Course title: Franz Kafka: A Prague Writer
Course code: LITT 3004 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) has become recognized as one of the leading figures in world literature. Perhaps more than any other major author, Kafka is associated with one geographical location: the city of Prague. Kafka's works themselves are not explicitly about Prague, nor are they set in Prague. But we cannot say that Prague is irrelevant to Kafka's works, for Kafka spent almost all of his life in this city. Therefore, we cannot "read" Prague through or into Kafka's works, but comparing the two is surely fruitful. The most obvious connection between Kafka's works and the city of Prague is Franz Kafka the historical person. While one always wants to be cautious about biographizing creative work, this course takes into consideration Kafka's life and times in reading and analyzing his fiction. Such an adventure is best undertaken in the city of Prague itself. Kafka's fiction, which is read in the course, is organized in a chronological manner, along with relevant critical material for each work. However, less time-bound thematic issues are also addressed in a less linear fashion, such as the cultural and historical interaction with the fiction, Kafka's development as a writer, the impact of Kafka's biographical story on his stories, Kafka's use of animal characters, and the narrative innovations that Kafka implemented. The course focuses on a selection from Kafka's many well-known short stories and one of his three novels. Kafka's works are studied in English translation; they were originally written in German.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Summarize Kafka's general biography and describe his innovative writing style;
- Describe and illustrate the intersection of German, Jewish, and Czech identities in Prague in the early 20th century and articulate how Kafka's writing is connected to his historical and cultural context;
- Understand, assess and analyze the story line and the main issues of each story and novel covered in the course;
- Understand and articulate the main idea of at least one critical article on Kafka;
- Write and effective literary analysis essay;
- Have prepared and delivered an effective in-class presentation on a critical article;
- Demonstrate different ways of thinking about literature, culture, and literary analysis.

Course Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. However, the course will mainly appeal to students who have an interest in literature, and in reading and discussing stories. It is more important to have an interest in this type of learning than it is to have experience studying literature.

Methods of Instruction

- Short lectures (often with PowerPoint presentation)
- Open class discussion to interpret literary works
- Small-group activities and discussions
- Student presentations (including PowerPoint presentation)
- Several field trips (Kafka museum, Prague Old Town, etc.)

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Midterm Exam 15%
2. Final Exam 15%
Course Requirements

Midterm Exam

Both exams will be in-class written essay exams. They will most likely be open-book. The Midterm Exam will focus on the “breakthrough” part of the course. The exams will not cover The Trial.

Final Exam

Both exams will be in-class written essay exams. They will most likely be open-book. The Final Exam will focus on the “mid” and “late” parts of the course. The exams will not cover The Trial.

Essay

An argumentative literary-analysis essay of 1500-2200 words (5-9 pages) that focuses on The Trial. There is a detailed assignment for the essay on the course Canvas site.

Weekly Insight Assignments

Students will post a brief response to the reading assigned on the Canvas course site for class each time there is a reading assigned, which is most class meetings. These short written assignments (between .5 and 1 page in length, about 100-300 words) should prepare the student for in-class discussion. Insights posts are graded on a completion basis: students get full points if they complete the assignment satisfactorily (including on time) and get zero points if they do not.

Presentation

One 10–15-minute presentation on a critical work relevant to the literary work(s) being discussed in that class meeting. Students find their own critical works to present to the class, who has not read that work, so the presentation also entails finding, selecting, and reading a text not otherwise assigned as reading for the course. There is a detailed assignment for the presentation on the course Canvas site.

Participation

Assessment of students’ participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor’s or other students’ line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students’ active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor. If missing a class, the student is expected to catch up on the class content and to submit well-reflected and in-depth contributions to Canvas discussions on the particular topic or reflections to the instructor to ensure that his/her absence from the class will not significantly affect his/her participation grade.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program.
If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of course hours missed</th>
<th>Number of CIEE classes</th>
<th>Minimum penalty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>One to Three 90-min. classes; or One 180-min. class</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% - 20%</td>
<td>Four 90-min. classes</td>
<td>Written notification* to the student, followed by a warning letter to the student and home school; 3% reduction in the final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five 90-min. classes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two 180-min classes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Six 90-min. classes; or Three 180-min. classes</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion with notification to the home school</td>
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* The notification letters are intended to ensure that you are well advised in advance of any potential for failure or dismissal, so that you can take steps to avoid this.

As the table shows, **missing more than 20% of any class (e.g., due to undocumented illness, travel delays, flight cancellations, over-sleeping, etc.) results in automatic failure of the course.**

If you miss an assessment in class due to an absence, you will be able to make it up in the following instances:

- You provide a relevant doctor's note from a local medical professional to your Program Coordinator within 24 hours of your absence (a scan or photograph sent via e-mail are acceptable)
- A CIEE staff member verifies that you were too ill to attend class.
- You provide evidence of a family emergency to your Program Coordinator.
- You have an approved absence related to the observance of a religious holiday from the Academic Director based on a request submitted before you arrived onsite.

