *Poetry of the Silver Age: The Various Voices of Russian Modernism*. Dresden UP, 1998;
Handbook of Russian Literature. Yale University Press, 1990;
Stone, Jonathan. *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature*, Scarecrow Press, 2012 (e-book at the Rosenthal Library);
The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader, ed. by Dennis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012;
Additional required readings – TBA

Recommended Readings

Sirotkina, Irina and Roger Smith. *The Sixth Sense of the Avant-Garde: Dance, Kinaesthesia and the Arts in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017
Dobrenko, E. A., and Marina Balina, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to 20th-Century Russian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Gasparov, B., Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, eds. *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
Hutchings, Stephen C. *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Learning Outcomes

Specific to this course:

Our course will concentrate on the critical reading, textual analysis, critical writing, discussion, and debate. Upon a successful completion of this course you will be able to:

- LO 1. Learn about the impact and influence of the Russian Silver Age and *avant-garde*, read and analyze selected stories, poems, view and discuss examples of visual art, music, ballets, and analyze critical materials pertaining to this literary-cultural phenomenon from the cultural, historic and literary critical perspectives;
- LO 2. Comprehend the characters and events presented in these works from cultural, literary, and historical standpoints;
- LO 3. Improve your critical skills through close engagement with the primary sources and make your own conclusions about these works, their characters, the events described in the texts and presented in various art forms;
- LO 4. Appreciate cultural, historical, class, and gender differences as reflected in these works;
- LO 5. Formulate informed questions and hypotheses;
- LO 6. Use your knowledge to make your own conclusions pertaining to studied topics;
- LO 7. Expand your understanding of the Silver age, the *avant-garde* in its many forms, and Russian studies, in particular, and of the world culture, in general.

This course satisfies the following two Queens College General Education criteria:

- QC 1: Address how, in the discipline (or disciplines) of the course, data and evidence are construed and knowledge is acquired; that is, how questions are asked and answered.
- QC 2: Position the discipline(s) in the liberal arts curriculum and the larger society.

In Addition, this QC College Option LIT course satisfies the following four learning outcomes:

LIT 1: Understand and be able to express the advantages of reading literature.

LIT 2: Engage in the practice of reading.

LIT 3: Appreciate different genres, including narratives, poetry, essays, or drama in their original language or in English translation.

LIT 4: Through discussion and writing, develop and improve upon skills used in understanding and appreciating literature.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and active participation in informed discussions are deemed vital for this course.

Attendance will be taken each class period and together with participation will determine a significant portion of your grade. More than two absences may negatively affect your participation grade.

A reasonable excuse should be provided by email or in person prior to your absence unless it is an emergency.

In either case, valid documentation will be required before an absence is considered excused.

Grading Policy

Evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- active participation in class discussions - 15%,
- paper #1 - 15 %,
- paper #2 - 20%,
- oral presentation – 5%,
- midterm - 20%,
- final exam - 25%.

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows (in accordance with QC Undergraduate Grade Equivalences):

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59

College Resources

All students should be aware of the Writing Center in 229 Kiely Hall, which offers feedback and support to student writers. Students who need ongoing support for their writing should set up a “standing” weekly appointment for tutoring at the Writing Center. Students who want help on a specific assignment or for a particular problem can stop by the Writing Center or call 718-997-5676 to schedule a one-hour drop-in session. Students may also submit work online using the Center’s e-tutoring option. More information is available at the website: <http://writingatqueens.qc.cuny.edu/the-writing-center/>.

Students with disabilities that may require accommodation or additional support should register with the Office of Special Services in 111 Frese Hall:

<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/StudentLife/services/specialserv/Pages/default.aspx>

Description of Assignments and Exams

Readings

Read the assigned texts before coming to class. Keep a little ahead of the reading assignments in order to be prepared to take part and to fully benefit from what is said in class. Be sure to set aside sufficient time for the substantial reading required.

