In today’s post-socialist, globalized, and post-transition Eastern Europe, interrogating the category of the “Second World” will seem at best unseemly and at worst anachronistic. Eastern Europe had, with the fall of socialism, after all, achieved its decades-long dream of “rejoining” Europe on the path of progress, modernization, and civilization. However, new perspectives in East European studies, including postcolonial methodology, take to task precisely this narrative of progress and modernization at the heart of the project of “rejoining” Europe.

In this course, we will read recent interventions in definitions of world literature and global modernism as a point of departure for our analysis of East European literary masterpieces. We will seek to understand the rise of modernism in Eastern Europe as a project directly related to specific processes of modernization on the European periphery, rather than a cultural or intellectual diffusion from or imitation of West European literary models.

Recovering the category of the Second World (rather than Eastern Europe) will similarly allow us to better understand the center/ periphery relations during the Cold War. Readings include Deleuze and Guattari, Jameson, Moretti, Warwick Research Collective, and others. Literary texts we will read hail from a number of European peripheries: Albania, Poland, Russia, and former Yugoslavia.