Course title: Communism and Nazism Reflected in the Arts
Course code: POLI 3019 PRAG / ARTS 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

Film, literature, and the arts have always played a central role in reflecting the attitudes towards the twin ideologies of Nazism and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe. They were central to propagandizing these ideologies and building their strength after World War I. However, they also provided the most vibrant forum for those challenging the totalitarian regimes established by Nazis and Communists. In the period since their fall, politics and academia have frequently failed to enable an accessible debate on their legacy. Thus, film and literature remain the site of a debate. This course explores the theme in a multi-disciplinary manner, drawing on history, political science, literature, film studies, and psychology. A thematical, rather than chronological, approach was selected to emphasize the occurrence of the examined issues across regions and times, using different methods of exploration. As Prague is one of the few capitals that experienced liberal democracy, Nazism, Communism, and a return to liberal democracy over the scope of slightly more than 50 years, first-hand experience through field trips and guest speakers is incorporated into the course to enhance understanding of the topic.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Critically discuss the origins and potential appeal of totalitarian regimes for some people represented in literature, film or other art forms;
- Analyze and compare different aspects of resistance to or coping with a totalitarian regime and illustrate them on specific works of literature, film and other art forms;
- Catalogue and analyze the impacts of both totalitarian ideologies and the different approaches to their representation in art;
- Critically reflect on the role of an artist in protesting against or resisting totalitarianism as well as promoting it as part of a common discourse and memory;
- Deliver a presentation on a selected work of literature, film or other art forms, including a critical analysis of the topic explored, defending their arguments and leading a discussion on the topic.

Course Prerequisites

The principal requirement for this course is willingness to engage with the issues that are raised and to take advantage of being in Prague and go beyond the material discussed in class.

Methods of Instruction

This is a flexible and participative course. In class we will watch and discuss films, explore ideas contained in literature, hear from those who have deep personal experiences of Nazism and Communism and use the opportunity of the active life of Prague to attend any relevant events that occur during the semester. The specific topics and order of classes will change to reflect both the opportunities for visits and guests as well as the interests of the students. Where a film is the principal instruction aid for a class it will only be shown in excerpt to illustrate the wider topic under discussion. Should students wish to see the complete film, most are available on DVD and loanable.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Midterm Examination 20%
### Course Requirements

#### Midterm Examination

- Final Examination: 25%
- Essay: 15%
- Presentation: 15%
- Class Participation: 25%
- TOTAL: 100%

#### Midterm Examination

There will be midterm and final examinations that will be held in class and involve a review of the core themes covered in the class. Details will be provided via Canvas course site.

#### Essay

Each student will choose one film, book, or artist and write an essay (1700-2500 words) on a relevant topic approved by the instructor ahead of time. Details will be provided via Canvas course site.

#### Presentation

Each student will choose one film, book, or artist and present an excerpt from the work in class, followed by a discussion led by the student (presentation – maximum of 15 minutes; follow-up discussion – ca 10 minutes). Details will be provided via Canvas course site.

#### Class Participation

Class participation is an essential element of this course. It is through the interaction of the instructor and guests with students that most of the ideas will be explored effectively. Class participation also includes regular preparation for class, including mandatory readings and film viewing.

#### 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:
*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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<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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</tbody>
</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

Overview of the course, its structure, papers to be prepared, reading and viewing required and recommended.

Sergej Ejzenstejn’s “The Battleship Potemkin” (1925) as first propaganda film.

Class: 1.2
The nature and significance of civil resistance facing totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.


**Week 2**

**Class: 2.1**

The notion of absurdity of any given totalitarian regime, the exploration of the situation of an innocent individual being treated as a potential criminal or enemy of the state, being young in Central Europe.

“The Rhythm in My Heels” by Josef Škvorecký and Andrea Sedláčková

**Class: 2.2**

Intelligent individuals trusting and serving a dictatorship e.g. in the communist Soviet Russia under Stalin and realizing too late what the real foundations of such a regime are.