Doing well in the course means reading critically and engaging thoughtfully with the texts and our discussion of them. Reading critically involves (1) considering the text in its historical, biographical and cultural context, (2) asking yourself questions about content and being prepared to respond in class to questions about content, (3) examining your personal response to issues that arise in the text, (4) identifying the main ideas of the text and of class discussion and restating them in your own words, (5) evaluating the author's argument in the text, and (6) comparing and contrasting the author's treatment of a given subject in different works.

Discussions

Following the instructor's lecture presentation in the beginning of a class, much of class time will be spent in class discussion of the reading assignments. Discussions are very important components of this course. Your participation in the discussion is important; therefore, your attendance is required. During the first class, there will be an introductory discussion, during which the students will introduce themselves. Literary discussions throughout the semester will be based on the course readings. Both the in-class discussions and those continued on the discussion board (on the course site on the Blackboard, if assigned) are a place where students can demonstrate their understanding and their knowledge of the subject, their ability to analyze the literary works and to prove their arguments. Students are expected to participate in each a discussion in order to demonstrate their knowledge of the material and their active engagement in this course.

How to prepare for a discussion:

- Read the assigned materials, including stories, instructor's lecture and critical materials from the textbook or posted in the *Course Materials*;
- Answer instructor's questions provided in advance;
- On the Blackboard – discussion board (if assigned): read all posts made by other classmates;
- Comment on your classmates' posts;
- Demonstrate a good and excellent knowledge of the stories, lectures, and readings;
- Show the ability to analyze literary characters and to compare and contrast the ideas, expressed by different authors;
- Proofread your posts and comments - please do not "text," use the literary language instead. The requirements of LIT 1-4, QC 1, 2, LO 1-7 will be met.

Papers

Two papers of critical analysis and commentary on the texts will be assigned.

Requirements for each essay: three pages long *minimum* - four pages *maximum* each essay, typewritten, double-spaced, Time New Roman 12, standard margins (total 6-8 pages for two essays). These essays are not to be about the author or things external to the text. They should reflect your own careful reading and analytical reaction to the texts and related class discussion. They should be given brief informative titles, indicating the content, must be well-written, with clear arguments and use of quotations, and must represent your own analysis of the stories or poems included in this exam. The paper structure must include the introduction, main part, conclusion, and may also include a select bibliography. In the introduction, you should unfold an *argument* in which you make a claim about the assigned topic/question. In the main part, you continue with explanation of your reasons for believing your claim, and support (back up) your reasons with evidence in the form of quotations from the course texts. You are not required to use any outside sources to write your essays, but if you do consult a secondary source (e.g. for historical information), be sure to cite it, preferably in Chicago format: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/1/>. You can also follow the guidelines for papers (including bibliographic entries) elaborated in The MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. (If you are reading the text in translation, always indicate the translator in addition to the author.) The language in which you write need not be excessively formal - in fact, the closer you can stick to your "natural," everyday voice, the better - but it should be carefully proofread to make sure that it says what you want it to say; that your sentences are clear and grammatically sound; that the logic of your transitions from

sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph is made clear to the reader (who should never have to read your mind); and that it conforms to the basic expectations of standard written English. In the end, you should lay out your conclusions about what you have written, including the statement on how this topic is related to other readings completed in this course. Keep a copy of papers submitted for your protection. Late papers will be accepted in the case of a documented health issue. Papers must be delivered in class or via e-mail on or by the due date (TBA). The requirements of LO 1-7, LIT 3,4 will be met.

Oral Presentation

During the first two classes, an oral presentation on a specific topic/questions will be assigned to each student (or to a group of students) for a certain date. This presentation should be 10-15 minutes long (equal approximately to 3-4 typewritten pages) and should represent student's own analysis of the work under the discussion. It may also be done as a PowerPoint presentation. Absence during a scheduled presentation will result in the grade 0% for this assignment. The requirements of LIT 1-4, QC 1, 2, LO 1-7 will be met.

