



## **CIEE Prague, Czech Republic**

<b>Course Name:</b>	History through Film: Search for Identity: Europe between Hitler and Stalin
<b>Course Number:</b>	CINE 3006 PRAG
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	CES, CNMJ
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. Semester Credits:</b>	3
<b>Contact Hours:</b>	45
<b>Term:</b>	Fall 2019

### **Course Description**

This unique interdisciplinary course is designed to discuss and question the identity of specific nations in the European space, which has always been a fascinating crossroads of interesting ideas and ideologies, as well as the birthplace of wars and totalitarian regimes. The course will cover masterpieces of Russian, Hungarian, German, Georgian, Polish, and Czech cinematography, focusing on several crucial periods of history, in particular WWII and its aftermath as well as revealing the bitter truth and brutality of Stalinist years. Students will be exposed to brilliant and often controversial works of film art, reflecting on the moral dilemmas of individuals during stressful times in history. Course participants will thus map the European space through the medium of film, analyzing the individual approach to historical events, while at the same time gaining a general picture of Europe during its crucial periods. Last but not least, they will learn to appreciate European film art through a very open discussion following each screening.

### **Learning Objectives**

Throughout the course, the student will:

- understand the historical and geo-political context within the European space;
- critically discuss the role of the individual in history;
- investigate the best of European film art;
- recognize the specifics of various film-makers' means of expression;
- analyze screened films.

### **Course Prerequisites**

The course is open for anyone who is interested in history and film as well as psychology, sociology, and political science and has an open mind to absorb new ideas.

### **Methods of Instruction**

Discussion sessions are a very important part of the class, as are the written responses after each of the screened films. Students will have a great opportunity to watch each film together



on a large screen in class, not just parts of it, which enables them to gain a complex experience as viewers.

There will be an introduction to the particular film with the professor's questions and suggested elements of the film to focus on, followed by the film screening. After each film, the student will write a response to the film, three pages double-spaced, and send it to the professor. The responses serve as a starting point for the next class discussion session when students will be engaged in asking questions, discussing the screened films and the historical events which inspired them.

### **Assessment and Final Grade**

- |                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1. Response paper      | 15% |
| 2. Presentations       | 15% |
| 3. Class participation | 20% |
| 4. Mid-term paper      | 20% |
| 5. Final essay         | 30% |

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Response papers**

The students are required to write a 750-word double-spaced response after each film screening which will not only answer the professor's questions, but also include questions of their own. These will be discussed at length during the seminar. The student must try to find answers to the topics, moral dilemmas and the way each director deals with their depiction, but is welcome to add his or her own thoughts and ideas.

#### **Presentations**

Based on response papers, each student will be invited to present their film responses in class at least twice throughout the course. Students will then lead class discussion based on their presentation.

#### **Midterm essay**

Students will write a mid-term essay on a topic chosen from the four options given by the professor. If a student wishes to modify the topic and come up with his/her own ideas, this can be approved after consulting the professor. The essay should be approximately 1,500 words long, double spaced. All additionally used sources (including those from the internet) should be properly cited, plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for the essay as well as the course.



### Final essay

The final essay on specific topics will be an out-of-class task. The topics will be discussed in class beforehand. The essay should be will approximately 3,000 words long, double-spaced.

### 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.

### CIEE Prague Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and **all absences are treated equally regardless of reason** for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

**Missing classes** will lead to the following penalties:

#### **90-minute semester classes:**

<i>Number of 90-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
<b>one to two</b> 90-minute classes	up to 10%	no penalty



<b>three</b> 90-minute classes	10.1–15%	reduction of the final grade by 3%
<b>four</b> 90-minute classes	15.1–17%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; <b>written warning</b>
<b>five</b> 90-minute classes	17.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 7%; <b>written warning</b>
<b>six and more</b> 90-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic <b>course failure</b> and possible expulsion

**180-minute semester classes:**

<i>Number of 180-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
<b>one</b> 180-minute class	up to 10%	no penalty
<b>two</b> 180-minute classes	10.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; <b>written warning</b>
<b>three and more</b> 180-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic <b>course failure</b> and possible expulsion

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.

**Missing more than 20% of the total class hours** will lead to a **course failure**, and **potential program dismissal**. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.

**Late arrival to class** will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. **Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.**

**Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason** and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student’s presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, **make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances**, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor’s note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor’s notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however **the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.**



Should a truly **extraordinary situation** arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. **Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.**

**Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.**

**For class conflicts** (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), **always contact the Academic Assistant** to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. **Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the records.** In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant **within one week of the discrepancy date** to have it corrected. Later claims **will not** be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

### **CIEE Academic Honesty Policy**

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one's own.

**The first principle** is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an "open book" basis).

**The second principle** applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.



**The third principle** is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another's work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.

The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1

#### **First meeting:**

Czech New Wave in cinema I.

Introduction to the course: political and cultural reasons for the blossoming of the film art in the 60s, inspirations and aspirations of the Czech New Wave, specific spheres of interest for the film-makers.

Screening: *The Shop on Main Street*, Jan Kadar, Elmar Klos, 1965

A non-heroic 'ordinary man' in the midst of the turmoil caused by the necessity to make crucial life-or-death decisions. Tragedy in the lives of human beings facing moral disintegration in the Slovak Nazi puppet state in the course of WWII. Oscar winner.

#### **Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Discuss the moral dilemma of the main protagonist; focus also on Slovak collaboration with the Nazis and the consequences on the Slovak psyche today. The role of the Catholic church in the 'independent' Slovak state. Similarities and differences of the Nazi ideology in both Czech lands and Slovakia. Czechoslovakia under communist rule after 1948 and its impact in the film art and industry.

Reading: '*Just Who Owns the Shop*', Identity and Nationality in *Obchod na korze*, A Horton,

Hitler's popular image and the "Jewish question" chapter from *The Hitler's Myth*,

Ian Kershaw, Course reader

### Week 2

#### **First meeting:**

Czech New Wave in cinema II.

Screening: *Closely Watched Trains*, Jiri Menzel, 1966

A tragicomedy about the private problems of a young railway station apprentice at a small station in Central Bohemia during WWII. Individual lives in the omnipresent war situation. Humor, love, sex, and death in a film based on a novel by an internationally recognized Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal. Oscar winner.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Searching for one's identity versus public affairs, private opposed to public? The roots of the so-called passive resistance of the Czechs as opposed to heroism.

Gender issues: the role of women in the film, are they just passive objects or active human beings? Male stereotypes and the importance of a uniform and stamps in society. Interesting view of the Germans, first shown in the 60s, reasons for this new approach. Hrabalesque poetics transformed into the film art.

Reading: *Closely Observed Trains*, Roger Hillman, Course reader

Week 3

**First meeting:** Czech New Wave in cinema III.

Screening: *Diamonds of the Night*, Jan Nemec, 1964

Based on a story by Arnost Lustig *Darkness Casts no Shadow*, a realistic depiction of two boys escaping the transport to the concentration camp, changed into an experimental, absurd, surreal visual study of the two men on the run, experiencing hunger, fear, despair but also solidarity. It deals with a human being under both external and internal pressure caused by external forces. The film pays a tribute to Luis Bunuel, infamous Spanish director who used to be a guru of surrealism.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: This film is the experimental peak of the Czech New Wave. We shall discuss both the influence of Russian silent cinema and Luis Bunuel on the film. The experiment covers the fact that there is hardly anything spoken, no music, and only diegetic sound used plus a hand-held camera. How do these means of expression influence the film?

And: how does our identity change in the times of struggling for survival?

Reading: *Miracle of the Czech New Wave*, A.J.Liehm, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about My Heart*, an interview with Jan Nemeč, Course reader

Week 4

**First meeting:** The role of the artist in totalitarian systems

Screening: *Mephisto*, Szabo Istvan, 1981

The film is based on a famous novel of Klaus Mann, a deeply disturbing piece of art about the complicity of an exceptionally ambitious actor in early 1930s Germany. Oscar winner.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: How can any artist survive under an authoritarian regime without losing both his calling and self-esteem? How far can one go in collaborating with the system?

In which way, if at all, is the artist's life and work different from lives of so-called ordinary citizens – both living under a dictatorship? We shall explore similarities and differences of the two most powerful dictatorships of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nazism and Stalinism.

Reading: *The History of Everyday Life - A different perspective*, chapter from *Inside Nazi Germany*, Detlev JK Peukert, *Order and Terror*, *Istvan Szabo and Mephisto*, Course reader

Week 5

**First meeting:** Threats to our identity and integrity

Screening: *Europe, Europa /Hitlerjunge Solomon*, Agnieszka Holland, 1990

A picturesque story of lost and later found identity of both the main protagonist and maybe Europe shows the impossibility of imposing labels. The drama of recognition and misrecognition emphasizes the epistemological impotency of hearing and vision in determining supposedly biologically-based identities. The tragedy and humor of many a grotesque situation is based on a true story of Solomon Perel.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: We shall talk about the influence of Polish cinema and Cinema of Moral Anxiety on this mainstream film since A. Holland was once an integral part of the Polish film scene. Moral issues: is it justified that we 'change coats' when it comes to our survival? Can one ever return to one's original belief when formed by completely opposite ideologies?

