

CERGE-EI and the Faculty of Humanities (FHS) at Charles University

Central Europe and its Transitions: The Czech Lands

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OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course aims to introduce students with historical and contemporary issues of Czech society and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Various Central and Eastern European countries of the former Socialist bloc up to 1989 had essentially the same political and economic system, and “recently were undergoing what is seen as a kind of transformation from a totalitarian political system to democratic pluralism and from centrally planned to a market global economy, even though there are considerable differences among them. Based on ethnographic case studies, among other academic literary and visual sources, in this course we will investigate the specific ways in which Czech society has experienced life under Communism, its overthrow during the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, the split of Czechoslovakia a few years later, and the political and economic transformation it has had since its integration into the European Union in 2004.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS-GRADING POLICY:

-Class preparation and participation: this must be the element most crucial to the student’s interest and therefore, the class’s success. Students need to read well the text assigned prior to each class. Students are expected to actively participate in all class discussions. The goal of the course is to develop analytical and critical thinking skills that enable students to understand the texts and lectures and to engage in provoking discussion and written analysis.

-Attendance policy: Students are required to attend class. Excuse medical absence requires a written document the day of return to class. UPCES program only allows one un-excuse absence.

-Grading: Throughout the course students will have weekly assignments and readings, a mid-term exam and a final research project.(see course schedule for due date). Final research paper should be 12 pages length and double-spaced. Guidelines will be given in class.

Participation/daily preparation: 20%

Mid-term exam: 40%

Final research paper and oral presentation: 40%

REQUIRED READINGS:

Package of readings classified by weeks will be available on-line and in paper.

Additional readings, as any other resource as current documentaries, doc-films or even music, will also be recommended throughout the course according to the needs and expectations of the class and any particular student's interest.

WEEKLY PROGRAM

WEEK 1

UPCES Orientation Lecture Series

Lectures and site visits on subjects of history, culture, politics, and the economies of the Czech Republic and Central Europe in order to establish a common interdisciplinary background and vocabulary for all courses.

Week 1

Introduction to the history and culture of the "Czech lands" since its origins to the present

Required reading:

Holy, Ladislav *The little Czech and the great Czech nation. National identity and the post-communist social transformation*. Cambridge University Press. 1999 (pp 61-66/185-190)

Week 2

Myth and symbols: the importance of myth, traditions and symbols in the creation of national Czech consciousness throughout history

Required reading:

Holy, Ladislav *The little Czech and the great Czech nation. National identity and the post-communist social transformation*. Cambridge University Press. 1999 (33-54)

Week 3

Collective memories & life stories. The legacy of Socialist Czechoslovakia

Required reading:

Haukanes, Haldis "Telling lives. Autobiography and history after socialism" *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 2005

Week 4

From Velvet Revolution to Velvet Divorce. Democracy and the recovering of the civil society

Required reading:

Agnew, Hugh. *The Czechs and the lands of the Bohemian Crown*. Hoover Institution Press, 2004 pp 284-307

Analysis of film-doc: *Občan Havel* (Citizen Havel). Dir by M. Janek and P. Koutecky (2008)

Weiner, R. "The Czech and Slovak Republics" in *Change in Eastern Europe*. Praeger, 1994. Pp 99-109

Week 5

Family & State: the important role of family relations in the maintenance of socialist system and in the revival of civil society

Required reading:

True, Jacqui. *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism. The Czech Republic after communism*. Columbia University Press 2003 (55-73)

Altshuler, D. "Departures from home: Czech perspectives on difference" In *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 2003

Week 6:

(Mid-Term Exams)

Week 7

Postsocialist ownership and emotions in the Czech Lands after 1989

Required reading:

Svasek, M. "Postsocialist ownership: Emotions, Power and Morality in a Czech Village" in Svasek, M *Postsocialism Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe*. Berghan Books, 2006 pp 95-115

Week 8

Globalization & mass consumption. What patterns of consuming are changing in Czech society and culture?

Required reading:

True, Jacqui. *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism. The Czech Republic after communism*. Columbia University Press 2003 (103-117)

Week 9

Health and food habits in historical and cultural context and as symbol of Czech national identity.

Required reading:

Haukanes, Haldis, "Ambivalent traditions: Transforming gender symbols and food practices in the Czech Republic, *Anthropology of East Europe*, Vol 21, n° 1, 2003

Week 10

Gender in-equalities in the workplace. What have been the changes that have impacted women in the workplace since the fall of Communism?

Required reading:

Hasková, H and Krizkova, A. "The impact of EU accession on the promotion of women and gender equality in the Czech Republic" in *Gender Politics in the expanding European Union*. Ed by Silke Roth. 2008

Vecernik, J "Work values and job attitudes in the CZ". *Czech Sociological Review*, 2006.

Week 11

The impact of Globalization and Mass Media in Czech society

Required reading:

True, Jacqui *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism. The Czech Republic after communism*. Columbia University Press 2003 (117-130)

Analysis of film-doc. The Beauty Exchange. Dir. Erika Hniková

Week 12

The construction of minorities in the multicultural social space of the Czech Republic: The Roma situation

Required reading:

Szaló, Csaba and Hamar, Eleonora "The formation of ethnic minority identities and their social inclusion" in Tomáš Sirovátka, et al. *The challenges of social inclusion. minorities and marginalised groups in Czech society*. Barrister&Principal 2006 (pp 245-265)

Week 13

Due date for final Research Paper

Oral presentations

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Agnew, H. *The Czechs and the lands of the Bohemian Crown*. Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2004

- Balibar, Étienne. *We, the People of Europe: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Barth, F. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. London: Allyn and Unwin, 1969
- Beck, U and Grande. E. *Cosmopolitan Europe*. Polity Press, 2007
- Capek, K *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*. Catbird Press, 1995 (transl by M. Henry Heim)
- Demetz, P, *Prague in Danger. The years of German occupation, 1939-45: memories and history, terror and resistance, theater and jazz, film and poetry, politics and war*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2008
- Havel. V (all his writings are relevant)
- Heiman, M. *Czechoslovakia. The state that failed*. Yale University Press, 2009
- Holy, L. *The little Czech and the Great Czech nation. National identity and the post-communist social transformation*. Cambridge University Press. 1999
- Kohák, E *Hearth and Horizon. Cultural identity and Global humanity in Czech Philosophy*. Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Prague, 2008
- Kolarová, K & Sokolová Vera. *Gender&Generation*. Litteraria Pragensia, Prague, 2007
- *Sociologický Casopis/Czech Sociological Review*. Praha (there are interesting articles)
- Sirovátka, T et al. *The Challenges of Social Inclusion. Minorities and Marginalised Groups in Czech Society*. Barrister&Principal 2006
- Soler, E and Calvo (eds) *Transiciones culturales. Perspectivas desde Europa Central y del Este (Cultural transitions. Perspectives from Central and Eastern Europe)* Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), 2016 (chapters in English and in Spanish)
- Svasek, M *Postsocialism Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe*. Berghan Books, 2006 pp 95-115
- Szczygiel. M. *Gottland*. Melville House Publishing. 2006
- True, Jacqui. *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism. The Czech Republic after Communism*. Columbia University Press 2003
- Zantovsky. M *Havel. A life*. Atlantic Books. 2014