**Week 3**

**Class: 3.1**

Another option for an intelligent, honest person in the Soviet Russia – trying to stay out of the historical events, an impossible attempt to live without either compromising with the regime or fighting it.


**Class: 3.2**

The general analysis of a non-democratic, oppressive system, whether it is Communism or Nazism and the striving of individuals for love, freedom, and truth.

George Orwell: “1984”.

**Week 4**

**Class: 4.1**

The appeal of totalitarian ideology to some artists and intellectuals – by opportunism, by conviction? Leni Riefenstahl and Albert Speer serving the Nazi regime and their different perception of guilt later on.

“The Triumph of the Will” and Gita Sereny’s biography of Albert Speer.

**Class: 4.2**

An opposite reaction of students fighting the same oppressive regime and believing in democracy as a fair social environment.


**Week 5**

**Class: 5.1**

How totalitarian ideology deals with its real or imagined opponents. Mass human rights abuses in Soviet Russia and witnesses who had difficulties to be trusted in Western liberal democracies.


**Class: 5.2**

Another example of an abusive regime dealing not only with its opponents, but other groups as well – Jews, Slaves, Romas, handicapped mentally or physically. Individual versus collective guilt.


**Week 6**
Class: 6.1 Midterm Exam Period

Surviving inhuman conditions of war, occupation, ghettos, and concentration camps. The notion of human solidarity, believing in good as a realistic concept after all, as well as friendship and love. The notion of guilt and shame.


Class: 6.2 Midterm Exam Period

Mid-term paper

**Week 7**
Class: 7.1 Midterm Exam Period


Class: 7.2 Midterm Exam Period

Jews as a persecuted group, the psychology of victimization and marginalization of a given social group by the majoritarian society.


**Week 8**
Class: 8.1

The loneliness of those who came back – from the front, from a prison, from a camp. Original beliefs confronted with today's reality.


Class: 8.2

Methods generally used by any totalitarian ideology whether it is Communism or Nazism or any current extremist movement.

Brain washing, psychological humiliation, physical torture, attacks on one’s beliefs and morals, isolation from the outside world.


**Week 9**
Class: 9.1

An attempt to catalogue and analyze the crimes of Communism over seventy years. Revelation of the actual, practical impacts of the ideology around the world – terror, torture, famine, mass deportations, massacres.

Karel Bartošek’s chapter in Stéphane Courtois and coll.: “The Black Book of Communism” (1999)

**Week 10**
Class: 10.1

What is it like to live in a society that is essentially not free and how do people react towards power. Conformity versus protest.

Class: 10.2.


Week 11
Class: 11.1.

A very different look at the social reality of the 80’s – although the abuse of power is omnipresent, a revolt is possible. Background of the Gdansk events just before the declaration of the martial law.

Andrzej Wajda: "The Man of Iron" (1977)

Class: 11.2.

Walking visit of the key central Prague sites of the November 1989 revolution and discussion of the dynamic of the sparking of a revolution.

Week 12
Class: 12.1.

Dissent and civil resistance as a phenomenon of the 20th century in Central and Eastern Europe. Life in truth as a response to the totalitarian regime, possibilities of help from the outside world.


Class: 12.2.

Secret police and its collaborators as an omnipresent control of people’s lives. Personal files and their critical evaluation.

Visit to the European Platform for Studying Totalitarian regimes which published extensive studies on both the Communist and the Nazi periods.

Week 13
Class: 13.1  Final Exam Week

Final Exam

Class: 13.2  Final Exam Week

Course wrap-up discussion

Course Materials
Readings
In addition to works mentioned with each class, the following represents a fuller range of texts which can help explore the themes addressed. A reader of select texts will be made available.

Secondary Sources


Patočka, Jan; Hájek, Jiří; Havel, Václav. *The Charter 77 Declaration*.


**Films & Documentaries**


