



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title:	Tribal Myths and Traditions of the Czechs
Course code:	HIST 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course:	Business, Arts and Sciences, Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3.00
Contact hours:	45.00
Term:	Fall 2023

Course Description

Many historical figures and phenomena that Czechs know well may remain a mystery to foreigners because of the lack of context. These omnipresent fragments of history are shared by members of the society and are usually modified by various ideological and political intentions, which eventually results in the creation of a national myth/myths. This course focuses on various forms of myths: pre-Christian (arrival of Czechs), Christian legends (St Wenceslas), folk tales, the "national" myth of the Czech National Revival, modern state-forming myths (Czechoslovak legionnaires) and urban legend (the Springman), and connects them also to various traditions, such as folk traditions throughout the year, as well as traditional skills like beer brewing, fish farming etc. Students engage in a historiographical and partially also anthropological analysis and interpretation of selected past events. To decipher how they came into existence, it is necessary to understand their historical context and the way they were understood and explained by contemporaries, the way they were interpreted by their followers, the way they were used, misused and imposed by politicians. Moreover, the course discusses the role paradigm shifts played in these processes and closely examines and critique some of the relatively well-defined pillars of public knowledge and collective identity.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- critically discuss the historical, social, religious, geographical, and national development of the Czech Republic;
- research and compare certain rituals, myths archetypes found in the Czech context with the situation in other countries;
- analyze and critically explain generally accepted constellations, and thus de-mythicize some historical facts which were distorted by paradigm shifts;
- describe and evaluate historical and social resentments, collective identity, and causes and consequences of important historical events in the history of what is now called the Czech Republic.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

Lectures with PowerPoint presentations, films, music samples, discussions, and field trips. All readings and materials will be published on the course Canvas site.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. In-Class Presentations	20%
2. Midterm Exam	20%
3. Final Exam	20%
4. Research Paper	20%
5. Participation and Homework Assignments	20%
TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

In-Class Presentations

Students will prepare and deliver in class a 10-minute **presentation** which will introduce the topic, the progress of research and research findings.

Midterm Exam

Final Exam

Students will take two **in-class exams** (midterm and final), each of which focuses on topics from the particular half of semester.

Research Paper

Students will select a topic of their interest, which will be approved by the instructor, and write a research paper (1250-1500 words) on the topic.

Participation and Homework Assignments

They also have to submit six assignments which will be included in the participation segment of the final grade, therefore failure to submit them will lower the participation grade.

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 hours, cannot miss assessment worth more than 5% of final course grade)
- a doctor's note from a local medical professional is provided
- evidence of a family emergency is provided
- it is a pre-approved observance of religious holiday

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: 1.1 Introduction

Periodization of the Czech history, interpretations and misinterpretations, historiography and ideology, paradigm shift, national myths.

Class: 1.2 Old Czech Myths I: Arrival of the Czechs

Fragments of pre-Christian Slavic mythology: Forefather Čech and arrival of Czechs to Bohemia, the role of Říp mountain. Uncovering the real core of the myth in old texts through archaeological findings and semiotic analysis.

Required Readings:

Wolverton 2009, 35-36.

Week 2

Class: 2.1 Old Czech Myths II: Přemysl the Ploughman

Přemyslid dynastic myth: Přemysl the Ploughman. Inauguration ritual of Přemyslids. Local or Indo-European origin? Role of Slavic mythology in the Czech National Revival.

Required Readings:

Demetz 1997, 3-26.

Wolverton 2009, 40-48.

Class: 2.2 The Bohemian Heaven: Christian Mythology

Patron saints of Bohemia: St Wenceslas, St Ludmilla, St Adalbert, St Agnes of Bohemia, St John of Nepomuk. Their ideological role in formation of the state of Bohemia, their legacy up to the present.

Required Readings:

Bartlett 2007, 47-70.

Samerski 2007, 81-91.

Week 3

Class: 3.1 Greatest Czech, Bohemian or European?

