CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

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: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring 2021

Course Description

This course aims to acquaint students with significant aspects of Central European visual culture from the modern era onward. It introduces major art styles and personalities in Czech modern art, from Art Nouveau's Alphonse Mucha and the pioneer of abstraction František Kupka, to the contemporary provocations of David Černý. Deep changes that occurred in architecture, from Art Nouveau decoration through Functionalist utopia to the Postmodern deconstruction, are introduced and discussed. Many of the artworks examined within their broader cultural and historical context are exhibited in galleries and museums in Prague, which gives the students an opportunity to study the originals, rather than reproductions, during many field trips incorporated into the course.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:
- apply theoretical concepts on modern and contemporary art;
- develop independent and creative interpretative skills;
- analyze selected works of art based on direct exposure to, and personal experience with the works;
- illustrate and assess the riches of Prague’s galleries and the city’s exteriors through direct contact and exploration.

Course Prerequisites

"Art is for everyone" (Tracy Emin, British contemporary artist), that is 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.

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 forgot to register for the trip during the add/drop period.

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:** 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).*
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, Dukelských 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)
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 (in class)
- 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)
- 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)
- 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)

• 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).

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