



## **CIEE Prague, Czech Republic**

<b>Course title:</b>	Franz Kafka: A Prague Writer
<b>Course code:</b>	LITT 3004 PRAG
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	Business, Arts and Sciences, Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. semester credits:</b>	3.00
<b>Contact hours:</b>	45.00
<b>Term:</b>	Fall 2023

### **Course Description**

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) has become recognized as one of the leading figures in world literature. Perhaps more than any other major author, Kafka is associated with one geographical location: the city of Prague. Kafka's works themselves are not explicitly about Prague, nor are they set in Prague. But we cannot say that Prague is irrelevant to Kafka's works, for Kafka spent almost all of his life in this city. Therefore, we cannot "read" Prague through or into Kafka's works, but comparing the two is surely fruitful. The most obvious connection between Kafka's works and the city of Prague is Franz Kafka the historical person. While one always wants to be cautious about biographizing creative work, this course takes into consideration Kafka's life and times in reading and analyzing his fiction. Such an adventure is best undertaken in the city of Prague itself. Kafka's fiction, which is read in the course, is organized in a chronological manner, along with relevant critical material for each work. However, less time-bound thematic issues are also addressed in a less linear fashion, such as the cultural and historical interaction with the fiction, Kafka's development as a writer, the impact of Kafka's biographical story on his stories, Kafka's use of animal characters, and the narrative innovations that Kafka implemented. The course focuses on a selection from Kafka's many well-known short stories and one of his three novels. Kafka's works are studied in English translation; they were originally written in German.

### **Learning Objectives**

By completing this course, students will:

- Summarize Kafka's general biography and describe his innovative writing style;
- Describe and illustrate the intersection of German, Jewish, and Czech identities in Prague in the early 20th century and articulate how Kafka's writing is connected to his historical and cultural context;
- Understand, assess and analyze the story line and the main issues of each story and novel covered in the course;
- Understand and articulate the main idea of at least one critical article on Kafka;
- Write an effective literary analysis essay;
- Have prepared and delivered an effective in-class presentation on a critical article;
- Demonstrate different ways of thinking about literature, culture, and literary analysis.

### **Course Prerequisites**

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. However, the course will mainly appeal to students who have an interest in literature, and in reading and discussing stories. It is more important to have an interest in this type of learning than it is to have experience studying literature.

### **Methods of Instruction**

- Short lectures (often with PowerPoint presentation)
- Open class discussion to interpret literary works
- Small-group activities and discussions
- Student presentations (including PowerPoint presentation)
- Several field trips (Kafka museum, Prague Old Town, etc.)

### **Assessment and Final Grade**

1.	Midterm Exam	15%
2.	Final Exam	15%

3.	Essay	20%
4.	Weekly Insight Assignments	15%
5.	Presentation	15%
6.	Participation	20%
	TOTAL	100%

## **Course Requirements**

### **Midterm Exam**

Both exams will be in-class written essay exams. They will most likely be open-book. The Midterm Exam will focus on the “breakthrough” part of the course. The exams will not cover The Trial.

### **Final Exam**

Both exams will be in-class written essay exams. They will most likely be open-book. The Final Exam will focus on the “mid” and “late” parts of the course. The exams will not cover The Trial.

### **Essay**

An argumentative literary-analysis essay of 1500-2200 words (5-9 pages) that focuses on The Trial. There is a detailed assignment for the essay on the course Canvas site.

### **Weekly Insight Assignments**

Students will post a brief response to the reading assigned on the Canvas course site for class each time there is a reading assigned, which is most class meetings. These short written assignments (between .5 and 1 page in length, about 100-300 words) should prepare the student for in-class discussion. Insights posts are graded on a completion basis: students get full points if they complete the assignment satisfactorily (including on time) and get zero points if they do not.

### **Presentation**

One 10–15-minute presentation on a critical work relevant to the literary work(s) being discussed in that class meeting. Students find their own critical works to present to the class, who has not read that work, so the presentation also entails finding, selecting, and reading a text not otherwise assigned as reading for the course. There is a detailed assignment for the presentation on the course Canvas site.

### **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**

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, shorter stories - Introduction to Kafka's short stories

"Before the Law" (1914), "A Common Confusion" (1916), "A Little Fable" (1920?), "Give it Up!" (1917-1923?)

Class: 1.2 Approaches to Kafka's work

Elizabeth Trahan, "A Common Confusion: A Basic Approach to Franz Kafka's World"

Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 2**

Class: 2.1 Breakthrough Kafka - Situating Kafka's Judgment and its Analysis

"The Judgment" (written and published 1912)

Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 2.2 Approaches to Kafka's work, cont.