Was Charles IV greatest Czech, Bohemian or European? Universal ruler of Christianity? Founder of the medieval state of the Bohemian Crown? Interpretation of his reception throughout history and understanding him as the co-creator of the Czech statehood.

Required Readings:

Rosario 2000, 71-76.

Nagy and Schaer 2001, 69-73.

Class: 3.2 Heretics or reformers? Hussite heresy against the European Catholicism

The icons: Jan Huss, Jan Žižka – their lives, adoration and fall. Ambivalent interpretations of Hussites in history. Hussite legacy at the birth of an independent Czechoslovak state: the Czechoslovak legion in WW I. A Hussite battle song as a candidate for the Czech national anthem, its cover versions in the 19th and 20th centuries: from Romanticism to heavy metal. Hussite legacy used by Communists.

Required Readings:

Šmahel 1998, 79-96.

Šmahel 1990, 27-33.

Fudge 2002, 66-68.

Week 4

Class: 4.1 Prague Legends: Devil's Stones in Vyšehrad

What is the origin of the strangely arranged stone columns in Vyšehrad? Were these stones originally menhirs constructed by ancient prehistoric people? What is the meaning of the mysterious inscription on the stones? An old legend is confronted with archaeology and geology.

Field trip: Visit to the Vyšehrad church and the Devil's Stones

Class: 4.2 16th Century Legacy in Everyday Life: Fish Farming and Beer Brewing

Traditions: Construction of ponds, fish farming – large projects in the 16th-century Bohemia. Jakub Krčín of Jelčany and a new form of landscape. The carp as Czech national Christmas meal. Fish farming as a scientific discipline.

Beer brewing during centuries. Scientific beer brewing: Tadeáš Hájek z Hájku, František Ondřej Poupě. Beer culture, pub culture.

Week 5

Class: 5.1 Rudolf II's Magical Prague

Superstition vs. natural philosophy of Paracelsianism. Occult disciplines: alchemy and astrology. Were Tycho Brahe and Kepler magicians? Maharal and Golem. A picture of 16th-century Prague in modern art.

Field trip: visit to Strahov Library's historical book collection

Required Readings:

Pařez 2004, 57-80.

Marshall 2006, 110-127, 151-184.

Class: 5.2 Libri Prohibiti – Prohibited Books.

Definition of the Libri prohibiti. Were prohibited books really prohibited? Vatican's Index and Index of Koniáš. Copernicus. Censorship in Czech history in the 19th and 20th centuries: Metternich, Bach, Austria-Hungary, Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes. Necessity of censorship. Paradigm shift and censorship.

Required Readings:

Gingerich 2004, 135-146.

Čornejová 1991, 90-92.

Week 6

Class: 6.1 Review, Discussion

Midterm Exam Period

Class: 6.2 Midterm Exam

Midterm Exam Period

Week 7

Class: 7.1 Blaník Mountain Myth

Midterm Exam Period

Sleeping army of knights led by the legendary St. Wenceslas awaiting the right moment to defend Bohemia. When and why did this myth appear? Its role in the Czech National Revival. Blaník in literature.

Required Readings:

Vrchlický 2010, 210-213.

Class: 7.2 Czech Year:

Folk Customs, Traditions, Celebrations and Rituals, Christmastime Customs, Traditions, Carols.

Week 8

Class: 8.1 Birth of a Czech National Myth, Czechs and Slavs.

Panslavism: a Myth of Slavic Reciprocity.

The birth of the modern Czech nation. Three concepts of national identity. Czech National Revival's transformation into a political movement of the middle class. Exclusion of the role of clergy and aristocracy from the national myth. The "soft Slavic linden" vs. the "hard Germanic oak". Panslavism – Slavic identity, its rise and fall.

Required Readings:

Dobrovský 2006, 97-103.

Havlíček Borovský 2007, 250-254.

Class: 8.2 Czech National Revival and the Creation of Historical Myths:

Literary falsifications, errors in historical painting and sculpture

Falsifications and their revelation: Controversy over the Manuscripts. How did revivalist artists depict the clothes of the first Slavs and historical Czechs on their paintings and sculptures.

