Course title: Modern Czech Art
Course code: AHIS 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism, Global Architecture and Design
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

This combined seminar and lecture course aims to acquaint students with aspects of Central European visual culture from the modern era onwards. It will introduce major art styles and personalities in Czech modern art (from Art Nouveau's Alphonse Mucha and the pioneer of abstraction František Kupka, to contemporary provocations of David Černý). Deep changes that occurred in architecture (from Art Nouveau decoration through Functionalist utopia to deconstruction of Postmodernism) will be introduced and discussed. All artworks will be examined within their broader cultural and historical context. Students will be given the opportunity to visit many Prague galleries and museums to encounter and study the originals in detail.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- apply theoretical concepts on modern and contemporary art
- have developed independent and creative interpretative skills;
- analyze selected works of art based on direct exposure to, and personal experience with, the works; and
- be able to illustrate and assess the riches of Prague’s galleries and the city’s exteriors through direct contact and exploration, which is a part of the course.

Course Prerequisites
"Art is for everyone" (Tracy Emin - British contemporary artist), that's why this course has no specific prerequisites. Students with a deeper interest in the subject will be provided with extra readings and course materials.

Methods of Instruction

The usual structure of the course forms (with some minor exceptions) the combination of in-class lectures and out-class excursions to galleries and exploration of architectural sites. As part of the lectures, Power Point presentations will be used together with music samples and short videos. The course is based on active participation and an interactive approach. Students are encouraged to discuss the presented works of art. Working sheets, mind maps, and other creative instruments will help students to get involved. Note: Participation will be taken into account for the final grade.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Midterm Test 15%
2. Final Test 15%
3. Final Assignment (essay or project) 30%
4. Gallery Journal 10%
5. Homework Essays 10%
6. Class Participation 20%
    TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Midterm Test
Final Test

The form of the tests will be mostly essay-like with comparisons and descriptions of chosen artworks (presentation with artworks will be provided). List of question will be provided in advance. Grading scale forms part of the test template.

Final Assignment (essay or project)

a) Final essay and in-class presentation
Students are asked to submit a short research paper (app. 7-10 pages, i.e. 2000 – 2500 words) on a chosen subject.

There will be a list of recommended themes handed out in the introduction lesson, but students are strongly encouraged to come with their own suggestions.

The final paper must include a bibliography featuring books (and other sources) that are not among the required reading (minimum 3 independent sources).

Part of the evaluation is a short (5 - 10 minutes) oral presentation of each student's final essay topic. This presentation should be spoken or read and include visual aids, such as power-point presentations, photocopies, or monographs. The student is expected to provide his peers with a short written summary/handout. The papers (as well as presentations) should most importantly show students’ interest supported by careful research, ability to outline and summarize the characteristics of a chosen style, work of an artist, architect or an art group, and systematic analysis of selected key works.

b) Final project and in-class presentation

- A group of students will be responsible for organizing an art event with a contemporary Czech artist (at the CIEE premises or in the city of Prague). This participative project serves as an alternative form of the final assignments (further details and important dates will be provided at the beginning of the semester).
- Part of the evaluation is a short (5 - 10 minutes) oral presentation of the project (see “final essay” for details of presentation).

Gallery Journal

Students should also show their own initiative with visiting galleries and museums on their own. Students should keep an exhibition journal throughout the semester with a short (5-10 sentences) description of the exhibits (both Modern Czech Art field trips and independent visits) - minimum of 10 entries.

Homework Essays
There will be also two short (each approx. 1 page, min. 250 words) written homework essays aimed at acquainting students with the methods of structured description and analysis of a selected piece of art and architecture.

Class Participation

- Handouts and required readings (as well as one presentation for a selected reading) are compulsory; students are expected to discuss required readings in the class. (10 %)
- The course is based on active participation and an interactive approach. Students are encouraged to discuss the presented works of art. (10 %)
- Attendance at the course trip. NOTE: not attending without a doctor’s note is counted as 1 unexcused absence. Do not forget to register for the trip during the add/drop period.

CIEE Prague Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences are treated equally regardless of reason for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

Missing classes will lead to the following penalties:

90-minute semester classes:
180-minute semester classes:

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.

