**Course title:** Contemporary Czech Culture: Alternative Literature, Music, and Lifestyles  
**Course code:** CEAS 3002 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

The course provides critical insights into the various elements of Czech non-mainstream culture, such as graffiti and street-art, political art collectives, the underground, new social movements, psychedelia, D.I.Y. music scenes, LGBTQ, social theatre, and others. It examines critical theory to discuss the practices of "alternative" urban lives in postindustrial society and certain trends of artistic production. The focus is on the political interpretation of youth subversion and disclosures of power mechanisms. Visuals and field trips to graffiti and other subcultural sites are an inherent part of this course.

### Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Interpret and assess the streets and other public spaces of the city and describe the styles of five local writers;
- Classify the topics and styles in contemporary Czech art;
- Compare poetics of five Czech bands/venues;
- Assess the influence of the history of the Czech underground on Charter 77;
- Critically discuss the connection between culture and politics;
- Conceptualize and contextualize expressions of new social movements;
- Apply critical imagination in decoding of subversive artifacts.

### Course Prerequisites

None. The course is suitable for anyone interested in cultural anthropology, cultural studies, visual studies, sociology of music, semiotics, and creative fields.

### Methods of Instruction

- seminar with mini-lectures  
- discussions of readings and artifacts on the basis of lectures, readings, and presentations  
- three field trips (legal graffiti site, festival, contemporary art museum)

### Assessment and Final Grade

1. Reading Check and Reaction Papers 20%  
2. Reading Presentation and Debate Leader 10%  
3. Midterm Test 20%  
4. Final Project on the topics covered in class 30%  
5. Class Participation 20%  
   TOTAL 100%

### Course Requirements

**Reading Check and Reaction Papers**

For each class (except midterm and final week), upload a write-up for one of the required or recommended readings.
Reading Presentation and Debate Leader

Grading takes into account the accuracy in delivering main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Extra images are a plus.

Midterm Test

an essay of 3 pages (750 words) on topics covered during the first half of the semester; questions are included after each week’s description.

+ a paragraph final project description with two sources, (the pitch can be brought into class).

Final Project on the topics covered in class

Final Project on the topics covered in class (graffiti and street art, music, etc.) 8 pages/2400 words. MLA format. Research papers are evaluated according to the quality of research and ability to use the concepts from lectures and readings. A short presentation of each project is required. You can select e.g. one of the Czech graffiti and other artists, bands, venues, political art collective, etc. Research, photo, interpret, comment, compare, etc. Creative project is a possible alternative after approval (film, songs, poetry, etc.). In that situation a two page (500 words) explanation (technical, creative ideas descriptions, concepts from class material, the journey of how the project developed) is required.

Class Participation

Assessment of students’ participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. 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. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

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.

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:
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 Introductions**

- course requirements – tasks with models, week-by-week schedule, questions.
- Lecture: Course terminology: avant-garde, counterculture, underground, alternative, subcultures, new social movements, etc. Theorizing culture – Critical Theory: Frankfurt, Birmingham School, and beyond.

**Study guide:** Name three branches of the avant-gardes pertinent to contemporary culture, their manifestos and their authors. Define counter-culture, name its theorist and his book. Define new...
social movement. Name schools theorizing culture, their timeframe, three representatives and main ideas. What points does Lyotard see that take us to postmodern paradigm?

Class: 1.2 Vyšehrad field trip: five Czech greats

Required reading:
Jonssonova

Recommended reading:
Kellner (2003)
Rojek (2003)

Week 2
Class: 2.1 CZECH ALTERNATIVE MUSIC AND MUSIC VIDEO

Required reading:
Ramet (1994).

Recommended reading:
Czech Rock Lyrics. FPB and UJD. Webpages of Už jsme doma,
showing: Metrofilm, UJD

Recommended Listening:
Czech bands: Radůza, Gipsy.cz, Gaia Mesiah, Vypsaná Fixa, Oldřich Janota, UJD, Čechomor, Yellow Sisters, BBP, New Kids Underground, Birds Build Underground, Priesnitz, Jablkoň, Rudovous, DG 307, Budoár stare dámy, Ještě jsme se nedohodli, Chadima, Richter, Jasná páka, Psi vojáci, Tata boys, Traband, etc.

Study guide: Name five Czech bands and their genre. What is the first album in Czech rock history? What is the best album in Czech rock history? What is the name of the Czechoslovak guitar George Harrison played in his early career?

What was the pre and post 89 situation for Czech bands? What are the specific poetics compared to US bands? What types of names were typical for pre and post-89 period? How can East block bands reach audiences in the West? Who has made it?

Assignment: R1 Czech Rock

Class: 2.2 Field Trip Concert

TBA

Week 3
Class: 3.1 UNDERGROUND, THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Required reading:
Views from the Inside – manifesto by Martin Jirous
Pavel (1999,) 1-42.

Study guide: Who was the main organizer of the Czech Underground? How does he describe the goals in his manifesto? What is the influence of the PPU on Charter 77? What forced them underground? Were they Christians or left wing activists? Name main bands and personalities? What strategies did these leaders propose to keep the culture alive in the midst of persecutions? What is
the band’s current situation? How did the band solve the tragic situation after the death of Mejla Hlavsa? What is the name of the best album of the PPU?

