Course title: Civic Engagement and Social Issues: Central European Perspectives
Course code: SOCI 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

The aim of the course is to describe and further elaborate on specific social problems in the Czech Republic, exploring the historical context that generated them as well as critically discuss their impact on Czech society in comparison to other countries. The course also examines the interrelation of certain social issues and pays special attention to social exclusion and inequalities, exploring them in more detail through case studies. The overall theme of the course is to understand people's engagement in changing the society, primarily through their participation in non-governmental organizations and community initiatives. Students are invited to share their personal experiences in order to raise awareness. This course also serves as an interesting insight into the Czech culture and society from an unusual perspective.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Critically discuss the development of civil society in the region, along with its cultural and historical specifics;
- Provide examples of major social problems in the Czech Republic and assess how they are being approached and why;
- Evaluate the role of the third-sector in dealing with major social problems and striving for social justice;
- Understand difference between individualistic and structural approaches to social change;
- Include the perspective of mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion and social justice in further areas of research/study.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

The class will combine teacher presentations (lectures with PowerPoint presentations) with interactive in-class activities, videos, and collaborative student tasks developing students' critical and creative thinking skills. The course will also include interactive site-visits and guest teachers.

Assessment and Final Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Course Requirements

Readings

Two response papers on compulsory reading are required, due during midterm week (reading response 1) and
Midterm Assignment

Students will conduct and present one interview with a random respondent within the topic of “Civil society participation and personal engagement in social issues.” Students will have time allocated during the classes to prepare and discuss their questions. The reading response to be handed in should be a summary of major points with a brief critical discussion on relevance to class topics and approximately two pages long.

Topic Presentation

Students will be divided into groups according to a topic based on their interests and will then prepare an interactive presentation for the class. Students will deliver the presentation during assigned time and also hand in supporting materials (such as presentation and reflection on personal contribution to the group presentation).

Final Paper

Personal reflection on the chosen issue inspired by the presentation given by another student group. Short essay elaborating the idea presented, further reflection of this idea and connection to the previous discussions in the class. Due during the final week. A brief presentation to the class is a part of this portion of the grade.

Class Participation

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:

<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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<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 to class

- Practical information, course requirements
- Previous experiences related to the class
- Discussing concepts of civil society, comparison of different definitions of the term, students’ own concepts of civil society

Class:  1.2  Understanding the concept of civil society

- Specifics of Western democracies and their implications for civil society (social capital, social cohesion, civic engagement)


**Week 2**

Class:  2.1  History and the current general state of the Czech civil society

- Specifics of development of the Czech civil society with a focus on the role of non-governmental organizations

Class: 2.2 Community psychology and learning about social issues in the CR

- Mapping social issues in the CR
- Belonging to community and social justice. Setting theoretical background.

*Required reading:* Kloos, 2011, Chapter 1, pp. 2 – 35.

*Deliverables:*

Reading questions for Kloos via Canvas discussion

**Week 3**

Class: 3.1 Community psychology and learning about social issues in the CR

- Belonging to community and social justice. Setting theoretical background. Core values of community psychology.

*Required reading:* Kloos, 2011, Chapter 1, pp. 2 – 35.

*Deliverables:*

Reading test 1

Class: 3.2 Preparation of midterm assignment

Group work and discussions, providing more detailed guidelines for the midterm assignment


**Week 4**

Class: 4.1 Homogeneity and society

- Minorities in a homogeneous society.

*Required reading:* Matějka, 2005, pp. 1 – 11.

Class: 4.2 Czech civil society and civic engagement

- Civic engagement survey 2016 – contents, modes, levels of scale of Czech engagement


*Deliverables:*

Reading questions for Ekman & Amna via Canvas discussion

**Week 5**

Class: 5.1 Inclusion and exclusion of “other” people

- Homelessness as a social stigma: Site visit – Jídelna kuchařek bez domova (Cooks without homes), Homeless women cook for the public and present their culinary skills in their own bistro to help break the stigma of homelessness.

*Required reading:* Strnad, Marek, 2014, pp. 121 -130.

Class: 5.2 Mandatory one-day excursion to Teplice

*Deliverables:*

Reading response 1

Site visit feedback, class excursion feedback

**Week 6**

Class: 6.1 Midterm week
- Presentations of midterm assignments
- Class reflection
- Plan for the second half of the term (topic presentation, final paper)

Deliverables:
Midterm assignment based on the interview
Annotation for final paper

Week 7
Class: 7.1 Inclusion and exclusion of “other” people

- Disability as a social stigma
- Learning about major social psychological perspectives explaining prejudice

Required reading: Gough, McFadden, McDonald, 2013, Chapter 5 Prejudice in practice

Week 8
Class: 8.1 Guest Speaker: Olga Marlin

Class: 8.2 Ethnicity and Prejudice in the CR (2 sessions)

- Ethnic minorities in the CR – roots of prejudices
- Gender and ethnicity

Required reading: Doubek, Levínská & Bittnerová, 2015, pp. 131-152.

Deliverables:
Reading questions for Doubek et al.
Reading test 2

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Ethnicity and prejudice in the CR (2 sessions)

- Focus on schools and school environment
- Inclusion versus segregation in schools

Required reading: Jarkovská et al., 2015, pp. 632-654.

Deliverables:
Reading response 2

Week 10
Class: 10.1 Topic presentation (group assignment) + follow-up discussion

Class: 10.2 Topic presentation (group assignment) + follow-up discussion

Deliverables:
Topic presentation (specific date will be set for groups)
Annotated bibliography (specific date will be set for groups)

Week 11
Class: 11.1 Topic presentation (group assignment) + follow-up discussion

Class: 11.2 Topic presentation (group assignment) + follow-up discussion

Deliverables:
Week 12
Class: 12.1 Field trip to Mezipatra

Class: 12.2 From collective action to prejudice reduction
  - Different perspectives on social change


Week 13
Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week
  
  Presentation of final papers (Thursday)

  *Deliverables:*
  
  Short presentation (slides) – final paper thesis

Class: 13.2 Final Exam Week

  End-of-class discussion

  *Deliverables:*

  Final paper due on Thursday

Course Materials

Readings


Jarkovská, L., Lišková, K., Obrovská, J. (2015). We treat them all the same, but...Disappearing ethnic homogeneity in Czech classrooms and teachers’ responses. Race Ethnicity and Education, pp. 1361-3324.


Matějka, O. (2005), The Sudetenland – A sociological laboratory (or)