Missing more than 20% of the total class hours will lead to a course failure, and potential program dismissal. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.

Late arrival to class will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.

Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student’s presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor’s note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor’s notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.

Should a truly extraordinary situation arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.
Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.

For class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), always contact the Academic Assistant to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the records. In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant within one week of the discrepancy date to have it corrected. Later claims will not be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

CIEE Academic Honesty Policy

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one’s own.

The first principle is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an "open book" basis).
The second principle applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.

The third principle is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another’s work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.

The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

Attendance

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Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

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N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class  Course Introduction

Towards modern architecture: conditions of Modernity in Architecture

Session 1 (in-class)

- Introduction of the course: objectives and assignments.
- Prague architecture in the past: From Romanesque style to Historicisms. Basic vocabulary; structured description of architecture; various types of eclectic architecture (Classicism, neo-Romanesque, neo-Gothic, neo-Renaissance).

Class  1.2

Session 2 (field trip)

- Visit to the Mucha Museum, www.mucha.cz
- Meeting point: at the statue of St. Wenceslas, top of the Wenceslas square,
- How to get there: tram 3, 9, 14, 24 – Vodičkova, – 5 min walk, metro C – Muzeum – 2 min walk.

Aim of the class: get acquainted with characteristics of Art Nouveau style in art and architecture, understand the role of Alphonse Mucha in development of the style (independent work in groups).
HW 1 (reading, questions and write-up) – due Wednesday Week 2:

a) Required reading:


b) HW Questions:

How is Czechness defined in Jiránek’s text? What constitutes national culture today? Can you think of examples of “American” art? Find examples of visual culture that you consider Czech and explain in what way they convey “Czechness”.

Week 2

Class 2.1  Idea of “Czechness” in art.

Session 1 (in-class)

- The “Czechness” of our Art: National Revival in visual arts. Czech art in contemporary global culture: The language(s) of provocation: David Černý and Pode Bal Group.
- Formal analyses: How to analyze painting and sculpture? Which questions to ask? Structured description of an art piece. Coming to terms with the basic terminology.

Class 2.2  

Session 2 (field trip)

- How to get there: Trade Fair Palace, Dukelskych hrdinu 47, Prague 7 - tram 12, 24, 17 – Veletržní palác (entrance is just opposite the tram stop), tram 1, 8, 25, 26 – Strossmayerovo nam., 5 min walk, metro C – Vltavská, 10 min walk.
Aim of the class: understand the historical and national importance of Slav Epic, its visual symbolism and style development (discussion in groups), get acquainted with the ideas of artists “prophets”

HW DUE: Written homework from Week 1

HW 1 (written HW and reading) - due Monday Week 4:

a) Written HW:

• Analysis of a chosen artwork (2D – painting, drawing, print) – 1 – 2 pages

b) Required readings:

Barnet 1999, 28-53 and 75-76.

Reading for presentation – due Monday Week 3:

a) Recommended reading (architecture) –

• Tietz 1998, 6-17 (Architecture at the Turn of the Century)

Reading for presentation – due Wednesday Week 3:

b) Recommended reading (art)

• Czech Modern Art 1900-60, 1995, 24-50 (Symbolism in Painting and Sculpture)

Week 3
Class Towards Modern art: from Romanticism to Symbolism.

Art and Architecture of Art Nouveau.

Session 1 (in-class)
• Definition of Modern Art: its conditions, time period, theory and artists involved.
• New materials in architecture: Art Nouveau.
• Introduction of the artist Tomáš Moravec (final project)

HW DUE: Readings for presentations from Week 2.

