

Central European Philosophy

Monday, 10am-1pm, room 5

Instructor: Juraj Hvorecky

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OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course introduces ways of philosophizing in Central Europe in the second half of the 20th century. The emphases are put on non-Marxist thinking and liberal Marxist ideas, opposing the dogmatic state-endorsed philosophy of the Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism. The effort will be made to underlie similarities and distinctions in ways, in which the harshness of political regimes, ever-present ideological domination, courage and personal stance of individual thinkers shaped their way of adaptation and development of the Western style of philosophizing. We will discuss the role various philosophical ideas had on the politics of the involved countries and their struggle for freedom. While this course is not supposed to be essentially focused on a role of philosophy in public life, many questions about the mutual relationship of these two domains will be debated. Discussions will take place in a general framework of possibilities of small nation-states to produce philosophical ideas that could bear their fruit worldwide.

The course will concentrate on selected philosophical writings from four different countries of the region, namely Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary and Poland. After introducing some basic notions of Marxist philosophy and its dogmatic interpretation, we will have a closer look at ways influential philosophers in the region tried to escape limitations set on them by the communist nomenclature. Twofold ways of avoiding the official line will be explored for each country. First, a liberal reading or an outright rejection of Marxism, often leading to a total exclusion from the public space, will be investigated. Second, a technical work in specific subfields of philosophy that seemingly evade the big political questions will also be followed and evaluated. While some previous familiarity with philosophical vocabulary and method on the side of the students is desirable, this course is also open to students with no previous experience with philosophy. The course is intended to serve a double role of a general introduction to philosophy of the region *and* to the very ways of philosophizing.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING POLICY:

Assignments for this course consist of a midterm (**30%** of the grade) and the final exam (**25%**), the research paper (**30%**) and your class participation (**15%**). As for the exams, midterm is an in-class essay, the final is a special format take-home. Both cover topics discussed during the term, with a heavy emphasis on readings.

The research paper should present your original approach to a topic of your choice, but your choice requires the prior approval of the instructor. You have time until the mid-term to choose the topic, and the instructor will be glad to discuss all the details and help you to search for the relevant literature. The paper is due on the last day of the term.

You are expected to attend all classes. If you are about to miss a class, prior e-mail notification is expected, but generally no more than one absence is tolerated. Because philosophy can't be learnt passively, but only by reevaluation and a critical discussion of your own opinions on the background of the material under discussion, active participation is highly coveted and students might be asked to express their opinions.

The final paper should be approximately six to eight pages long (min. 12,000 characters without spaces), double-spaced. It is crucial that you submit your final paper on time; a penalty for late submission will be assessed at 10% of the paper grade per day past due. Needless to say, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The COURSE PACKET is available on-line via the CERGE-EI web site at http://iweb.cerge-ei.cz:81/upces_data/ (Log-in and password provided by UPCES staff)

Schedule of Topics:

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 2, Febr. 22nd

Opening class

Course objectives, readings and a general outline. What is philosophy, what is Central Europe and how do they match together.

Week 3, Febr. 29th

Marxism and its dogmatic forms

What is Marxism, why it is so influential, how it penetrated Central Europe, and how it should be read

Readings: *Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, excerpts from Marx and his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

Week 4. March 7th

Later alternations in Marxism

Politics of Marxist parties, Lenin and the revolution, intellectual changes in 20th century Marxism.

Readings: *Lenin – State and the revolution, ch. V, The Economic basis of withering away of the State*

Kolakowski – Permanent vs. Transitory Aspects of Marxism

Week 5, March 14th

Liberal approaches to Marxism: Hungary

The rise of the left in the Central Europe, Georg Lukacs and his reading of Marx, revisionism and voluntarism. Marxist aesthetics

Readings: *Lukacs: Bolshevism; Healthy or Sick Art?; Art as Self-Consciousness in Man's Development*

Week 6, March 21st

Hungary continued

The revolution of 1956 and its ideological consequences

Divergences in philosophical thinking, Readings of liberal and conservative traditions in Central Europe

Readings: *Nyiri: Tradition and Bureaucratic Lore*

Week 7, April 4th

Mid-term exam

In-class essay

Week 8, April, 11th

Opposing Stalinism: The case of Czechoslovakia

Intellectual developments under the Communist regime

The thaw of the 60s, intellectual origins and reflections of Prague Spring

Readings: *Kosík: What is Central Europe?*

Week 9, April, 18th

Czechoslovakia under the Soviet occupation

The emergence of parallel philosophizing, intellectual possibilities in the confinement and open space, the legacy of Jan Patočka

Readings: *Patočka: Does history have a meaning?*

Landgrebe: Patočka

Week 10, April, 25th

Slovakia: Realism and its enemies

Confronting reality, normalization and the legacy of prison writings
Readings: *Šimečka: Letters about the nature of reality*

Week 11, May, 2nd

Polish philosophy at its best

The rise of the Lvov-Warsaw school, the relation between philosophy and logic
Readings: *Lukasiewicz: On Determinism, In Defence of Logicism*

Week 12, May, 9th

Polish Philosophy continued

Aesthetics, Philosophy of Science and Law

Readings: *Ossowska: Theories concerning Morality as a whole, Fictitious beings*
Tatarkiewicz: The Great Theory; Happiness and Time

Week 13, May, 16th

Final exam, research paper due and good bye

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Ulc, O: Some Aspects of Czechoslovak Society since 1968, *Social Forces*, 57, 2, 419-435

Smith, B. (ed.): *Philosophy and Political Change in Eastern Europe*, The Hegeler Institute, La Salle, IL, 1993

Patocka, J. *Plato and Europe*, Stanford UP, 2002

Jadacki, J. *Polish Analytical Philosophy*, Semper, Warsaw, 2009

Kusin, V. *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring*, Cambridge UP 2002

Kosík, K. *The Crisis of Modernity*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1995

Web sources:

Web page www.marxists.org

Value and Inquiry web <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series04/series-IVA.htm>

Polish Philosophy web <http://segr-did2.fmag.unict.it/~polphil/PolPhil/Schools.html>