Wednesday, 20 February, 2013, 11 a.m.  

**Fellow Seminar**

**Birgit Beumers:**

**Special / Spatial Effects in Soviet Cinema**

This paper explores the way in which tricks and special effects inspired filmmakers to imagine flight and spaceflight. Even before the birth of cinema, artists have tried to capture the human body in motion and rising above the ground, but also the theme of flight. This interest continued with the advent of moving images in early animation: the first space flight was simulated by the master of film tricks, Georges Méliès. In the Soviet era, we see an interest in technology, but the representation of space flights remains flawed until Pavel Klushantsev developed methods and techniques in the 1950s which allowed the simulation of space flight to a level that stunned filmmakers and scientists alike. His achievements of manipulating the viewer into forming an impression of the then second-hand experience of weightlessness especially was so successful that many American B-class movements copied footage from Klushantsev’s films, while others were simply re-released. The paper places these visual experiments into the context of Soviet achievements in space flight and in film technology – at the height of the Cold War.

**Birgit Beumers** is Professor of Film Studies at Aberystwyth University, Wales. She specialises in contemporary Russian culture and has published widely on cinema and theatre. Recent publications include *A History of Russian Cinema* (2009) and, with Mark Lipovetsky, *Performing Violence* (2009); as editor, *Alexander Shiryaev, Master of Movement* (2009, with D. Robinson and V. Bocharov), *Directory of World Cinema: Russia* (2010) and *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov* (2011, with Nancy Condee). She is currently working on early Soviet animation and developments in film technology. She is editor of the online quarterly *KinoKultura* and of the scholarly journal *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*. 