

O s i p M a n d e l s t a m : T h e M o d e r n i s t P a r a d i g m & t h e R u s s i a n E x p e r i e n c e S l a v i c 272



The focus of the seminar is Osip Mandelstam's *oeuvre* as an expression of Russian modernism and the Russian (and Soviet) experience; the chief aim is a close reading of his poetry and prose *in context* (contemporary poetry, cultural trends and schools, modernization and politics, criticism and scholarship – and, of course, twentieth-century experience). We shall explore: Mandelstam's background in Russian Symbolism (Ivanov, Bely, Blok, Annensky, Kuzmin); Acmeism/Futurism; Mandelstam's reception in contemporary letters, scholarship, and history; the role of poetry in modern Russian culture and civil religion (poet as citizen and martyr); Mandelstam's Acmeism and the cultural paradigm of Soviet civilization; construction of a poet's biography and contemporary cultural theory (sociology, psychoanalysis, Formalism, Bakhtin); Mandelstam and the Russian/Soviet/post-Soviet experience (1900s to Sots-Art, Timur Kibirov, Sergei Gandlevsky).

Editions: With the exception of a few translations of Mandelstam's prose and criticism, and one short biography in English (at the bookstore), the seminar will rely on the editions placed on reserve at Green and the Slavic Department library. A selected bibliography is to be distributed in class.

Open to graduate students and advanced undergraduates who are familiar with and have a strong interest in Russian literary history, Russian and/or modernist poetry.

Language: knowledge of Russian (three ears or equivalent) is highly desirable but not absolutely necessary.

Requirements:

1. A short essay on a poem (3-5 pp. or 800-1200 words, due Oct. 18)
2. A short essay on a prose piece (approx. 800-1200 words, due Nov. 8)
3. A review of a recent monograph on Mandelstam (800-1200 words, due Nov. 29).

NB: Please note that session VIII will be rescheduled for Monday or Tuesday, Nov. 15 or 16.

*Session
& Date* *Readings and Discussion Topics*

I. Introduction: Mandelstam and the Modernist Paradigm
Sept. 22 Chronology and Periodization

- ❑ Editions and Publication; Memoirs and Scholarship; Approaches to Mandelstam
- ❑ Mandelstam and the Modernist Paradigm, Western and Russian
- ❑ Камень. Первая книга стихов (1913). From Symbolism to Post-Symbolism

Reading: Poems «Звук осторожный...», «Дано мне тело», «Silentium» (1910), «Айя-София», «Notre Dame».

II. **Mandelstam's Early Poetry and Prose in the Context of Russian Modernism and the 1905 Revolution, Revolt Against Symbolism**
Sept. 29

- ❑ *Bexu* (*The Signposts*, ed. M.O. Gershenzon)
- ❑ Crisis of Symbolism (Briusov, Bely, Vyach. Ivanov, Blok, Kuzmin)
- ❑ Цех поэтов (Poets' Guild) and Emergence of Acmeism (Gumilev, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Zenkevich, Narbut)
- ❑ Futurist and Acmeist manifestoes

Reading: Mandelstam's first books of poetry (*Камень*, 1913 and 1916);

Essays: «Франсуа Виллон» «Утро Акмеизма», «О собеседнике»

Background: Symbolism and Its Manifestoes

III. **Patterns of Identity and Cultural Archetypes. A Comparative Perspective: Mandelstam, Akhmatova, Gumilev, Mayakovsky**
Oct. 6

Reading: Камень (the second book of poetry, 1916)

Essay «Пушкин и Скрябин»

Selections of the new "city" poems from Akhmatova, Gumilev, Mayakovsky

Background: City in Briusov, Blok, Bely, and Annensky

IV. **Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny: Mandelstam *Tristia* (War, Revolution, and Uses of Antiquity)**
Oct. 13

Reading: *Tristia* (1921)

Reading: «Rome» poems, «Зверинец», «Когда октябрьский нам готовил временщик», The poems of *Tristia* («Сумерки свободы», «Декабрист», «Исаакий под фатой молочной белизны»

Essays: «Петр Чаадаев», «Слово и культура», «О природе слова»

Optional: monographs by Broyde, Ronen, and Taranovsky; *A Coat of Many Colors*.

Timenchik, «Заметки об акмеизме» I, II, and III

Oct. 18 First paper (analysis of a poem) is due

V. **1921-25: Discontinuities and Conjunctions. Contemporary Reception. Mandelstam and Futurism Revisited**

Oct. 20

Poetry: «Концерт на вокзале», «Век», «Грифельная ода», «1 января 1924»

Read/Review: O. Ronen, Ronen, O. *An Approach to Mandel'stam*. Jerusalem, 1984.

VI. **Mandelstam the Critic: *On Poetry* (1928), the Puzzle of Alexander Blok , and a Conversation About Dante (Dialogue with the Formalists and Bakhtin's Circle)**

Oct. 27

Read/Review: *О поэзии*, «Армия поэтов», «Конец Романа», *Разговор о Данте* (*On Poetry*, «An Army of Poets», «The End of the Novel», *Conversation About Dante*)

VII. **Memories and Surrender: The Noise of Time and The Egyptian Stamp (Mandelstam, Konstantin Vaginov, Zoshchenko, Ilf and Petrov and Self-Image of Russian Intelligentsia)**

Nov. 3

Reading: *Шум времени, Египетская марка, Четвертая Проза*

Nov. 8 Second paper (analysis of a prose piece) is due

VIII. *Moscow Notebooks*: Mandelstam and the Culture of the First Five-Year Plan

Nov. 10

Prose: Путешествие в Армению (*Journey to Armenia*), selections

Poetry: *Московские тетради* («Еще далеко мне до патриарха», «Квартира тиха, как бумага», «На смерть Андрея Белого», «Стихи о русской поэзии», «Восьмистишия», «Мы живем, под собою не чуя страны»)

IX. Mandelstam and Stalin: The Poet Remembered

Nov. 15 Reading: Воронежские тетради (the "Ode" and the Ode Cycle)

Monday Memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam and Emma Gershtein

Nov. 22-26 - Thanksgiving Week – No Classes

Nov. 29 Book Review is due

X. **Mandelstam, Sots-Art, Timur Kibirov, Sergey Gandlevsky and the Paradigms of Soviet/Russian Experience**

Dec. 1