Martin Swales, "Why Read Kafka"

Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 3**

Class: 3.1 Breakthrough Kafka II - Situating Kafka's Metamorphosis and its Analysis

"The Metamorphosis" (written 1912, published 1915)

Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 3.2 Literary approach to Kafka's *Metamorphosis*  
Nabokov chapter on "The Metamorphosis"  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 4**

Class: 4.1 Breakthrough Kafka III- Situating Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony' and its Analysis  
"In the Penal Colony" (written 1914, published 1919)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 4.2 Koelb's Approach to Kafka's scene of Reading  
Koelb, "Kafka and the Scene of Reading"  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 5**

Class: 5.1 Kafka and Myth  
**Field Trip:** Visit to "The City of K.", a Kafka museum  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 5.2 Reflection on the Field trip and contextualization of his work  
"The Silence of the Sirens", "Prometheus", Poseidon"  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 6**

Class: 6.1 Midterm Exam Period  
**Midterm Exam** in class  
*Novel Kafka*  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 6.2 Situating Kafka's Trial  
*Midterm Exam Period*  
*The Trial* (written 1914–1915, published posthumously), to page 53 in the Schocken version).  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 7**

Class: 7.1 Novel Kafka II - Analysis of The Trial, part 1  
*Midterm Exam Period*  
*The Trial*, to page 110 in the Schocken version  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 7.2 Analysis of the Trial, part 2  
*The Trial*, to page 165 in the Schocken version  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

#### **Week 8**

Class: 8.1 Novel Kafka III - Analysis of The Trial, part 3  
*The Trial*, complete novel (to page 224 in the Schocken version)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 8.2 How Pure is the Limited Circle?  
Smith, "The Limited Circle Is Pure"  
Proposal for essay due on Friday  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

### **Week 9**

Class: 9.1 Mid- Kafka - Situating 'A Report to an Academy' and its Analysis  
"A Report to an Academy" (written and published 1917)  
Recommended:  
David Foster Wallace, "This is Water"  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 9.2 Situating 'A Country Doctor' and its Analysis  
"A Country Doctor" (written 1917, published 1919)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

### **Week 10**

Class: 10.1 Late Kafka - Situating 'A Hunger Artist' and its Analysis  
"A Hunger Artist" (written?, published 1922)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 10.2 Situating 'Josephine the Singer' and its Analysis  
"Josephine the Singer" (1924)  
Essay due  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

### **Week 11**

Class: 11.1 Posthumous Kafka and the Writer's Legacy - Kafka's Legacy I  
"Description of a Struggle" (1904-09/1936)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 11.2 Field Trip: Visit to the Kafka Museum ("The City of K.")  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

### **Week 12**

Class: 12.1 Posthumous Kafka and the Writer's Legacy II - Kafka's Legacy II  
"The Hunger Artist", "Give it Up!", "A Little Fable" (illustrated stories by Peter Kuper)  
Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canvas

Class: 12.2 Laughing with Kafka?

David Foster Wallace, "Laughing with Kafka"

Student presentation on critical work

Weekly insight due before the class session, submission via Canva

### **Week 13**

Class: 13.1 Final Exam Week

*Course summary and final exam review session*

Class: 13.2 Final Exam Week

**Final Exam** during normal class time

### **Course Materials**

#### **Readings**

- Kafka, Franz. *The Complete Stories*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.
- - - - . *The Trial*. New York: Schocken Books, 1998.
- Kolb, Clayton. " 'In der Strafkolonie': Kafka and the Scene of a Reading." *The German Quarterly* 55:4 (November 1982) 511-525.
- Kuper, Peter. *'Give it up!' and Other Short Stories by Franz Kafka*. New York: Nantier, Beall, Minouschine Publishing inc., 1995.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. "Franz Kafka, 'The Metamorphosis'." *Lectures on Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980. 251-284.
- Smith, Zadie. "The Limited Circle is Pure." *New Republic*. Nov. 3, 2003. <https://newrepublic.com/article/67211/the-limited-circle-pure>
- Swales, Martin. "Why Read Kafka?" *The Modern Language Review* 76:2 (April 1981) 357-366.
- Trahan, Elizabeth. " 'A Common Confusion': A Basic Approach to Kafka's World." *The German Quarterly* 36:3 (May 1963) 269-278.
- Wallace, David Foster. "Laughing with Kafka." *Harper's Magazine*. July 1998. <https://harpers.org/wp-content/uploads/HarpersMagazine-1998-07-0059612.pdf>
- - - - . "This is Water." *The Guardian*. September 20, 2008. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/20/fiction>