Exams

The midterm exam will consist of short answer questions (including definitions of key terms) and commentary on selected key passages from the texts.

Preparation for the mid-term: This file will be posted in the folder *Examinations* in advance.

Exam content (non-cumulative) will be based on the works and critical materials studied before the mid-term examination. The requirements of LIT 1,3, LO 1-7 will be met.

The final exam will include essay questions and commentary on key passages.

Preparation for the final exam: This file will be posted in the folder *Examinations* in advance.

Exam content (cumulative) will cover all the material read in the course.

Exams can be made up only in the case of documented illness or circumstances. The requirements of LIT 1,3, LO 1-7 will be met.

Policy on Plagiarism

Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. If a case of cheating or plagiarism is detected, it will be reported to the Departmental Chair and then to the College Academic Integrity Officer in the Office of the Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Affairs for the due process and a possible disciplinary action. According to the *QC (Revised) Academic Integrity Policy*, "Students found in violation of the Revised Academic Integrity Policy can face both academic and disciplinary sanctions." Like any form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism can result in a failing grade in the course and further disciplinary action such as suspension or dismissal from the College. Each course assignment must be your own individual work. In writing papers or exams, indeed, in all class-work, you must document direct quotations, paraphrases, information and ideas.

Feedback to Students

Feedback on your grades, participation, assignments and exams will be provided upon completion of each assignment and/or upon your request in person or via the email. Please visit me during my office hours, call and/or email me at svetana.cheloukhina@qc.cuny.edu, if you have any questions about the course content or about your course standing.

Course Calendar

Abbreviations:

JB - Bowlt, John E. *Moscow and St. Petersburg: Art, Life and Culture of the Russian Silver Age*. The Vendome Press, NY, 2008

JBA - ____ed. and transl. *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934*. Thames and Hudson, 1988

AK - Kahn, Andrew; Lipovetsky, Mark; Reyfman, Irina, and Sandler, Stephanie. *A History of Russian Literature*. Oxford, 2018

VT - Terras, Victor. *Poetry of the Silver Age: The Various Voices of Russian Modernism*. Dresden UP, 1998

VTH - *Handbook of Russian Literature*. Yale University Press, 1990

JS - Stone, Jonathan. *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature*, Scarecrow Press, 2012 (e-book at the Rosenthal Library)

DI - *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Dennis G. Ioffe and Frederick H. White. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012

AR – electronic copies of some additional readings, provided by professor, placed in the folder *Course Materials*.

Class Meeting	Day & Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments	Objectives/ Criteria Met
1	Mon., Jan.27, 20XX	Introductory lecture. Syllabus. General Requirements and Expectations. Students' oral presentations assigned. Film abstracts - TBA	Throughout semester: Reading assignment for the following class - see topic. Discussion: questions posted on the Bb. Students' oral presentations on assigned topics.	LIT 1, QC 1,2 LIT 1, 2,3, for all reading assignments LO 1-6 for all students' presentations QC 1,2 Addressed in discussion throughout semester
2	Wed., Jan.29, 20XX	Artistic, cultural, and literary movements in the early twentieth-century in Russia. Defining the Russian Silver Age and <i>avant-garde</i> .	JB , "Introduction," pp. 9-32; "A Double-Headed Eagle: Russia, Land of Paradox," 33-65; AK , "Introduction. The Shape of the Period;" "Institutions: Defining the Silver Age," pp. 523-528 (E)	
3	Mon., Feb. 3, 20XX	Realism and expressionism in the late 19 th - early 20 th -century Russian literature. Chekhov and	Anton Chekhov, "The Darling" (E) William Boyd, "Brief Encounters" ("The Guardian,"	