What kind of lyrics have the PPU had over their existence?

Who is Pavel Z and Jachym Topol? What is The Game Park about?

**Assignment: R2 Underground**

**Class: 3.2** Underground Poetry: Topol, Pavel Z, Magor

**Week 4**

**Class: 4.1** PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH.

Addiction and Anxiety. In Pot We Trust: legalization of medicinal marihuana in the Czech Republic

**Required reading:**

Keller (2006)

Garber (2013)

**Recommended reading:**

Zábranský (2007)

**Study guide:** What does psychedelic mean? Who are the five main psychedelic researchers? What is the specific contribution of the Czech researcher Stanislav Grof?

**Assignment: R3 Psychedelic Research**

**Class: 4.2** Excerpts: Katka, One Way Ticket, The Substance

**Week 5**

**Class: 5.1** HUMAN RIGHTS

Jan Palach, Václav Havel, new social movements

Film excerpts: Burning Bush, Citizen Václav Havel

**Required reading:**

Zizek (2013)

Williams (2011)

**Recommended reading:**

Andriolo (2006)

**Study guide:** What is the history of One World film festival? What is its agenda? Name three works written by Vaclav Havel. What are Havel’s dates? What does the word samizdat mean? Define dissidents. What are the new social movements Williams talk about in Related Fields? What protest movements does Zizek talk about in The Impossible Happens? What does he mean by saying the impossible happens – which philosopher does he have the term from? What is the legacy of Jan Palach? What is the name of the director and what did she what to say by Burning Bush?

**Assignment: R4 Human Rights**

**Class: 5.2** Field Trip to One World Film Festival

**Week 6**

**Class: 6.1** HIPSTERS OLD AND NEW. RECYCLING.

*Midterm Exam Period*
Assignment: R5 Hipsters

Study guide: Why are contemporary subcultures lacking in authenticity? Can there be a real subculture in postmodern situation? What is the origin of the current hipster subculture? What are some of the characteristic of hipsters – how do they differ from earlier subcultures? What do hipsters wear? What do they listen to? What do they eat? Where are the main centers of hipster post-subculture in Prague? Name five vintage technical items hipsters are fascinated by.

Film excerpts Prague Krymska street
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HuhJBEPzUE
Berlin, Germany: Trendy PrenzlauerBerg
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u_o0xp4OT0
Vice Hipsters?

Class: 6.2 Guest Speaker

Week 7
Class: 7.1 Midterm Test
Midterm Exam Period

Class: 7.2 The Can graffiti film

Week 8
Class: 8.1 Graffiti: Urban Decor or Politics

Lecture: Artcrime

Required reading
Magid (2007)

Study guide: What does Magid claim about graffiti? Why is he interested in CAP crew? What is CAP crew style? What is the difference between graffiti and street art? Name five Czech graffiti artists (crews) and describe their style.

Assignment: R6 Graffiti

Class: 8.2 films excerpts: Czech Republic, Exit through the Gift Shop, Style Wars.

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Street Art

Required reading:

Recommended:
Streetfonts on facebook
Study guide: When was the legal site Tesnov started and by whom? What is Banksy’s take on the “broken window” theory? Describe Banksy’s style. What are different approaches to graffiti in Europe? What was Namesfest

Assignment: R7 Street Art

Class: 9.2 Site Visit: Tesnov Legal Graffiti Site Visit

Thu Site visit: Tesnov legal graffiti site visit
Meeting place: Florenc McDonald’s under the freeway half hour after class start

Week 10
Class: 10.1 ART AND POLITICS

Political Art Collectives: Ztohoven, Podebal, Guma Guar, Rafani. Culture Jamming

Field trip Parallel Polis http://www.paralelnipolis.cz/en/:

1. Cryptocurrencies, free market and parallel economies
2. Cryptoanarchy and other concepts for developing free society
3. Political art
4. Open source, 3D print, copyright

Required reading:

Klein (2001)
Harris (2009)
Film: Czech Dream by Vit Klusak and Filip Remunda

Assignment: R8 Art and Politics

Class: 10.2 EASTER BREAK, NO CLASSES

Week 11
Class: 11.1 HAPPENING, ACTION ART, SOCIAL ART CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

Required reading:

Morganová (2013)

chapter of your choice from: Klienhamplova & Stejskalova (2015)

Study guide: What is Action Art? Give examples and three names. Who is an artist, what is their role? What is the role of a curator?

DVD After Velvet

Assignment: R9 action art

Class: 11.2 Field Trip DOX

Week 12
Class: 12.1 EXPATS IN PRAGUE

Expat communities: writings, publishing, activism, cafes.

Required reading:

New Orleans Review. Ten Years After Velvet Revolution. Voices from the Czech Republic

Recommended:

Kimberly (2013)
Assignment: R10 Expats

Class: 12.2 St. Agnes Sculpture Garden Field Trip

Week 13
Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week
Presentation of Final Projects

Class: 13.2 Final Exam Week
End-of-course discussion

Course Materials
Readings

- Jonssonova, Pavla. *Introductory Notes to the Reader of Alternative Culture*.

Recommended: