



## **CIEE Prague, Czech Republic**

<b>Course title:</b>	The Rise and Fall of Central European Totalitarianism
<b>Course code:</b>	POLI 3003 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**

Liberal democracy seems to be the obvious winner of the ideological struggle of the twentieth century. It is therefore hard to understand why the two main alternatives to liberal democracy – Nazism and Communism – exercised such a power over the lives and minds of people of Central Europe throughout the larger part of the twentieth century. This interdisciplinary course aims to examine this conundrum through systematic study of totalitarian practices. Following a basic theoretical outline and criticism of the term “totalitarianism”, the course analyses the ideologies of the “Totalitarian Twins”, Communism and Nazism, which both grew from a perceived crisis of liberal democracy. The main focus of the course is on the methods the two regimes used to rule over their citizens, going beyond the obvious themes of fear and terror and looking at the role of economic policy, propaganda, leader’s cult, and media and art in securing the conformity of the citizens. By studying these methods the course touches upon the challenges liberal democracy faces in the current political situation. The course also includes the often overlooked issue of environmental destruction especially under communism, and the consequent rise of the environmental consciousness and movements, which contributed significantly to the eventual fall of communism. The course presents a “Prague perspective,” examining the experience of the Czechs in the twentieth century as an example of a nation dealing with the two dictatorships.

Although the Nazi and Communist dictatorships are over, their residues remain in the collective memory, which influences everyday life. As mentality can only be explained against the historical backdrop, students undertake a journey into the minds of people who lived in these two destructive dictatorships and try to understand them.

### **Learning Objectives**

By completing this course, students will:

- Critically define totalitarianism, discuss how it “rises” in society and becomes an omnipresent reality, through an examination of the historical context;
- Analyze the core texts of Communism and Nazism, The Communist Manifesto and Mein Kampf, and assess the methods of the propaganda as the regimes’ principle tool facilitating a popular appeal among people;
- Critically discuss the social and political power of terror within totalitarian systems, presenting specific examples and their effect on the society;
- Compare and contrast the economic policies of Communism and Nazism, their effects on the society and “achievements” of the regimes.

### **Course Prerequisites**

None

### **Methods of Instruction**

This course requires active participation of the students and discussion is encouraged. In terms of structure, the course will consist of lectures (accompanied by a PowerPoint) and seminars (usually based around a worksheet). Also, it is necessary to do the reading for each class.

### **Possible Trips and Excursions:**

**Strahov Stadium, Prague**

Students will visit the stadium used for mass gymnastics events during the interwar period and Communist period as well

Goal: Understand the goals of mass gymnastics events

### **Archive of Security Services, Prague**

Students will visit the most important archive for studying the totalitarian past in the Czech Republic.

Goal: Show the archive and archive materials; discussion with Czech historians.

### **Communist Prague**

Students will be shown the most important places from the Communist past in Prague

Goal: Learn about the places which play an important role in Czech mentality and remembrance; explain the role of place in the commemoration.

### **Department of Communist Party Czech and Moravia (KSČM), Prague**

Students will meet the representatives of the contemporary Communist Party, who will provide information about the Party's history and about contemporary politics.

Goal: Discussion about the narrative of representatives of KSČM.

### **Assessment and Final Grade**

1.	Research Paper	20%
2.	Take-home midterm assessment	15%
3.	Group Presentations	20%
4.	Final Exam	25%
5.	Class Participation	20%
	TOTAL	100%

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Research Paper**

Students are required to complete an eight-page paper on one of the questions listed below (submission via email).

Research paper topics

1. Critically discuss the concept of totalitarianism. Why is it a complicated and controversial idea?
2. What were the conditions under which totalitarianism emerged? And in what ways did these conditions facilitate extreme regimes? Pick an example of either Germany or Russia.
3. In the preface to *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt states the following when describing the Nazis and the Soviets: '...the curious contradiction between the totalitarian movements' avowed cynical "realism" and their conspicuous disdain of the whole texture of reality'. Analyze this quote, and give relevant historical examples from either the Nazi Party or the Soviet system to substantiate your perspective.
4. According to Marxism, capitalism was doomed. Why? This response should entail an analytic discussion of *The Communist Manifesto* and at least one other relevant contemporary source.
5. How does historical antisemitism in Central Europe contribute to the theories of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*?
6. 'War was inevitable for Nazi Germany'. Agree or disagree, and provide supporting evidence.
7. Compare and contrast the social policies of Hitler and Stalin.
8. Critically analyze the term 'banality of evil', including stating what Arendt meant by this and why it remains controversial.
9. How does George Orwell in *1984* describe the workings of the propaganda machine? Compare with at least two examples from either Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, or communist Czechoslovakia.
10. Film analysis: compare and contrast the propaganda methods and aims of *Triumph of the Will* and *Battleship Potemkin*. What is the ideological message of each one?
11. Why, historically speaking, has it been important to legally define the term genocide? How have totalitarian regimes in the 20th century facilitated genocide?

#### *Aims of the research paper*

Students should provide a critical analysis of the question they have chosen, along with evaluating historiography (scholarly sources) in a relevant manner. Formulating a substantiated and cohesive argument is another

important aspect, along with including accurate historical context.

### **Take-home midterm assessment**

This will be assigned before mid-term week, the due date will be specified in the semester-specific syllabus. The assessment includes answering a series of questions in short-essay format – and an emphasis is placed on critical analysis within the response.

### **Group Presentations**

Students will be responsible for one ten-minute (minimum time) group presentation, which will be on either a feature film or documentary dealing with totalitarian regimes. The presentations will begin during Week 5. The form of the presentation should briefly outline the plot, followed by placing the film in a wider historical and theoretical framework. The conclusion of the presentation should include why the selection is relevant to the course.

*Presentation goals:* to analyze the given source critically, to discuss the relevant contexts, and to engage in group work.

### **Final Exam**

The format will be five (out of ten) short-answer questions which engage not only with the recollection of factual information but also with the ability to contextualize the answer, followed by an essay portion (one out of at least four). Additionally, the questions that might appear on the exam that are part of the seminars will be emphasized in each class so please pay attention. Guidelines will be provided one week before the exam and there will be a short revision session.

### **Class Participation**

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. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

### **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 The Theory of Totalitarianism and the Road(s) to Revolution

**Course introduction-** please read through the course syllabus in preparation for the first class.

Class: 1.2 Theory and critique of totalitarianism

We will be looking at different interpretations of the theory of totalitarianism and analyzing some of the complexities of the term.

Required reading:

- Arendt, (2012), 460-479.
- Analysis of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem through some parts of the film, *Hannah Arendt* (Dir. Margarethe Von Trotta, 2012).

### **Week 2**

Class: 2.1 The Weimar Republic and 'the stigma of failure'

The lecture and the seminar discussion will assess the interpretations and the historiography of the Weimar Republic and look at why it's generally considered to be either a 'failure' or simply a prelude to the Nazi Party.

Class: 2.2 Analysis of Hitler and his book *Mein Kampf*. Ideology of Nazism

we will discuss antisemitism, roots of the race struggle, and various concepts such as *lebensraum*.

Required reading:

- Canning (2010), 567-580.
- *Mein Kampf* (1925), 340-342 & 442-454.

### **Week 3**

Class: 3.1 Ideology of Communism

The lecture and seminar will explore key ideas of *The Communist Manifesto*, class struggle, and the notion of a proletariat revolution.

Class: 3.2 Site visit to the Museum of Communism

Topic discussion: historical museums as sites of memory in XXIC Europe.

Required reading:

- *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), 31-66.

### **Week 4**

Class: 4.1 Part II: The Mechanics of Nazism and Stalinism

Revolutionary conditions, ideology, and pre-Soviet Russia- we will focus on the road to revolution in tsarist Russia, the heritage of Marxism in turn of the century Europe, Lenin and Marxism.

Class: 4.2 The Bolsheviks and the early foundations of the Soviet state

Required reading:

- Figes, (2015), 7-53.
- Figes (2015), 54-87.

**Deadline for submitting assignment on Museum of Communism visit: Monday this week**

**Week 5**

Class: 5.1 The Soviet consolidation of power and the Soviet Terror

The lecture will examine the Gulag system in Soviet Russia. Analysis of the work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Class: 5.2 .

Analysis of the Great Famine in Ukraine and show trials considering the implications of a society of denunciation.

Required reading:

1. Wheatcroft (2007), 20-43.
2. Figes (2015), 190-200.

**Week 6**

Class: 6.1 Midterm Exam Period

Review for the exam. Please bring any question.

Class: 6.2 Midterm Exam Period

Midterm Exam

**Week 7**

Class: 7.1 The Mechanisms of Nazism

Focus on the methods used to consolidate power by the Nazis.

Class: 7.2 The Nazi Terror

This lecture will be dedicated to analyzing the purpose of terror and the different mechanisms of terror used by the SS, in addition to providing a theoretical framework for the term terror itself.

Required reading:

- Loeffel (2012), 380-393.

**Week 8**

Class: 8.1 The Cult of the Leader

In this session we will examine the theoretical concept of charismatic authority (Max Weber).

Class: 8.2 .

Analysis of the speaking to the 'masses', engage with critically comparing Hitler and Stalin, and view a few snippets of the *Lazy Dictator* (Charlie Chaplin).

Required reading:

- Kershaw (2004), 239-54.
- Weber (1949), 212-45.

**Week 9**

Class: 9.1 The Politics of the Body

The lecture and discussion will cover the symbolism of the human body and its purposes within totalitarian propaganda along with the concept of the human body as the 'ideal canvas'.

Class: 9.2 Guest speaker: Marie Janouskova.POST Bellum NGO in the CZ

Required reading:

- Linke (1999), 212-239.
- Roubal (2003), 1-25.

## Week 10

Class: 10.1 Part III: Looking at Czechoslovakia during and after the WWII as a case-study

The impact of the meta-events on Czechoslovakia- this lecture session will look at how the propagand machines of the Third Reich worked against Czechoslovakia's favour before, during, and after the Munich Agreement.

Class: 10.2 .

Analysis of Life stories during the time of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under the German occupation (1939-1945)

Required reading:

- Demetz (2009), 3-46.

## Week 11

Class: 11.1 Totalitarian Czechoslovakia

After the Communist coup in 1948, certain measures such as show trials were implemented and Czechoslovakia became a hard-line Stalinist state. In this lecture and seminar, we will look at the evolution of a post-war totalitarian Czechoslovakia.

Class: 11.2 .

We will cover the time period from before the Prague Spring (1968) and immediately after, leading to Normalization period and a different kind of oppression functioning within society. Analysis of the meaning of Charta 77.

Required reading:

- Bouska and Pinerova (2009), 7-22.
- Havel (2009), 10-59.

## Week 12

Class: 12.1 1989 Velvet Revolution

Special class on the analysis of the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution.

Defining revolution – Causes of revolutions in Central Europe – Logistics of the revolutions – Opposition movement and opposition demonstrations – Revolutionary power: Civic Forum(s)

*Reading:*

- Ash (1990).

Class: 12.2 Dealing with the Communist past today

Changing narratives – totalitarianism versus revisionism in the Czech Republic – historians, media and laws as a catalyst of history

Guest lecture: Michal Louč – Law of Anti-Communist resistance and narrative

Reading:

- Švédá (2010).

## Week 13

Class: 13.1 Oral Presentations

Class: 13.2 End-of-course discussion

Final Exam and Paper Deadline

## **Course Materials**

### **Readings**

#### **Required:**

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, vol. III (New York: Harcourt, 1951).

Aslund, A., "What Communism Actually Was," in his *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Ash, Timothy Garton. "Prague: Inside the Magic Lantern," in *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of 89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Random House, 1990).

Bouška, Tomáš and Pinerová Klára, eds. *Czechoslovak Political Prisoners. Life Stories of 5 Male and 5 Female Victims of Stalinism*. (Praha, 2009).

Bren, Paulina: *The Greengrocer and His TV. The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Feuchtwanger, Edgar. "Why did the Weimar Republic Fail?" in *Modern History Review* Sept. 1997.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Stalinism: New Directions* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary life in extraordinary times. Soviet Russia in 1930s*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

Havel, Václav. "The Power of the Powerless," in his *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965 – 1990* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

Holy, Ladislav. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. National identity and the post-communist transformation of society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Kershaw, Ian. *Hitler*. (New York: Longman, 1991).

Kozlov, Vladimir A., "Denunciation and its functions in soviet governance," In Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Stalinism: New Directions* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Mason, T.W. "Internal Crisis and War of Aggression, 1938-1939," in his *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Mishler, William, and Rose, Richard. "Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies". *Journal of Politics* 59, no.2 (1997): 418–451.

Orwell, George. *Nineteen eighty-four* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

Roubal, Petr. "Politics of Gymnastics. Mass gymnastic displays under communism in Central and Eastern Europe," *Body and Society* 9, no. 2 (2003): 1-25.

Sontag, Susan, "Fascinating Fascism," in her *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

Švédá, Josef. *Narrative and ideological discourses in representations of the Mas<sup>ˇ</sup>in Brothers*  
. MPhil(F) thesis, University of Glassgow, 2010 (<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2289/>).

Wandycz, Piotr S.

*The price of freedom: A history of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present*. (London: Routledge, 1993).

#### **Required Primary Sources:**

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1925.

Karel Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 1936.

**Recommended:**

Agnew, Hugh. *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Hoover Institution Press, 2004).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (revised edition) (London: Verso, 1993).

Banac, Ivo and Katherine Verdery, eds. *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*. (New Haven: Yale Center for International Area Studies, 1995).

Bonnell, Victoria E. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Burawoy, Michael. *The Politics of Production. Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1985).

Crampton, Richard J. *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century - and After*. (London: Routledge, 1997).

David Crowley and Susan Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* 2002.

Davies, Norman. *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Day, Barbara. *The Velvet Philosophers* (London: The Clarendon Press, 1999).

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

Garros, Veronique et al. eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930's* (New York: New Press, 1995).

Griffin, Roger. *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

Groys, Boris. *The total art of Stalinism: avant-garde, aesthetic dictatorship, and beyond* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Havel, Václav. "The Garden Party." In *Selected Plays 1963-1983*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

Havelkova, Hana. "Women in and after a Classless Society." In *Women and Social Class – International Feminist Perspectives*. eds. C. Zmroczek and P. Mahony, pp. 69-82. (London: Taylor and Francis/UCL, 1998).

Hayek, Friedrich. *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents— The Definitive Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Hellbeck, Jochen. "Fashioning the Stalinist soul: the diary of Stephan Podlubnyi, 1931-9," In Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Stalinism: New Directions* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Hrabal, Bohumil. *Closely Watched Trains*. (Simon and Schuster, 1971).

Johnson, Lonnie R. *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*. (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Kafka, Franz. *The Castle*, in *The Complete Novels*. (New York: Vintage, 1992).

Kenez, Peter. *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-29* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Kershaw, Ian and Moshe Lewin (eds.) *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Kolakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Kundera, Milan. *The Joke*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Captive Mind* (New York : Knopf, 1953).

McDermott, Kevin and Matthew Stibbe, eds. *Stalinist Terror in Eastern Europe: Elite Purges and Mass Repression* (Manchester, 2010) .



Pipes, Richard. *Communism, a History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

Popper, Karl Raimund. *The open society and its enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945).

Rupnik, Jacques. *The Other Europe: The Rise And Fall Of Communism In East-Central Europe* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

Taylor, Richard. *Film Propaganda. Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London: 1988).

Tormey, Simon. *Making sense of tyranny: interpretations of totalitarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

Tickle, A. and J Vavrousek (1998) 'Environmental politics in the former Czechoslovakia'. In *Environment and Society in Eastern Europe* (eds. A Tickle and I. Welsh). Longman, Harlow, pp. 114-145.

Weber, Max. "The Types of Legitimate Domination," in Max Weber, *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), pp. 212-45.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We* (New York: Modern Library, 2006).