CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Prague-German Literature: Passion, Madness, Murder and Memory
Course code: LITT 3003 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

This course examines German-language literature (in English translation) written in Prague from the late 19th to the late 20th century. The unique cultural and political environment of the Czech Lands and Prague at this time fermented one of the richest periods in European literary history. Hailing from a territory historically inhabited by three major populations - Czech, German, and Jewish - the authors covered in this course found themselves consistently confronted with questions of identity, belonging, alienation, and escape. The tumultuous developments going on around them led many of these authors to focus their literary lens on the madness of modern life and the attempt to discover purpose, meaning, fulfillment, and interpersonal connection - although often with tragic results. A primary goal of the course is to situate well-known authors such as Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Gustav Meyrink in a broader cultural context, while also exposing students to some lesser-known authors, who provide fascinating insight into the cultural, historical, and literary landscape of Prague in the early 20th century. Progressing more or less chronologically, the course presents a variety of texts by these authors: poetry, short stories, reportages, novels, memoirs, etc. The works are analyzed in the context of major historical developments such as the rise of nationalism in the late 19th century, World War I, the founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic, World War II, the Holocaust, and the nearly absolute disappearance of German-Bohemian literature after the 1940s. The end of the course examines the loss of the German and Jewish populations in Bohemia and considers the legacy of these authors in contemporary Czech society and (Central) European culture more generally. In addition, the course takes advantage of our unique setting in Prague by making several excursions into the city to explore the streets where these authors lived and examine first-hand some key locations described in their works. This helps the literature "come alive" for the students and provide insight into the traces of these literary works still visible in the present day.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Distinguish major Prague-German authors from the first half of the 20th century and work
- Critically discuss the basic socio-cultural context of Prague and the Czech Lands as well as the major issues of the time period, specifically those related to ethnicity, religion, nationality, and modern identity
- Analyze each individual author’s style and situate each author within the broader literary and cultural context
- Engage with and employ 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

The majority of the course is dedicated to engaging with primary literary texts. Several secondary texts will also provide cultural context and analytical frameworks.

Class sessions will be devoted primarily to interactive discussion. As a class, we will all participate in analytical discussions of the texts and the issues that they touch on. Students will occasionally work in small groups to prepare ideas for our larger discussions. Prior to each class session, students will be asked to prepare a brief response text that engages with specific aspects of the text that will be the focus of discussion for that day. On some days, designated students will lead all or part of the discussion. In addition, each student will prepare a
short classroom presentation at some point in the semester.

At the beginning of each new section of the course (i.e. when we start working with a new author), a certain part of the session will be dedicated to a short lecture from the instructor to introduce the new material and provide the background information necessary for engaging with the text.

The course will also include several outclasses that meet outside of the classroom to go “on location” to actual places around Prague that are depicted in the readings or that display traces of the city’s once thriving German cultural community.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Weekly short response assignments 25%
2. Presentation 10%
3. Midterm exam 20%
4. Final Paper 30%
5. Participation 15%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Weekly short response assignments

Prior to each class session, the student will prepare and submit a brief written text in response to a prompt provided by the instructor. These weekly responses should display critical, analytical thought about the text rather than mere factual comprehension.

Presentation

Each student is responsible for introducing the reading and leading class discussion for part of one class session during the semester. For this task, the student will prepare a written handout on the reading and prepare topics and questions for discussion.

Midterm exam

The midterm exam is composed of essay questions, asking the student to identify key concepts from the readings and engage in critical analysis of major course themes.

Final Paper

In the final paper, on a topic of the student’s choice, the student must present their own critical analysis of one of the course’s literary texts.

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:

<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>
<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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</table>

* 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: Prague and the Czech lands in the Habsburg Empire
       Intro to course mechanics and topic

Class: 1.2 Reading:
       Cohen, 2006: selections
       Eisner, 1950: selection
       Recommended:
       Tramer, 1964

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 2
Class: 2.1 The unique and problematic position of Prague-German authors
       Reading:
       Kisch, 1941: selections
       Spector, 2000: selections

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 2.2 Field Trip: German Prague – Old Town and New Town

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 3
Class: 3.1 Romanticism, national awakening, mysticism and myth I
       Reading:
       Rilke, 2005: selections

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 3.2 Reading:
       Rilke, 1994: “The Siblings”

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 4
Class: 4.1 Romanticism, national awakening, mysticism and myth II
       Reading:
       Meyrink, 2011.

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 4.2 Meyrink, 2011 (continued).

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas
Week 5
Class:  5.1  Romanticism, national awakening, mysticism and myth III
       Reading:
       Meyrink, 2011 (conclusion).
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class:  5.2  Jung-Prag - Decadence and decline I
       Reading:
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 6
Class:  6.1  MIDTERM EXAM

Class:  6.2  Jung-Prag - Decadence and decline II
       Reading:
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 7
Class:  7.1  Field Trip: The Prague Castle and Mala Strana

Class:  7.2  Jung-Prag - Decadence and decline III
       Reading:
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 8
Class:  8.1  Modernity, alienation, and the absurd
       Reading:
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class:  8.2  New Objectivity, psychology, and pathology I
       Reading:
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Week 9
Class:  9.1  New Objectivity, psychology, and pathology II
       Reading:
       Ungar, 2009 (continued).
       Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas
Class: 9.2.

Reading:
Ungar, 2009 (conclusion).

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 10**

Class: 10.1 Reportage, social activism, political engagement

Reading:
Kisch, 1941.

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 10.2 Lamentation, loss, and memory I

Reading:
Perutz, 1990.

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 11**

Class: 11.1 Lamentation, loss, and memory II

Reading:
Perutz, 1990 (continued).

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 11.2.

Reading:
Perutz, 1990 (continued).

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 12**

Class: 12.1 Lamentation, loss, and memory III

Reading:
Perutz, 1990 (conclusion).

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 12.2.

Reading:
Reinerová, 2005.

Weekly response due before the class session, submission via Canvas

**Week 13**

Class: 13.0 End-of-course discussion.

**Final Paper due**

**Course Materials**

**Readings**

**Required:**


-. The Road to Darkness. Translated by Mike Mitchell. Sawtry, UK/Monroe, OR: Dedalus/Ariadne, 1997.


Recommended:


