**Course Description**

This course examines crucial issues visible in politics on both sides of the Atlantic: the conflicts between identities and institutions, the impact of historical events and sociocultural developments on the political life of the society, the current challenges to liberal democracy in the era of social media, fake news and populist political mobilization, all of this focused on the particular case of the Czech Lands against a broader backdrop of Europe and the West in general. A historical summary of key developments that had an impact on the formation of modern Czech identity gives way to a look at the institutions of the interwar First Republic of Czechoslovakia as a peculiar incarnation of a nation state, the descent of Czechoslovakia’s democracy into two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, the rebuilding of democracy and “return to Europe” after the 1989 revolution, and the issues, challenges and opportunities brought by political realignments and populist mobilization of the recent decade. Through this, the course hopes to help students answer their broader questions about democracy, its founding conditions and its current state around the world in general.

**Learning Objectives**

By completing this course, students will:

- Identify key moments in modern nation building in the Czech case, and draw basic comparisons with other European nations and the U.S.;
- Critically discuss the ways cultural and social conditions impact on the survival of a democratic system and the political life of a nation in general;
- Compare the constitutional setup and practical functioning of the parliamentary system in the Czech Republic (and, to some extent, in other European nations) to the presidential system of the U.S.;
- Discuss challenges posed by the recent rise in anti-establishment populism, and evaluate potential responses.

**Course Prerequisites**

None

**Methods of Instruction**

Lectures, class discussion, discussion of required readings, presentations.

**Assessment and Final Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Current Events Presentations</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Midterm Test</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Current Topics</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Requirements**

Current Events Presentations
Students will prepare a presentation of the topic they have chosen for the final paper. The topic and findings will be presented to class. Classmates are expected to provide constructive criticism in order to help the presenting student to improve his/her work before submitting the Final Paper. Presentations will take place during week 10.

**Midterm Test**

Students will choose from 12 topics, answering 10 of them in the mid-term test. Understanding of the given problem will be more important than memorizing data.

**Final Paper**

(2,500 words)

Students will write an essay on the topic of interest from the Czech or Slovak politics. They should show clear understanding of given topic, independent critical thinking, and deeper analysis. Students will be able to choose a topic upon discussion with the tutor in the class. The essay topic and a brief synopsis are due to be announced by week 7, the final essay is due during finals week.

**Current Topics**

Two students will present news from a newspaper or other media to the entire class at the beginning of each lecture. Class discussion will follow. Students will be evaluated for their performance.

**Class Participation**

Reading is assigned for each class and participation in class discussion is expected. The course exams will be based on both the materials discussed in class and the reading assigned.

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to give quizzes on the reading or past lecture content or ask for reading presentation with little or no notification.*

**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**

To encourage engaged learning, regular class attendance is required throughout the program. This includes any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as internship, service-learning, or other required field placement.

An excused absence in a CIEE course will only be considered if approved by a CIEE Center Director/Academic Director (not the Instructor), and:

- it is a self-certified absence for illness (only once per course, requires formal request before or within 24
Unexcused absences include personal travel and/or travel delays, as well as missing more than 25% of a single class period (including tardiness and early departure). Assessments missed due to unexcused absences will be marked as zero. Students with over 10% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff. Students with over 20% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff, receive a formal warning letter (shared with their home institution) and lose 10% of the final course point total (e.g., a final A grade of 93% will be lowered to a B grade of 83%).

For more detail, please consult your CIEE Academic Manual.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is essential to a positive and inclusive teaching and learning environment. All students are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness, respect, and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own can result in grade penalties or disciplinary action. See the CIEE Student Academic Manual for further information on academic integrity.

---

**N.B. Course schedule and co-curriculars are subject to change. The final duration and distribution of content and assignments will be determined and presented to students at the onset of the course.**

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: Introduction to the Czech Politics

Required reading: Čornej, Pokorný (2000)

Political theory behind voting; voting and elections; direct democracy (plebiscite, Swiss Union); lot – Athens; representative democracy, republic (Rousseau, Madison); rule of law; rule of majority; minority rights; usurpation, succession, ex officio, appointment, competition, acclamation, co-optation, plebiscite, lot, election; loose mandate, imperative mandate; majority system, STV, proportional system, mixed system.