Required Readings:

Palacký 2007, 322-329.

Week 9

Class: 9.1 Czech National Revival Field Trip: From Vyšehrad to the Palacký Monument

Examples of the Czech national myth of the 19th century: mixed and selected features from the historical legacy

Research Paper Presentations 1

Class: 9.2 Emigration from the Lands of the Bohemian Crown

Emigration as a general problem of Czech history: 1620, 1848, 1870-1910, 1929, 1938, 1948, 1968.

Why and how? Emigration to the USA. People and places. Searching for Czech and Moravian communities.

Required Readings:

Habenicht 1996

Albright 2012, 112-114

Research Paper Presentations 2

Week 10

Class: 10.1 How Deserters Fought for Independence: Czechoslovak Legionnaires in WW I

WW I: Czechoslovak legionnaires in France, Italy and Russia and the anabasis of the latter. Sokol members in the Middle Asia: the role of Sokol in the Czechoslovak legion. The importance of the Hussite legacy. Did Czechoslovak legionnaires steal Russian golden treasure? The legionnaires' return home, and their position and role in the Czechoslovak Republic. The former legionnaires as victims of reprisals from both Nazis and Communists.

Required Readings:

Agnew 2004, 161-172.

Documentary film about Czechoslovak legionnaires in WW I.

Research Paper Presentations 3

Class: 10.2 The Protectorate myths I: Parachuters of Anthropoid

Decision of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile to Heydrich. Operation "Anthropoid". Never captured paratroopers – heroes of Anti-Nazi resistance. Lidice and Ležáky. Positive consequences. Heydrich's assassination negatively received by Communists and why it did not become a modern myth.

Required Readings:

Burian 2002

Heydrich 2010, 321-326.

Documentary film about Czechoslovak pilots in Royal Air Force.

Research Paper Presentations 4

Week 11

Class: 11.1 The Protectorate Myths II: Springman

An urban legend about the Springman, the first Czech superhero. Modification of the hero in art. A narrative that became a legend of anti-Nazi resistance.

Required Readings:

McDonald – Kaplan 1995, 137.

Animated movie "Springman and the SS" by J. Trnka.

Class: 11.2 Rychlé šípy (The Rapid Arrows)

Czech writer Jaroslav Foglar and his novels about a fictional club of five boys. The first comics for youngsters suppressed by the Nazis as well as Communists. Dark Alleys, "Hedgehog in the Cage" and the flying bicycle of Jan Tleskač. Vont organization and its anthem without words. Did Rapid Arrows exist and if so, where did they live?

Mirek Dušín for President! "Rapid Arrows" vs. "Fellowship of the Cat Paw".

Week 12

Class: 12.1 Jára (da) Cimrman: Universal Genius from the Alcohol-Free Wine Cellar

Fictional polymath, traveler, teacher, inventor, composer, who was nearly elected the Greatest Czech in Czech TV contest. Jára Cimrman in theatre, movie, exhibitions and street names.

Required Readings:

Excerpts from "seminars" before theatre plays. Translated by Andrew Roberts.

Class: 12.2 Review and General Discussion

Research Paper due

Week 13

Class: 13.1 Revision and end-of-course discussion

Final Exam Week

Class: 13.2 Final Exam

Final Exam Week

Course Materials

Readings

Required:

Agnew H., *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, Stanford 2004, pp. 161-172.

Albright M., *Prague Winter. A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948*, New York 2012, pp. 112-114.

Bartlett R.: *From Paganism to Christianity in medieval Europe*, in: Berend N. (ed.), *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus', c. 900-1200*; Cambridge University Press 2007, pp. 47-70.

Burian M. et al., *Assassination. Operation Anthropoid 1941-1942*, Prague 2002.

Čornejová I., *The Jesuit School and John Amos Comenius*, in: Pešková J. (ed), *Homage to J. A.*

Comenius, Prague 1991, pp. 90-92.

