Traditionally, the life in the soviet period is perceived as being polarized between the ideological constraints imposed by the state authorities, on the one hand, and acts of popular resistance by dissidents, on the other. In this course, we will approach soviet life from a different point of view. By looking at everyday practices in socialist countries, we will try to understand how communist ideology was ‘translated’ into the language of material objects, spatial arrangements, and rituals of consumption. As in any act of translation, success of these everyday renditions of the dominant political and economic frameworks involved substitution and adaptation.

Ideological slogans and party directives were not just blindly followed; rather they were modified in accordance with people’s habits, life-styles, and expectations. What was lost in these interpretative acts of the “original message”? What was added to it? How was this “message” transformed, adopted and/or subverted? Through reading primary accounts, fiction, film, and academic studies of Soviet daily life we will analyze the cultural logic of socialism that still retains its legacy in a large part of the former Soviet world.

Requirements:

1. Class participation and weekly position papers – 30%
2. Midterm paper (Oct.27) – 30%
3. Final paper (Dean’s Day) – 40%

Film Screening: TBA

Required books:

September 11.

**Introduction**

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September 16, 18.

**Week 1: MODERNISM, MODERNITY, AND THE MODERN WORLD**

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Optional:  
**Charles Taylor.** Two Theories of Modernity.  

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September 23, 25.

**Week 2: IDENTITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND SELF-MAKING**

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**Charles Taylor.** Modernity and Identity.  

**Michel Foucault.** The Hermeneutic of the Subject.  

**Serguei Oushakine.** The Flexible and the Pliable: Disturbed Organisms of Soviet Modernity.  

**Jochen Hellbeck.** Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlybnui (1931–1939).  

**Stepan Filippovich Podlubny.** Diary.  

**Film:** *Father* (Apa, dir. István Szabó. 1966).

Optional reading:  
**Stuart Hall.** The Question of Cultural Identity.  


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September 30, October 2.
Week 3: THE EVERYDAY: THEORY AND (SOME) PRACTICE

Michel de Certeau. General Introduction; Chapter I: A Common Place: Ordinary Language.

Nancy Ries. Anthropology and the Everyday, From Comfort to Terror.


Slavenka Draculić. Make-Up and Other Crucial Questions; On Doing Laundry; Forward to the Past.

October 7, 9.

Week 4: NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. The home as symbolic environment

Pierre Mayol. The Neighbourhood; Propriety; Private Spaces.

Victor Buchli. Revolution and the Restructuring of the Material World; Soviet Hygiene and the Battle against Dirt and Petit-Bourgeois Consciousness.

Stephen Kotkin. Living Space and the Stranger’s Gaze.


Optional:

October 14, 16.

Week 5: EMBODYING THE REGIME


**Film:** White Palms (Fehér tenyér, dir. Szabolcs Hajdu, 2006)

Optional:


October 21, 23.

**Week 6: TRAUMATIZED BODIES OF SOCIALISM**


**FALL RECESS**

November 4, 6.

**Week 7: OUTSIDEDNESS: PRIVATE LIFE IN PUBLIC**


Film: Vertical (Vertikal’, dirs. Boris Durov, Stanislav Govorukhin, 1966)

Optional:


November 11, 13

Week 8: COLLECTIVE JOYS


Film: Circus (Tsirk, dir. Grigorii Aleksandrov, 1936).

Optional reading:


November 18, 20.

Week 9: THE WEST OF SOCIALISM


Optional


November 25 (Nov.27 – Thanksgiving)
Week 10: REGIMES OF CONSUMPTION


Optional:


December 2, 4.

Week 11 OBJECTS AND PEOPLE


Film: *Good bye, Lenin!* (Dir. Wolfgang Becker, 2003)

Optional:

December 9, 11.

Week 12: SOCIALISM WITH STYLE

**Pierre Bourdieu.** Class Taste and Life-Style; Conclusion. In: Bourdieu, Distinction…, pp.257 – 317; 466 – 485.