		Gorky.	October 2, 2004 - on Chekhov's short stories - E) Svetlana Evdokimova, "The Darling: Femininity Scorned and Desired," in <i>The Russian Twentieth-Century Short Story: A Critical Companion</i> . Ed. and with an introduction by Lyudmila Parts, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009, 2-11 (E) . Maxim Gorky, "Twenty-Six and One" (E) Ivan Strannik on Maxim Gorky (E)	
5	Mon., Feb. 10:	Moscow and St. Petersburg-Petrograd in the <i>fin-du-siècle</i> .	JB : "A Double-Headed Eagle: Russia, Land of Paradox," 33-65;	
6	Wed., Feb. 12:	College is closed. No classes		
7	Mon., Feb. 17:	College is closed. Presidents' Day.		
8	Wed., Feb. 19:	Philosophical concepts of Russian Modernism	"Azure Heights, Sapphire Depths: Philosophical Concepts of the Russian Silver Age," 65-98; Teffi, "Black Iris" (E) ; William Grimes, "Compared to Chekhov, Colette and Now Sedaris." <i>The New York Times</i> , Dec. 12, 2014 (E) . More readings – TBA.	
9	Mon., Feb. 24:	The Death of the Old World. Decadence and Symbolism.	JB - "The Shock of the New: Technology Science, Engineering," 99-128; "The Style <i>Moderne</i> : Russian Refractions of <i>Art Nouveau</i> ," 129-160; "Flowers, Flowers to Cover the Tomb! Blooms of Decadence," 201-222;	
10	Wed., Feb. 26:	Symbolist poetry and prose. "Stray Dog" Cabaret.	VT – Introduction, 1-8; Symbolism, 9-15 (E) . Zinaida Hippus, "Hippus," incl. poems, 63-76 (E) . Viktor Annenskii (E) Valerii Briusov (E)	

			Alexander Blok(E)	
11	Mon., March 2:	Symbolist poetry and prose, cont.	Paper 1 is due VT – Fedor Sologub, “Sologub,” incl. poems, 32-47; “The Invoker of the Beast” (E) ; Andrei Bely, “Bely,” incl. poems, 105-117	Paper LO 1-7, LIT 1-4
12	Wed., March 4:	Symbolist Poetry and Prose, <i>cont.</i>	VT – Alexander Blok, “Blok,” incl. poems, 118-144 (E) ; Alexei Remizov, “The Little Devil” (E) .	
13	Mon., March 9:	Visual Arts, Ballet and Theatre. Film / ballet abstracts	JB - “The World of Art”: Sergei Diagilev and His Circle,” 161- 200; JB - “Body Art: Ballet, Theatre, Cabaret, Nudism,” 223-294.	
14	Wed., March 11:	Post-symbolism. Acmeism.	VT – “Acmeism,” 145-148; Nikolai Gumilev, “Gumilyev,” incl. poems, 149-158; Anna Akhmatova, “Akhmatova,” incl. poems, 159-183; Osip Mandelshtam, “Mandelstam,” incl. poems, 184-218.	
15	Mon., March 16:	Acmeists-Adamists.	JB - “Aethetes and Barbarians: <i>Apollo</i> and the Suicide of Art,” 295-318. Vladimir Narbut, poems (E); Mikhail Zenkevich, poems (E).	
16	Wed., March 18:	Russian Futurism.	Paper 2 is due DI – Vladimir Markov, “The Hileia,” 21-53; Elena Basner, “The Phenomenon of David Burluyk in the History of the Russian Avant-Garde Movement,” 150-169. VT – “Futurism,” 219-224; Velimir Khlebnikov, “Khlebnikov,” incl. poems,	Paper LO 1-4, LIT 1-4