Required reading:

Krejčí, pp.xv-xliv

**Week 2**

Class: History of elections in Bohemia and Moravia I

Parliamentarism of the estates (English Parliamentarism); Przemyslids and Luxembourgs; Hussite assembly, general assembly of the Czech crown (1327-1620), estate and absolute monarchy, elections in Austria (1848-1918), elections in Hungary (Slovakia).

Required reading: Krejčí, pp.1-128

History of elections in Bohemia and Moravia II; the first republic; WWII; the third republic.

Required reading:

Krejčí, pp.129-211; Civic Society and the State, Packet, Chapter 9, pp. 182-end (xerocopied handout - library)

**Week 3**

Class: The period of bureaucratic socialism

Required reading: Krejčí, pp. 213-223; Civic Society and the State, Packet, Part II, Chapter 6, pp. 114-end of chapter (xerox handout - library)

Democracy in transition
**Week 4**

Class: Elections after 1989; local elections; Magdeburg law.

Required reading:

Krejčí, pp. 227-274; Magstadt, T. Flawed Democracies (xerox handout - library)

Current political system in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, USA; division of power; parliamentary democracy, presidential system, directly elected president (Slovakia), electoral college (USA), president elected by the parliament (Czech Republic).

Required reading:


**Week 5**

Class: Municipal level of government

Czech Republic, United States; proportionally elected city council; single-district elected city council; popularly elected mayor; council elected mayor.

Required reading:

Since local structure is very recent and not included in textbooks, a handout will be available at CIEE at least a week in advance.

Regional level of government; Czech Republic, EU, United States; division of power between country, state, region, municipalities.

Required reading: A handout on regional government structure will be available at CIEE one week in advance.

**Week 6**

Class: Midterm Test

Czech Republic in international institutions: EU, NATO, OECD, GATT, IMF etc.; Czech Republic and international treaties – an important part of the Czech legal structure.

Required reading:

Students will read basic information on EU, NATO, OECD, GATT, IMF from the organizations’ websites.

**Week 7**

Class: The role of media in Czech society.

Required reading: Students will follow the Czech media for a week and will write a one-page observational report and do a presentation for the class – English language transcripts can be viewed on HYPERLINK "http://www.praguemonitor.com"www.praguemonitor.com.

Role of media – continuation.

**Week 8**

Class: Courts; police; employee unions.

Right to know, right to participate, right to justice; from Helsinki conference to the Aarhus Convention.

Required reading: The Aarhus Convention (available at its website)

**Week 9**

Class: Conflict of interest
Corruption in the parliament, government, state-owned companies, private companies; accountability; transparency international; corruption index.

Required reading:

Transparency International website

Conflict of interest at the local level; municipal corruption; preventing corruption.

**Week 10**
Class: Work in Progress.

Students will present a paragraph on their final essay as a work in progress. Students must register their essay topic & synopsis in the CIEE essay database by this date!

Direct democracy; Ancient Greece; De Gaulle; Switzerland; California, EU, Referendum 2000, Tabor Road Referendum.

**Week 11**
Class: Environmental policy in the Czech Republic.


Environmental policy in Prague.

**Week 12**
Class: Civil society -- civic movements and NGOs throughout the Czech Republic.

Required reading:
- Fisher, Getting to yes – Chapter 4, pp. 56-80 - library;

Field trip: visit to a Town Hall or Parliament

**Week 13**
Class: Final Exam Week

Final paper presentations.

End-of-course discussion

**Course Materials**

**Readings**

**Required:**
- Čornej, Petr and Jiří Pokorný. *A Brief History of the Czech Lands to 2000*, Prague: Práh, 2000. to be read before the course starts!

**Recommended:**

