



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title:	Contemporary Czech Culture: Alternative Literature, Music, and Lifestyles
Course code:	CEAS 3002 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

The course provides critical insights into the various elements of Czech non-mainstream culture, such as graffiti and street-art, political art collectives, the underground, new social movements, psychedelia, D.I.Y. music scenes, LGBTQA, social theatre, and others. It examines critical theory to discuss the practices of "alternative" urban lives in postindustrial society and certain trends of artistic production. The focus is on the political interpretation of youth subversion and disclosures of power mechanisms. Visuals and field trips to graffiti and other subcultural sites are an inherent part of this course.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Interpret and assess the streets and other public spaces of the city and describe the styles of five local writers;
- Classify the topics and styles in contemporary Czech art;
- Compare poetics of five Czech bands/venues;
- Assess the influence of the history of the Czech underground on Charter 77;
- Critically discuss the connection between culture and politics;
- Conceptualize and contextualize expressions of new social movements;
- Apply critical imagination in decoding of subversive artifacts.

Course Prerequisites

None. The course is suitable for anyone interested in cultural anthropology, cultural studies, visual studies, sociology of music, semiotics, and creative fields.

Methods of Instruction

- seminar with mini-lectures
- discussions of readings and artifacts on the basis of lectures, readings, and presentations
- three field trips (legal graffiti site, festival, contemporary art museum)

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Reading Check and Reaction Papers	20%
2. Reading Presentation and Debate Leader	10%
3. Midterm Test	20%
4. Final Project on the topics covered in class	30%
5. Class Participation	20%
TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

Reading Check and Reaction Papers

For each class (except midterm and final week), upload a write-up for one of the required or recommended

readings.

Reading Presentation and Debate Leader

Grading takes into account the accuracy in delivering main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Extra images are a plus.

Midterm Test

an essay of 3 pages (750 words) on topics covered during the first half of the semester; questions are included after each week's description.

+ a paragraph final project description with two sources, (the pitch can be brought into class).

Final Project on the topics covered in class

Final Project on the topics covered in class (graffiti and street art, music, etc.) 8 pages/2400 words. MLA format. Research papers are evaluated according to the quality of research and ability to use the concepts from lectures and readings. A short presentation of each project is required. You can select e.g. one of the Czech graffiti and other artists, bands, venues, political art collective, etc. Research, photo, interpret, comment, compare, etc. Creative project is a possible alternative after approval (film, songs, poetry, etc.). In that situation a two page (500 words) explanation (technical, creative ideas descriptions, concepts from class material, the journey of how the project developed) is required.

Class Participation

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 Introductions

course requirements – tasks with models, week-by-week schedule, questions.

Lecture: Course terminology: avant-garde, counterculture, underground, alternative, subcultures, new social movements, etc. Theorizing culture – Critical Theory: Frankfurt, Birmingham School, and beyond.

Study guide: Name three branches of the avant-gardes pertinent to contemporary culture, their manifestos and their authors. Define counter-culture, name its theorist and his book. Define new social movement. Name schools theorizing culture, their timeframe, three representatives and main ideas. What points does Lyotard see that take us to postmodern paradigm?

Class: 1.2 Vyšehrad field trip: five Czech greats

Required reading:

Jonssonova

Recommended reading:

Kellner (2003)

Rojek (2003)

Week 2

Class: 2.1 CZECH ALTERNATIVE MUSIC AND MUSIC VIDEO

Required reading:

Maderová (2013) "Czech Alternative Music and Rock" (CIEE Library)

Ramet (1994).

Recommended reading:

Czech Rock Lyrics. FPB and UJD. Webpages of Už jsme doma,

showing: Metrofilm, UJD

Recommended Listening:

Czech bands: Radůza, Gipsy.cz, Gaia Mesiah, Vypsaná Fixa, Oldřich Janota, UJD, Čechomor, Yellow Sisters, BBP, New Kids Underground, Birds Build Underground, Priesnitz, Jablkoň, Rudovous, DG 307, Budoár stare dámy, Ještě jsme se nedohodli, Chadima, Richter, Jasná páka, Psí vojáci, Tata boys,

Traband, etc.

Study guide: Name five Czech bands and their genre. What is the first album in Czech rock history? What is the best album in Czech rock history? What is the name of the Czechoslovak guitar George Harrison played in his early career?

What was the pre and post 89 situation for Czech bands? What are the specific poetics compared to US bands? What types of names were typical for pre and post-89 period? How can East block bands reach audiences in the West? Who has made it?

Assignment: R1 Czech Rock

Class: 2.2 Field Trip Concert

TBA

Week 3

Class: 3.1 UNDERGROUND, THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Required reading:

Views from the Inside – manifesto by Martin Jirous

The Plastic People of the Universe. *Lyrics*. Praha: Maťa, 1997.

