Course title: Anthropology of Czech Society and Culture
Course code: ANTH 3001 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: Spring 2021

Course Description

Up to 1989, several Central and Eastern European countries belonging to the former socialist bloc had essentially the same political and economic system. These countries have since undergone what is perceived as a transformation from a totalitarian political system to democratic pluralism and from centrally planned economy to market economy. Nevertheless, there are considerable differences between the ways the transformation occurred in each of these countries. Following the work of L. Holy, among other scholars, the course investigates the specific ways in which Czech cultural meanings (in particular, the culturally constructed notion of the Czech identity/ies) affected life during communism, the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, and the political and economic transformation into a new social system. This course aims to introduce the historical as well as the contemporary issues of Czech society and culture from an anthropological perspective. Using several ethnographic case studies, among other literary and visual sources, the course makes connections between memory and history, narrative and experiences, change and continuity, the past and the present.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Recognize, describe, and analyze the most important events, symbols, and personalities in Czech history;
- Demonstrate how myths, symbols, and traditions make the identification of people as members of the Czech nation possible and how they create national consciousness;
- Describe the characteristics of life under the socialist system in the former Czechoslovakia, and explain how this system transformed into its present-day form and what kind of anthropological research it stimulated and why;
- Analyze and assess the recent changes that have taken place in Czech society and culture in relation to the process of Europeanization and globalization (traditions, consuming habits, food, family structure, the media, gender roles);
- Critically discuss the construction and current situation of minority groups in the ethnically diverse social space of the Czech Republic;
- Compare/contrast the dilemmas of nationalism and emigration in life narratives of Czech emigrants.

Course Prerequisites

This course is open to anyone interested in Central Europe and its transitions.

Methods of Instruction

In addition to lectures, classes will include discussion stimulating critical thinking, and individual and group work depending on the topic. Classes will employ different material, such as academic readings, recent news relevant to the topic of the week, images, and short documentaries, and class excursions and guest teachers to contribute to experiential learning.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Short Presentation based on Reading 10%
2. Midterm Exam 25%
3. Final Oral Presentation 15%
4. Research Essay 30%
5. Home Preparation and Class Participation 20%
Course Requirements

Short Presentation based on Reading

Each week a student will have to prepare a short presentation on one assigned reading.

Midterm Exam

An exam of one hour and a half where the student will have to choose two questions out of three. Each question will count for 50% and will be based on the material covered from week one to week five.

Final Oral Presentation

On the last day of classes, students will have a 10-minute oral presentation in order to share details of their research essay with the rest of the class. During the presentation, the student has to be able to defend his/her project and be ready to answer any question from the professor related to the work done.

Research Essay

Each student will work on a research essay (3,000 words in length) from week six to the end of the course. The student will choose a topic related to the content of the course and seek an approval from the professor. The professor will be happy to help students during their work on the final research essay, supplying academic advice, help with the selection of sources, and methodology. This final essay will demonstrate the student’s ability to interpret a topic of their choice, ask relevant questions, and defend their stance regarding the topic to the class.

Home Preparation and Class Participation

This will be crucial to both the student’s success and the success of the class. Students are required to read the assigned texts prior to each class. Each class will begin with either questions about or summaries of the texts. Each week a student will have to prepare a short presentation on one assigned reading. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions through comments, questions, and answers.

CIEE Participation Policy

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:
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.

<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>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 to the Czech Republic

Geographical, cultural and historical overview of the “Czech lands” since its origins to the present

Class: 1.2

What does it mean to be Czech?

Required reading:
Week 2
Class: 2.1 Myth and Symbols

The importance of myth, traditions and symbols in the creation of national Czech consciousness throughout history: past and present.

Class: 2.2

Special focus on the 100 anniversary of the birth of Czechoslovakia

Required reading:
- Holy (1999), 33-54
- Hobswann and Range (1992), 263-309.

Week 3
Class: 3.1 The legacy of socialism. Collective memories & life stories

Explore the relation between autobiography and the history of the Czech nation. What defined the Socialist system? How was this system transformed into its present-day form? And, what anthropological research has it stimulated?

Class: 3.2

Field trip to the National Gallery in Prague (Trade Fair Palace in Holesovice). Koudelka: Invasion 1968

Topic discussion: Museums and exhibitions as sites of memory in contemporary European societies and nation building.

Required reading:
- Haukanes (2005), 160-169
- Halbawchs (1992), 1-20

Week 4
Class: 4.1 Democracy and the Political Process

The construction of Czech citizenship in the new state.

Class: 4.2

Explore the dynamics of the notion of “citizenship” in Czech Republic from a totalitarian system to a democratic one.

Required reading:
- Palous (1995), 141-164

Week 5
Class: 5.1 Family & State

The important role of family relations in the maintenance of socialist system and in the revival of civil society in the 1980s.

Class: 5.2

Analysis of family histories.

Required reading:
- True (2003), 55-73.
- Nash (2005), 53-63
**Week 6**
Class: 6.1 Midterm Exam Period

Review for the exam. Please, bring any questions.


Class: 6.2

**Midterm Exam**

**Week 7**
Class: 7.1 Property and Housing

Explore some of the strategies that have been used by families in order to maintain properties and housing in post-socialist system.

Class: 7.2

Analysis of different case studies in the city of Prague.

**Required reading:**

- Šmídová (2000), 89-123.

**Week 8**
Class: 8.1 Globalization & Mass Consumption

Explore the role of culture industries, especially American popular culture in global capitalism.

Class: 8.2

We will see how patterns of consuming and daily habits are changing in Czech society.

**Required reading:**

True (2003), 103-117

**Week 9**
Class: 9.1 Food, Consumption and Health

Food in historical and cultural context and as symbol of national Czech identity.

Class: 9.2

Analysis of case studies (rural & urban)

**Required reading:**

- Haukanes (2003), 77-82

**Week 10**
Class: 10.1 Change and Gender in the Workplace


Class: 10.2

Explore some of the changes that have impacted women in the workplace. Case study: ethnographic fieldwork that took place in the city of Brno in 2002-2003

**Required reading:**
Week 11
Class: 11.1 Mass Media and Shared Culture

Monday: Film-doc analysis: Český sen by Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda, Prague, 2004

Class: 11.2

Mass media (television, radio and the press) as the main means of communication of shared Czech culture.

Required reading:
- True (2003), 117-130.

Week 12
Class: 12.1 Minority Groups in the Czech Society

Explore the formation of social identity of minority groups in the ethnically diverse social space of the Czech Republic. Special attention to the Roma case.

Class: 12.2

Guest lecturer. L. Kopecká: “Russian minority in the Czech Republic”

Required reading:
- Szaló and Hamar (2006), 245-265.

Research Essay due.

Week 13
Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week

Concluding remarks & Oral presentations

Required reading:
- Havel, Vaclav The Power of the Powerless

Class: 13.2

Oral presentations

Course Materials

Readings
In Our Lives as Database. Doing a Sociology of Ourselves: Czech Social Transitions in Autobiographical Research Dialogues. Prague: Charles University in Prague, 89-123.


In addition to the above readings, the following ones are also highly recommended: