

Czech History in Context: Narratives and Memories

Lecturer: Dr. Adéla Muchová

Course Description:

This course examines the tumultuous Czech history of the past millennium through individual and collective narratives and field study of relevant sites. Following key historical periods from the 13th to the 21st century, we will see how collective memory formed national identity as seen today. We will investigate how men and women—rulers, politicians, writers, and artists—influenced the past and constituted the present. We will follow the complex social, political, and cultural forces that shaped this region by visiting sites and memorials in public spaces, studying primary sources, and analyzing historical echoes.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

This course will enable students to explore the evolution of Czech identity and understand pivotal historical periods and figures. The students will be able to recognize and analyze the role of culture in various social landscapes and assess how history influences contemporary society through narratives and memories.

Course Requirements:

The course is available to all students without any specific prerequisites. Weekly sessions include presentations, discussions, and tours of related historical locations. All participants are expected to actively participate in discussions and site visits and engage with assigned study materials. Course assignments include a presentation, a mid-term test, and a final project.

Grading Policy:

Class participation	20%
Presentation	20%
Mid-term test	25%
Final project	35%

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

History in Context

Disciplinary framework for exploring history, society, and culture. Overview of course topics, study resources, and assignments

Week 3

The Royal Rush Hour: Kings, Gold, and Getting Official (13th Century)

Agnes of Bohemia

Bohemian royal kingdom, colonization, and settlement

Week 4

Charlie's Golden Ticket: Emperors, Universities, and a Very New Town (14th Century)

Charles IV

Holy Roman Empire, Carolingian era, prosperity, growth, religious orders, university

Week 5

The Hussite Revolution: Religious Reform and the Crucible of War (15th Century)

Jan Hus

Reformation, Hussite movement, nationalism

Week 6

Rudolf's Renaissance Rhapsody: Art, Alchemy, and a Kingdom on Edge (16th Century)

Kryštof Harant

Habsburg Empire, cultural boom, religious tensions

Week 7

The Shattered Kingdom: War, Counter-Reformation, and the Reshaping of Bohemian Society (17th Century)

Jan Amos Komenský

Thirty Years' War, social and religious transformations

Week 8

Wigs, Reforms, and Music (18th Century)

Maria Theresa

Enlightenment, state transformation, centralization, education, music

Week 9

Steam Engines and Singing in Czech: The Big National Comeback (19th Century)

František Palacký

National Revival, industrialization, cultural revival, and the struggle for autonomy

Week 10

Building a Dream, Facing a Nightmare (20th Century I.)

Karel Čapek

Czechoslovak State, Nazi Protectorate and World War II, resistance movements

Week 11

Red Star Blues and a Velvet Touchdown: Journey from East to West (20th Century II.)

Milada Horáková

Communism, Cold War, cultural dissent and resistance, Velvet Revolution

Week 12

From Velvet Divorce to Brussels and Beyond: Czechia Charts Its 21st Century Course

Václav Havel

Cultural legacy, historical knowledge, and perspectives. The Memory of Nations.

Week 13

Memory Forever

Conclusion, remarks, and evaluation

Readings:

- Bažant, Jan; Nina Bažantová, and Frances Starn (eds). *The Czech Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Demetz, Peter. *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes in the Life of a European City*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.
- Pánek, Jaroslav; Oldřich Tůma et al. *A History of the Czech Lands*. Praha: Karolinum, 2019.
- Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. London: Penguin, 2017.