Topol (1995), 30-32.

Pavel (1999,) 1-42.

Study guide: Who was the main organizer of the Czech Underground? How does he describe the goals in his manifesto? What is the influence of the PPU on Charter 77? What forced them underground? Were they Christians or left wing activists? Name main bands and personalities? What strategies did these leaders propose to keep the culture alive in the midst of persecutions? What is the band's current situation? How did the band solve the tragic situation after the death of Mejla Hlavsa? What is the name of the best album of the PPU?

What kind of lyrics have the PPU had over their existence?

Who is Pavel Z and Jachym Topol? What is The Game Park about?

Assignment: R2 Underground

Class: 3.2 Underground Poetry: Topol, Pavel Z, Magor

Week 4

Class: 4.1 PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH.

Addiction and Anxiety. In Pot We Trust: legalization of medicinal marijuana in the Czech Republic

Required reading:

Keller (2006)

Garber (2013)

Recommended reading:

Zábranský (2007)

Study guide: What does psychedelic mean? Who are the five main psychedelic researchers? What is the specific contribution of the Czech researcher Stanislav Grof?

Assignment: R3 Psychedelic Research

Class: 4.2 Excerpts: Katka, One Way Ticket, The Substance

Week 5

Class: 5.1 HUMAN RIGHTS

Jan Palach, Václav Havel, new social movements

Film excerpts: Burning Bush, Citizen Václav Havel

Required reading:

Zizek (2013)

Williams (2011)

Recommended reading:

Andriolo (2006)

Study guide: What is the history of One World film festival? What is its agenda? Name three works written by Vaclav Havel. What are Havel's dates? What does the word samizdat mean? Define dissidents. What are the new social movements Williams talk about in Related Fields? What protest movements does Zizek talk about in The Impossible Happens? What does he mean by saying the impossible happens – which philosopher does he have the term from? What is the legacy of Jan Palach? What is the name of the director and what did she want to say by Burning Bush?

Assignment: R4 Human Rights

Class: 5.2 Field Trip to One World Film Festival

Week 6

Class: 6.1 HIPSTERS OLD AND NEW. RECYCLING.

Midterm Exam Period

Required reading:

Erbacher (2012)

Schiermer (2014)

Assignment: R5 Hipsters

Study guide: Why are contemporary subcultures lacking in authenticity? Can there be a real subculture in postmodern situation? What is the origin of the current hipster subculture? What are some of the characteristics of hipsters – how do they differ from earlier subcultures? What do hipsters wear? What do they listen to? What do they eat? Where are the main centers of hipster post-subculture in Prague? Name five vintage technical items hipsters are fascinated by.

Film excerpts Prague Krymska street

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HuhJBEPzUE>

Berlin, Germany: Trendy Prenzlauer Berg

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u_o0xp4OT0

Vice Hipsters?

Class: 6.2 Guest Speaker

Week 7

Class: 7.1 Midterm Test

Midterm Exam Period

Class: 7.2 The Can graffiti film

Week 8

Class: 8.1 GRAFFITI: URBAN DECOR OR POLITICS

Lecture: Artcrime

Required reading

Magid (2007)

Pospiszyl & Lékó (2007) 1-19.

Study guide: What does Magid claim about graffiti? Why is he interested in CAP crew? What is CAP crew style? What is the difference between graffiti and street art? Name five Czech graffiti artists (crews) and describe their style.

Assignment: R6 Graffiti

Class: 8.2 films excerpts: Czech Republic, Exit through the Gift Shop, Style Wars.

Week 9

Class: 9.1 STREET ART

Required reading:

Banksy. (2005).

Kaláb, Barenthin Lindblad, Tobias (2008).

Recommended:

Streetfonts on facebook

<http://www.widewalls.ch/interview-with-jan-kalab-march-2015/>

Study guide: When was the legal site Tesnov started and by whom? What is Banksy's take on the "broken window" theory? Describe Banksy's style. What are different approaches to graffiti in Europe? What was Namesfest

Assignment: R7 Street Art

Class: 9.2 Site Visit: Tesnov Legal Graffiti Site Visit

Thu Site visit: Tesnov legal graffiti site visit

Meeting place: Florenc McDonald's under the freeway half hour after class start

Week 10

Class: 10.1 ART AND POLITICS

Political Art Collectives: Ztohoven, Podebal, Guma Guar, Rafani. Culture Jamming

Field trip Parallel Polis <http://www.paralelnipolis.cz/en/>:

1. Cryptocurrencies, free market and parallel economies
2. Cryptoanarchy and other concepts for developing free society
3. Political art
4. Open source, 3D print, copyright

Required reading:

Klein (2001)

Harris (2009)

Film: Czech Dream by Vit Klusak and Filip Remunda

Assignment: R8 Art and Politics

Class: 10.2 EASTER BREAK, NO CLASSES

Week 11

Class: 11.1 HAPPENING, ACTION ART, SOCIAL ART CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

Required reading:

Morganová (2013)

chapter of your choice from: Klienhamplova & Stejskalova (2015)

Study guide: What is Action Art? Give examples and three names. Who is an artist, what is their role? What is the role of a curator?

