CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Czech Cinema
Course code: CINE 3009 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

The aim of the course is to discuss the most important trends and movements in the history of Czech cinema, to put the films within their historical, political and cultural contexts, and to explore how Czech films capture the life of the Czech society during various epochs (1960s - 2010s). Students learn how to analyze the film form and style and how to employ various approaches to film criticism. As the course focuses on practical application of concepts and theories on film material, it requires that students watch selected feature films in their entirety (with English subtitles) as well as short extracts illustrating the topic outside of class.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- classify and critique the most important Czech directors and films;
- assess the Czechoslovak New Wave;
- explain which genres are typical for Czech cinema and justify your arguments;
- analyze a Czech film of interest in its socio-cultural context;
- employ various critical approaches while writing about the particular film;
- analyze a film form and style of a chosen film.

Course Prerequisites

The only prerequisite is a willingness to read, think, speak, write, and learn about Czech cinema and film style and form generally.

Methods of Instruction

The course is rather discussion-laden: one of the weekly sessions is entirely devoted to discussing one particular feature film and the other session to a lecture, which will still require a lot of student participation. Being a film class, the showing of clips is indeed necessary. Occasionally there will be presentation slides shown. We will have two field trips: to the film festival One World and Barrandov studios. Also, there will be two guest teachers.

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.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Response Papers 200 points (50 each) 20%
2. Presentation 20%
3. Midterm Essay 20%
4. Final Test 20%
5. Class Participation 20%

TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Response Papers

200 points (50 each)
The students will write FOUR 500-word response papers about the films. Each response paper will be written in one of following approaches: reception criticism, feminist criticism, auteur criticism, formalist criticism (each response paper will be written within a different approach; students themselves choose which films they will be writing about and which approach would be suitable for that very film; the suggestions will be provided). All the approaches will be explained in class ahead. The papers about the particular film will be turned in BEFORE the class discussion of the film. All four response papers need to be turned in until the last day of discussion. The response papers will be graded based on consistency of the arguments: students should prove that s/he understands the particular critical approach as well as show that s/he is able to apply it to the film. Students will not write a response paper on the film s/he has a presentation on.

**Presentation**

200 points

One lesson each week (90 minutes) will be devoted to discussion. We will discuss the film and the reading(s) that are assigned for that day. While all the students will be familiar with the film and the reading(s), one student will have a special task to be a “leader of discussion”. S/he will prepare the handout for each student that will include the close analysis of the film based on the reading (not exclusively, student may add whatever else s/he will find important for understanding the film). The handout will include AT LEAST 5 questions for class. Those questions should be rather complicated, can be even controversial, encouraging the students to think about the film more intensively (not “Did you like the film?). The 90 minutes time span reserved for the discussion does not mean that the “leader” will talk 90 minutes! Since everybody in class will be prepared, the “leader” will encourage all students to talk. The handout/presentation should NOT include the factual information as in the names of the cast and crew (with exception of director and DP when relevant), the number of awards and prizes the film has received, the names of the production/distribution companies associated with the film, the titles of the director's other films etc., unless it is particularly relevant. You should instead focus on YOUR OWN analysis and/or interpretation of the film (with the help of readings assigned) and perhaps also on the additional reviews/analysis of that film available online. The presentation will be assessed based on following categories.

1. Subject. Was the presentation informative? Did it have a clear focus? Was it well researched? Was the student knowledgeable about the subject?
2. Organization/Clarity. Was it easy to follow? Was there a clear introduction and conclusion?
3. Delivering of the presentation. Was the speaker in control of the sequence, pacing and flow of the presentation? Did s/he make effective use of notes, without relying on them too heavily?
4. Sensitivity to audience. Did the speaker maintain eye contact with all members of the class? Did s/he give you time to take notes if needed? Did s/he speak clearly and loudly?
5. Handouts/Clips. Did the speaker make effective use of handouts? Did s/he used clips from the movie that were relevant to the topic discussed?

**Midterm Essay**

200 points

Students will write a midterm essay and they will decide themselves what they want to write about. I am open to suggestions. The in-class presentation is a part of the assignment. Late submission of the essay (max 5 days) will result in lowering the grade by two-thirds of point (e.g. B + instead of A, B instead of A -, B – instead of B + etc.).

- Essay will have 1400 words (about 6 pages double-spaced).
- The essay that would combine your major and (particular) film is highly encouraged.
- The essay will cover one or more Czech film(s). It does not have to necessarily be about film(s) we have seen in class, in that case, though, I need you to let me know ahead.
- Plagiarism is unacceptable, and if any part of the assignment is plagiarized you will receive a failing grade for the essay and may fail from the overall course.

"Itinerary":

1. Think about the topic for your essay and the source(s) you would like to use.
2. Meet me in a scheduled meeting and let’s discuss your project.
3. Present your project to your classmates and myself and receive feedback.
4. Send me a final version of your essay before midnight on the Thursday of midterm week.