Demetz P.: *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes from the Life of a European City*, Hill and Wang New York 1997, pp. 3-26.

Dobrovský J., *Concerning the Constant and Enduring Allegiance of the Slav Peoples to the House of Austria*, in: Trencsényi B. – Kopeček M (eds): *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) Vol. I*, Central European University Press Budapest – New York, 2006, pp. 97-103.

Fudge, T. A. (ed.), *Crusade Against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418-1437: Sources and Documents for the Hussite Crusades*. Aldershot 2002, pp. 66-68.

Gingerich O., *The Book Nobody Read. Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus*, New York 2004, pp. 135-146.

Habenicht J., *History of Czechs in America*, St. Paul 1996.

Havlíček Borovský K., *The Slav and the Czech*, in: Trencsényi B. – Kopeček M (eds): *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) Vol. II*, Central European University Press Budapest – New York, 2007, pp. 250-254.

Heydrich R., *On the Elimination of the Czech Nation*, in: Bažant J. – Bažantová N. – Starn F. (eds), *The Czech Reader. History, Culture, Politics*. Duke University Press 2010, pp. 321-326.

Marshall P., *The Magic Circle of Rudolf II: Alchemy, Astrology and Magic in Renaissance Prague*, New York 2006, pp. 110-127; 151-184.

McDonald C. – Kaplan J., *Prague in the Shadow of Swastika*, Prague 1995, 137.

Nagy B. – Schaer F. (eds.), *Autobiography of Charles IV*, Budapest 2001, pp. 69-73.

Palacký F., Letter to Frankfurt, 11 April 1848, in: Trencsényi B. – Kopeček M (eds): Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) Vol. II, Central European University Press Budapest – New York, 2007, pp. 322-329.

Pařez J., An Essay on Paracelsus and his Influence on Natural Philosophy in Bohemia under Rudolf II, in: Acta historica rerum naturalium necnon technicarum. New Series, vol. 8, Prague 2004, pp. 57-80.

Rosario I., Art and Propaganda: Charles IV and Bohemia, Boydell Press 2000, pp. 71-76.

Samerski S., The Quest for a Symbol – Wenceslas and the Czech State, in: S. J. Kirschbaum (ed.), Central European History and the European Union. The Meaning of Europe, New York 2007, pp. 81-91.

Šmahel F., The Hussite Movement: an anomaly of European history?, in: Teich M. (ed.), Bohemia in History, Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 79-96.

Šmahel F.: Prophets without honour? Jan Hus – Heretic or Patriot? History Today 40, No. 4, 1990, pp. 27-33.

Vrchlický J., The Ballad of Blaník, in: Bařant J. – Bařantová N. – Starn F. (eds), The Czech Reader. History, Culture, Politics. Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 210-213.

Wolverton L. (ed.), Cosmas of Prague. The Chronicle of the Czechs, Washington D.C. 2009, pp. 35-36, 40-48

Recommended:

Bařant J. – Bařantová N. – Starn F. (eds), The Czech Reader. History, Culture, Politics. Duke University Press, 2010.

Čornej P. – Pokorný J., A Brief History of the Czech Lands to 2004, Prague 2004.

David Z. V., Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquist's Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther, Washington – Baltimore 2003.

Evans R. J. W., Rudolf II and His World. A Study in Intellectual History 1576-1612, Oxford 1973.

Evans R. J. W., The Making of Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700, Oxford 1979.

Fudge T. A., The Magnificent Ride. The First Reformation in Bohemia, Aldershot 1998.

Gellner E., Nations and Nationalism, Oxford 1983.

Okey R., The Habsburg Monarchy. From Enlightenment to Eclipse, New York 2001.

Pánek J. – Tůma, O. et al.: A History of the Czech Lands, Prague 2009.

Poliřenský J. V., History of Czechoslovakia in Outline, Prague 1991 (2nd edition).

Skilling H. G., T. G. Masaryk: Against the Current 1882-1914, The Macmillan Press 1994.

Teich M. (ed.), Bohemia in History, Cambridge University Press 1998.