Class 3.2

Session 2 (field trip)

• Aim of the class: get acquainted with specifics of Czech impressionism and symbolism (students presentation)

HW (Final Paper):

• Topic and outline for the FINAL PAPER (1/2 – 1 page) – due Monday Week 8 – see List of recommended topics in the Moodle
• Final paper (7 – 10 pages) - due Monday Week 12
• Short PPT presentation (5 – 10 slides, 5 – 10 minutes speech, outline 1 – 2 pages) - due Monday Week 12 or 13

Reading for presentation (František Kupka) – due Wednesday, Week 4:

• Czech Modern Art 1900-60 (catalogue) (pp 70-80) – From the figure to Abstraction OR (pp 128-134) - Cosmic Architecture

Week 4
Class 4.1 Czech Symbolism, Decadence and Abstraction

Session 1 (in-class)

• Czech Impressionism, Symbolism and Decadence – is every turn if the Century decadent?
• Founders and principles of Abstract Art – Malevic, Mondrian, Kandinsky and Kupka – searching for the Universe.

HW DUE: Written HW from Week 2 (2D analysis) - HARDCOPY.

Presentations for reading from Week 3.

Class 4.2

Session 2 (field trip)


• Aim of the visit: get acquainted with principles of abstract art and its birth (working in groups, students presentations), understand the influence of French avant-garde upon Czech Art (Auguste Rodin and Pablo Picasso).

Reading for Presentation – due Wednesday Week 5:

• Janak, Benson 2002, 86-92

Week 5

Class 5.1 “Scream Mouth!” – philosophy of Czech Expressionism.


Session 1 (inclass)

• Melting pot of Styles: Czech Modernism between Expressionism and Cubism (Filla, Kubišta, Gutfreund)

• Prague – the capital of cubism – unique application of cubist forms in architecture and design (Josef Chochol, Pavel Janák, and Josef Gočár).
HW DUE: Decision about Final Project or Paper.

Presentations for readings from Week 4.

Class 5.2

Session 2 (field trip)

• Visit to the permanent collection of Czech Cubism, House at the Black Madonna,
• How to get there: Ovocný trh 19 (corner with Celetna street),
  Prague 1 – metro B – Náměstí republiky OR tram 5, 8, 24, 26 – Náměstí republiky, 5 min walk.
• Aim of the visit: understand the specifics of Czech Cubism – creation of a universal style including applied arts and architecture (working in groups, students presentations).

Reading for Presentation (due Monday Week 6)

Tietz 1999, 30-39 (Functionalism) -

• HW Question: What architectural styles formed the basis for what was later named “International Style”? Which countries did they come from and what was their social and political background?

Week 6

Class 6.1 Towards “new media” – art and architecture of the 1920s – 30s.

Session 1 (in class)

• Association Devětsil: “Poetization” of the everyday, “art for all senses”, Karel Teige: l´enfant terrible of the avant-garde.
• Constructivist dreams: reality and utopia - Functionalism in European context (Bauhaus, Russian constructivism, Le Corbusier), social aspects and theory of communal housing (Karel Teige).
HW DUE: Presentation for reading from Week 5.

Class 6.2

Session 2 (field trip)

- HW (structured 3D analyses) – due Monday Week 10:
  - Written HW
  - Structured analyses of a chosen piece of architecture, 3D artwork or new media (250-500 words).
- Required reading:

Reading for Presentation (due Monday Week 8)

Mansbach 1999, 72-82 (Surrealism)

- HW Question: Why Karel Teige repeatedly refused surrealism during the 1920s? Use two artworks by Jindřich Štýrský (Marriage, 1934, collage and Trauma of birth, 1936, oil painting) to explain what were typical subject-matters and concerns of Czech surrealism.

Week 7

Class 7.1  Architecture of Trade Fair Palace

Between Constructivism and Functionalism. Development of Modern Sculpture.

Session 1 (in-class)

- MIDTERM TEST

Class 7.2

Session 2 (field trip)
• Visit to the National Gallery Prague collection of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Trade Fair Palace,
• Aim of the visit: understand principles of functionalist architecture and its place in urbanism of the city (working in groups in both exterior and interior), development of modern sculpture.

HW 1 (reading, questions and write-up – 1 – 2 pages) – due Monday Week 9:

• Required readings
  • Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s – Jindřich Chalupecký: The Intellectual under Socialism (pp. 29-37)
• HW Question:
  • What were the various oppressive strategies and controlling mechanisms utilized by the Communist regime? Describe the position of the intellectual under socialism according to Chalupecký.