**Final Test**

200 points
A test on the material covered in class will be written during final exam week. The questions will stem from both the history of Czech cinema, as well as the film theory. One class will be entirely devoted to reviewing facts/information that will be needed to succeed on the final test.

Class Participation

200 points

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

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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<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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* 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

- Course introduction: course objectives, reading, assignments, approach, etc.
- What is cinema?

Class: 1.2 Response Papers: AUTEUR CRITICISM

- Jan Švankmajer (shorts)

**Week 2**

Class: 2.1 Field Trip

Class: 2.2 Chronology / MISE-EN-SCENE + CINEMATOGRAPHY

**Week 3**

Class: 3.1 Chronology II + How to write an essay (workshop)

Discussion: **BURNING BUSH** (Hořící keř, Agnieszka Holland, 2013, 231’, color)

Required readings:


Class: 3.2 Response Papers: FEMINIST CRITICISM

- Michaela Pavlátová (Repete, 1995) + other animated films

Required readings:

- Hamen (2012), 87-95.
Week 4

Class: 4.1 Guest Speaker

Eliška Děcká “Contemporary stop-motion films”.

Class: 4.2 Czechoslovak New Wave; narration

- New Wave – its social and cultural roots, international links, the inspiration
- The directors of “Czechoslovak New Wave”: Věra Chytilová, Jiří Menzel, Pavel Juráček, Juraj Jakubisko, Juraj Herz, Jaromíl Jireš etc.

Week 5

Class: 5.1 Discussion: DAISIES (Sedmíkrásky, Věra Chytilová, 1966, 74’, color)

Required reading:

- Lim (2001), 36-77.

**Turn in DAISIES response paper (suggested approaches: feminist, reception, formalist)**

Class: 5.2 Discussion: HAPPY END (Oldřich Lipský, 1967, 71’, b&w /tinted/)

Required reading:


**Turn in HAPPY END response paper (suggested approaches: reception, formalist, feminist)**

Week 6

Class: 6.1 Field Trip: Karel Zeman Museum

Midterm Exam Period

Class: 6.2 Midterm Essays - Drafts

- Class discussion on the drafts of students’ final papers (each student will have a presentation, others will give him/her feedback, the presentation creates 5% of a grade)

**Midterm essay due**

Week 7

Class: 7.1 Czech cinema in the 1970s + 1980s

Midterm Exam Period

- the political situation and its consequences
- new “genres”

Class: 7.2 Miloš Forman / EDITING

Miloš Forman CS/US careers

Week 8

Class: 8.1 Discussion: LOVES OF A BLONDE (Lásky jedné plavovlásky, Miloš Forman, 1965, 88’, b&w)

Required reading:

- Parvulescu (2009), 87–91.

**Turn in LOVES OF A BLONDE response paper (suggested approaches: reception, formalist, feminist)**

Class: 8.2 Discussion: FIREMEN'S BALL (Hoří, má panenka, Miloš Forman, 1967, 71’, color)
Required reading:

**Turn in FIREMEN'S BALL response paper (suggested approaches: reception, formalist, feminist, auteur)**

**Week 9**
Class: 9.1 Field Trip: NaFilm! Film Museum

Class: 9.2 post-1989 Czech cinema / DOCUMENTARY
- New topics in new regime

**Week 10**
Class: 10.1 Discussion: CZECH DREAM (Český sen, Klusák+Remunda, 2004, 93’, color)

Required readings:

**Turn in CZECH DREAM response paper (suggested approaches: formalist)**

**Week 11**
Class: 11.1 Discussion: CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE
(Spiklenci slasti, Jan Švankmajer, 1996, 85’, color)

Required readings:

**Turn in CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE response paper (suggested approaches: formalist, feminist, auteur)**

Class: 11.2 Field Trip: Barrandov Studios

**Week 12**
Class: 12.1 Revision for Final test

Class: 12.2 Q&A + discussion about class
- Discussion about the class (What did you learn? What do you miss? What was your best experience?)

**Week 13**
Class: 13.1 Q&A + discussion about class

*Finals Week*
- Discussion about the class (What did you learn? What do you miss? What was your best experience?)
- Anything about final test you need to know?

Class: 13.2 Final Test
Course Materials

Readings


Media Resources

Films (in order they will be discussed)

*BURNING BUSH* (Hořící keř, Agnieszka Holland, 2013, 231’, color)

*DAISIES* (Sedmikrásky, Věra Chytilová, 1966, 74’, color)

*HAPPY END* (Oldřich Lipský, 1967, 71’, b&w /tinted/)

*LOVES OF A BLONDE* (Lásky jedné plavovlásky, Miloš Forman, 1965, 88’, b&w)

*FIREFMEN’S BALL* (Hoří, má panenko, Miloš Forman, 1967, 71’, color)

*CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE* (Spiklenci slasti, Jan Švankmajer, 1996, 85’, color)

*CZECH DREAM* (Český sen, Klusák+Remunda, 2004, 93’, color)