			<p>225-240;</p> <p>Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Mayakovsky," incl. poems, 241-266;</p> <p>Futurist manifestos: "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste" (E).</p>	
17	Mon., March 23:	Futurism, <i>cont.</i> Imagism. "Peasant Poets"	<p>VT – on Boris Pasternak, "Pasternak," incl. poems, 267-288;</p> <p>Excerpts from Pasternak's early prose – TBA;</p> <p>Elena Guro, "The Life Passes" (E).</p> <p>Sergei Esenin, Nikolai Kliuev - poems – TBA.</p>	
18	Wed., March 25:	<p>Before the War: 1913.</p> <p>Eroticism in the early twentieth-century Russian literature.</p> <p>Russian gay literature.</p>	<p>JB – "The Year 1913: Crossroads of Past and Future," 319-346;</p> <p>AL - Fedor Sologub, "Tsarina of Kisses," 69-76 (E);</p> <p>Mikhail Kuzmin, "The Wings," abstracts – TBA.</p>	
19	Mon., March 30:	Apocalypse and The Birth of the New World: World War I and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.	<p>JB – "Apocalypse Now: War, Revolution and Cultural Centrifuge," 347-373;</p> <p>DI – Boris Grois, "The Birth of Socialist Realism from the Spirit of the Russian Avant-Garde," 250-276 (E);</p> <p>JBA - Anatolii Lunacharsky, "Revolution and Art," 196-198;</p> <p>Alexander Blok, "The Twelve" (E).</p> <p>More readings – TBA</p>	

20	Wed., April 1:	The Russian Literary <i>Avant-Garde</i> . OBERIU, the last <i>avant-garde</i> poetic group (1925-1929).	Daniil Kharms – poems and prose, translated by E. Ostashevsky (E) Nikolai Zabolotsky - poems translated by Daniel Weissbort - (E) S.Cheloukhina, abstracts from <i>The Poetic Universe of Nikolai Zabolotsky</i> , 2006 – TBA (E) ;	
21	Mon., April 6:	Review and preparation for the midterm	No presentations scheduled	
22	Wed., April 8:	Midterm exam	Midterm exam	QC 1,2; LO 1-7
23	April 9-17	<i>Spring Recess</i>	<i>Spring Recess</i>	
24	Mon., April 20	The Russian Literary <i>Avant-Garde</i> . OBERIU, the last <i>avant-garde</i> poetic group (1925-1929).	DI – “Some Philosophical Positions in Some OBERIU Texts (translator’s preface) by Eugene Ostashevsky,” 314-356 Aleksandr Vvedensky - poems and prose	
25	Wed., April 22:	Abstract and <i>Avant-Garde</i> Visual Art: Constructivism, Cubism, Suprematism.	JBA – Vasilii Kandinsky, “Content and Form,” 17-22; David Burlyuk, “Cubism (Surface-Plane),” 69-76; Some exhibitions, Internet and other resources from the Guggenheim Museum and MoMA, NYC.	
26	Mon., April 27:	Abstract and <i>Avant-Garde</i> Visual Art: Constructivism, Cubism, Suprematism.	JBA - Ilya Zdanevich and Mikhail Larionov, “Why We Paint Ourselves: A Futurist Manifesto,” 79-86; Vladimir Tatlin.	
27	Wed., April 29:	Abstract and <i>Avant-Garde</i> Visual Art: Constructivism, Cubism, Suprematism.	Kazimir Malevich, “From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism,” 116-135.	

28	Mon., May 4:	<i>Avant-Garde</i> Theatre and Cinema.	DI – Frederick H. White, “Eisenstein: A Short Biography,” 407-419. Film abstracts from “The Battleship Potemkin.”	
29	Wed., May 6:	<i>Avant-Garde</i> Theatre and Cinema, <i>cont.</i>	AR – From Acmeism to Avant-garde: New Theatre. Mikhail Zenkevich. “Altimeter” and “The Triumph of Aviation”	
30	Mon., May 11:	Russian Silver Age and Avant-garde and the World Literature and Culture. Conclusions.	Last presentation. JB – Epilogue, 374-375.	
31	Wed., May 13:	Final class. Course review. Preparation and for the final exam.	DI - Dennis Ioffe, “Concluding Addendum: The Tradition of Experimentation in Russian Culture and the Russian <i>Avant-Garde</i> ,” 454-467.	
32	Monday, May 18, 1.45 PM -3.45 PM	Final Exam		LIT 1,3 LO 1-7