Week 8
Class 8.1 Art of “compulsive beauty”. Strategies of survival: Art in World War II.

Session 1 (in class)

• Surrealism in Czechoslovakia (Jindřich Štyrský, Toyen, Karel Teige); tradition of the surrealist tendencies up to the present moment.
• Strategies of survival: mythology of everyday life (Group 42 and Jindřich Chalupecký), return of expression, reflection of loneliness, ways to escape (Alén Diviš).

HW DUE: Final paper topic and outline.

Class 8.2 .
Session 2 (field trip)

- Aim of the class: understand the development of surrealism and figurative art (1930s-50s) and its connection with politics of the time (working in groups, working sheets).

HW DUE: Presentations for readings form Week 6.

Reading for Presentation (due Monday and Wednesday Week 10)

- Required readings:
  - Artist Intervene in Everyday Life (pp. 120-123), Milan Knížák a Jan Maria Mach
- HW Question:
  - What do you think of the described project? Do you consider it art? Do you consider it relevant?

Week 9
Class 9.1 Socialist realism and its counterparts

Official and unofficial art of the 1950s-60s

Session 1 (in class) –

- Official and non-official art of the second half of the 20th century; socialist realism and its adversaries (Vladimír Boudník, Mikuláš Medek).

HW DUE: Required readings and questions from Week 7 (write-up).

Class 9.2 .

Session 2 (field trip)

How to get there: tram Újezd (9, 12, 20, 22) – go back to the river and walk along it in the direction of Charles Bridge (5 – 7 min walk).

Aim of the class: get acquainted with most important private art collection in Prague, existential and surrealist undercurrents in Czech modern art (working in groups)

Week 10
Class 10.1 “Art Leaving Galleries (and coming back)”

Figuration, Abstraction and Experimental art (1960s – 70s)

Session 1 (in class)

• Abstract art and new technological optimism of the 1960s (Zdeněk Sýkora, Stanislav Kolíbal).
• Fluxus, Happening, Performance, Body art (HAPSOC, Actual Group, Milan Knížák, Petr Štembera); Land Art (Zorka Ságlová); Conceptual Art

HW DUE: Written HW (3D analyses) from Week 6.

Presentations for readings from Week 8.

Class 10.2

Session 2 (field trip)

• Aim of the class: Czech art during the 1960s political “thaw” and after 1968 (new sensibility, new figuration), discover new forms of art: happening, installation, etc.
HW (reading, questions and write-up – 250-500 words) – due Monday

Week 11:

- Required reading: Přibáň 2013, 15 – 26 (The anomic society of late socialism)
- HW Question: How would you describe the situation in Czech society during the late socialist regime of the 1980s? What problems were the artists facing? What visual codes did the artists adopt or what were they forced to avoid?

Week 11

Class 11.1 “Everything goes” - Postmodern shift in art and architecture.

Session 1 (in-class)

- From prefabricated housing projects to postmodernism; Dancing House (Frank Gehry, Vlado Milunic); organic architecture (Jan Kaplický)
- Postmodern art and its concepts: plurality of meanings, multiple coding, eclecticism, appropriation, deconstruction, etc.

Class 11.2

Session 2 (field trip)

- Aim of the class: get acquainted with principles of postmodernism and its Czech specifics using examples of artworks (students activity in groups)

Recommended reading:

Pospiszyl, Tomáš. David Černý - The Fucking Years, The Life and Work of an Artist.
Week 12

Class 12.1 Czech Art after the Velvet revolution

Session 1 (in-class)

- Art and politics, art in public space, the role of the context.
- Women in art: strong generation of woman artists – can we talk about “feminist” strategies in art?
- Presentation for the final paper (part 1)

HW DUE: Final paper and presentation (PPT and write-up).

Class 12.2

Session 2 (field trip)

- Visit to an art gallery or exhibition of contemporary art (will be specified)

Week 13

Class 13.1 Assessment of the course, revision, discussion, presentations.

Session 1 (in-class)

- Presentation for the final paper and project (part 2)

HW DUE: Presentation for the papers and project (PPT and write-up).

Class 13.2 Final Test

FINAL TEST

Course Materials

Readings