DVD After Velvet

Assignment: R9 action art

Class: 11.2 Field Trip DOX

Week 12

Class: 12.1 EXPATS IN PRAGUE

Expat communities: writings, publishing, activism, cafes.

Required reading:

New Orleans Review. Ten Years After Velvet Revolution. Voices from the Czech Republic

Recommended:

Kimberly (2013)

film: Rexpatriots

Assignment: R10 Expats

Class: 12.2 St. Agnes Sculpture Garden Field Trip

Week 13

Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week

Presentation of Final Projects

Class: 13.2 Final Exam Week

End-of-course discussion

Course Materials

Readings

- Banksy. *Wall and Piece*. London: Random House, 2005.
- Harris, Stephen: "What is Cheaper than Nothing at All?" *Bright Lights Film Journal* (January 31, 2009). <http://brightlightsfilm.com/what-is-cheaper-than-nothing-at-all-czech-dream-culture-jamming-and-consumerism/#.WYTUK4iGM2w> (retrieved on January 15, 2010).
- Jirasek, Alois. *Old Czech Legends*. London: Forest Books, 1992.
- Jonssonova, Pavla. *Introductory Notes to the Reader of Alternative Culture*.
- Kaláb, Jan, Barenthin Lindblad, "Tobias. 10-15". *Names*. Praha, Třafačka, 2008. 22-30.
- Keller, Robert. "Rappers, Ravers, and Rock Stars. The Deviatizing Hand of Music in Psychotropia". In *Psychotropic Drugs and Popular Culture* Jefferson. NC: McFarland & Company, 2006.
- Kellner, Douglas. "The Frankfurt School." In Edwards, Tim (ed.) *Cultural Theory*. London: Sage, 2003.
- Klein, Naomi. "Culture Jamming." in *No Logo*. London: Flamingo, 2001.
- Klienhamplova, Barbora, Stejskalova, Tereza. *Who Is an Artist?* Praha: Academy of Fine Arts, 2015.
- Machovec, Martin (ed.). *Views from the Inside. Czech Underground Literature and Culture (1948-1989)*. Praha: FFUK, 2006.
- Maderová, Blanka, Jurková, Zuzana, and Veselý, Karel. *To Touch the World: Czech Musical Alternative 1968-*

2013. Praha: Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy v Praze, 2013. (CIEE Library)
- Magid, Václav. In: *Crew against People* (Blez, Crap, Dize, Key, Kto, Masker, Mosd). Praha, Bigg Boss, 2007. 7-16.
 - Morganová, Pavlína. *Czech Action Art*. Praha: Karolinum Press, 2013. (CIEE Library)
 - Pavel Z. *Time is a Mid-Night Scream*. Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 1999. pp. 1-42.
 - Pospiszyl, Tomáš, Lékó, István. 1-19. In *Street Art Praha*. Praha, Arbor vitae, 2007. 17-21.
 - Riedel, Jaroslav (ed.). *The Plastic People of the Universe. Lyrics*. Praha: Maťa, 1997.
 - Rojek, Chris. "Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School." In Edwards, Tim (ed.) *Cultural Theory*. London: Sage, 2003.
 - Sokolova, Vera. "State Approaches to Homosexuality and Non-Heterosexual Lives in Czechoslovakia under State Socialism." In *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
 - Sullivan, Niki. "Pop Culture and Queer". In *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: NYU Press, 2003.
 - Topol, Jáchym. *Game Park*. Prague: Yazyk, 1995, 164-165.
 - Williams, Patrick J. "Related Fields". In *Subcultural Theory. Traditions and Concepts*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
 - Žižek, Slavoj. "The Impossible Happens". In *Demanding the Impossible*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

Recommended:

- Andriolo, Karin. "The Twice-Killed: Imagining Protest Suicide." *American Anthropologist*, 108, 2006.
- Czech Rock Lyrics. FPB and UJD. Website of Uz jsme doma, accessed April 7th, 2004.
- Machovec, Martin: "Czech Underground Literature, 1969-1989. A Challenge to Textual Studies." In *Voice, Text, Hypertext, Emerging Practices in Textual Studies*. Modiano Raimonda et al. (ed.) Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003.
- Zábřanský, Tomáš. Methamphetamine in the Czech Republic. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 37(1), 155-180. Retrieved Sept. 27, 2007.