**Please note:** Absences incurred due to documented illness, documented family emergency or the observance of a religious holiday approved before arrival onsite do not count towards the total of absences. Students may self-certify one absence due to illness without providing a doctor's note as long as they notify the Program Coordinator within 24 hours of their absence by e-mail or a text message.

**Other attendance-related policies**

If you transfer from one CIEE class to another during the Add/Drop period, you will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of the new class provided you were marked present for the first session(s) of the original class.

If you are over 15 minutes late for a class, the instructor is required to mark you absent.

In case of class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips and make-up classes), always contact the Academic Department to decide the appropriate course of action.

Please remember to track your attendance on the Canvas Course Sites and report any errors in the record to the Academic Department within one week of the discrepancy date, as later claims may not be considered.

These attendance rules also apply to any required co-curricular excursion, activity, or event, and to for-credit internships.

CIEE staff does not manage absences at partner institutions providing direct enrollment classes (FAMU, ECES and FSV), but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

**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: 1.1 Introduction, shorter stories - Introduction to Kafka’s short stories

"Before the Law" (1914), "A Common Confusion" (1916), "A Little Fable" (1920?), "Give it Up!"
Class: 1.2 Approaches to Kafka’s work

Elizabeth Trahan, “A Common Confusion: A Basic Approach to Franz Kafka’s World”
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 2**
Class: 2.1 Breakthrough Kafka - Situating Kafka’s Judgment and its Analysis

“The Judgment” (written and published 1912)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 2.2 Approaches to Kafka’s work, cont.

Martin Swales, “Why Read Kafka”
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 3**
Class: 3.1 Breakthrough Kafka II - Situating Kafka’s Metamorphosis and its Analysis

“The Metamorphosis” (written 1912, published 1915)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 3.2 Literary approach to Kafka’s Metamorphosis

Nabokov chapter on “The Metamorphosis”
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 4**
Class: 4.1 Breakthrough Kafka III- Situating Kafka’s ‘In the Penal Colony’ and its Analysis

“In the Penal Colony” (written 1914, published 1919)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 4.2 Koelb’s Approach to Kafka’s scene of Reading

Koelb, "Kafka and the Scene of Reading"
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 5**
Class: 5.1 Kafka and Myth

**Field Trip:** Visit to “The City of K.”, a Kafka museum
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 5.2 Reflection on the Field trip and contextualization of his work

“The Silence of the Sirens”, “Prométheus”, Poseidon”
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 6**
Class: 6.1 Midterm Exam Period

**Midterm Exam** in class
Novel Kafka
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 6.2 Situating Kafka’s Trial

Midterm Exam Period

The Trial (written 1914–1915, published posthumously), to page 53 in the Schocken version.
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 7
Class: 7.1 Novel Kafka II - Analysis of The Trial, part 1

Midterm Exam Period

The Trial, to page 110 in the Schocken version
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 7.2 Analysis of the Trial, part 2

The Trial, to page 165 in the Schocken version
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 8
Class: 8.1 Novel Kafka III - Analysis of The Trial, part 3

The Trial, complete novel (to page 224 in the Schocken version)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 8.2 How Pure is the Limited Circle?

Smith, “The Limited Circle Is Pure”
Proposal for essay due on Friday
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Mid- Kafka - Situating ‘A Report to an Academy’ and its Analysis

“A Report to an Academy” (written and published 1917)
Recommended:
David Foster Wallace, “This is Water”
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 9.2 Situating ‘A Country Doctor’ and its Analysis

“A Country Doctor” (written 1917, published 1919)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 10
Class: 10.1 Late Kafka - Situating ‘A Hunger Artist’ and its Analysis

“A Hunger Artist” (written?, published 1922)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas
Class: 10.2 Situating ‘Josephine the Singer’ and its Analysis

“Josephine the Singer” (1924)

Essay due
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 11
Class: 11.1 Posthumous Kafka and the Writer’s Legacy - Kafka’s Legacy I

“Description of a Struggle” (1904-09/1936)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 11.2 Field Trip: Visit to the Kafka Museum (“The City of K.”)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 12
Class: 12.1 Posthumous Kafka and the Writer’s Legacy II - Kafka’s Legacy II

“The Hunger Artist”, “Give it Up!”, “A Little Fable” (illustrated stories by Peter Kuper)
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 12.2 Laughing with Kafka?

David Foster Wallace, “Laughing with Kafka”
Student presentation on critical work
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 13
Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week

Course summary and final exam review session

Class: 13.2 Final Exam Week

Final Exam during normal class time

Course Materials

Readings

- - - - “This is Water.” The Guardian. September 20, 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/20/fiction