How do Stalinism and Nazism differ in the film? Who are we if not keeping our integrity?

Reading: *Europa, Europa*, article and interview with A. Holland, Course reader

Week 6  
Midterm Exam  
Period

**First meeting:** The bizarre, grotesque, political and magical in film  
Screening: *The Tin Drum*, Volker Schlöndorff, 1979  
This is an Oscar winning adaptation of a Nobel Prize winner Gunter Grass' novel taking place in Gdansk/Danzig. Germans, Poles and a Kashubian minority used to live there peacefully until the outbreak of WWII. A grotesque story of a boy called Oskar who decides never to grow up and whose adventures before, in and after the war are truly bizarre. Before it was awarded Oscar for Best Foreign film, it was banned in several states in the US for its open sexual content. A complicated, controversial, yet fascinating film.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Magic realism and allegory in the film, inspiration by German Expressionism and surreal imagery, eroticism and a fierce farce altogether. We shall try to detect everything mentioned above in various scenes. We shall also discuss whether the open brutality, sexuality and grotesqueness are adequate to the theme it shows. Do we understand a certain blasphemy towards the Catholic Church in the film? Who does Oskar represent? Is he a genuine creature who despises the ugly world of adults, which is why he does not want to be like them or is he an incarnation of the surrounding world?

Reading: *The Tin Drum* by Barry Meyer, *The History of Everyday Life-different perspective*, Detlev JK Peukert, Course reader

Mid-term topics will be given to students this week.

Week 7  
Midterm Exam  
Period

**First meeting:** From Nazism to Stalinism – Differences and similarities of the two totalitarian systems  
Screening: *The Soviet Story - Red Evil*, Edvins Snore, 2008  
A documentary unveiling the truth about The Great Famine in Ukraine ordered by Stalin in 1932-3 as well as the Soviet participation in the Nazi Holocaust. It mentions the Katyn massacre in Poland 1940 and many other events connected not only with the Great Terror period of Stalinism, but also with the contemporary Russia.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Historical background of Stalinism, the roots of Marxism and Leninism,  
Focus on the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia.  
Reading: Communism, excerpts, Richard Pipes, 2003

Week 8

**First meeting:** The Aftermath of WWII in Europe

Screening: *Ashes and Diamonds*, Andrzej Wajda, 1958

This is one part of WWII trilogy by an internationally acclaimed Polish director which focuses on a small Polish town celebrating the end of the war while new animosities are arising. There is passion and anger, a visual dynamism that includes use of symbols and light reminiscent of so-called cinema noir. The viewer is overwhelmed by a beautiful performance of an icon of Polish cinema, actor Zbigniew Cybulski, sometimes called the Polish James Dean. The metaphorical message of the film suggests that Polish identity was seriously harmed not only by the fascist period but also by the import of Soviet communism. This was a daring statement in the late 50s, when the film was shot.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Polish School films, as well as Cinema of Moral Anxiety/Moral Dissent will be discussed. Personal courage and cowardice in the war and post war times, individual longings in contradiction to the public tasks are to be focused on. Can one ever fully recover after actively participating in the war at a young age? How does history shape our lives? What is the difference, if any, between the two main protagonists of the film, fighting 'on the other side of the barricade? We shall also talk about the close-ups, light and darkness used in this black-and-white film.

Reading: *Popiol i diament/Ashes and Diamonds*, reviews by Rahul Hamid, Course reader

Week 9

**First meeting:** In the grip of Stalin

Screening: *Burnt by the Sun*, Nikita Mikhalkov, 1994

The Soviet Union in 1936, heading into Stalinist purges. The film is dedicated to 'everyone who was burnt by the sun of the Revolution'. We shall witness a Chekhovian atmosphere at a typical Russian dacha inhabited by few representatives of 'good old days' and a hero of the Revolution, Colonel Kotov and his family. But even the heroes of the Revolution are not spared Stalin's paranoia and brutality. The film was

the first one in a post-communist Russia which clearly attacked Stalin's cult. All of this could happen only due to glasnost and perestroika after the split of the Soviet Union. The movie won an Oscar in 1995.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Is faithfulness to the homeland at any cost heroism or blind naiveté?

Discuss private stand versus duty to the motherland.

Who is a hero and who is a coward in the film; think of the clash between the main characters, Colonel Kotov and Mitia, who is not a communist follower. How about an ordinary man in a totalitarian society? Can he survive untouched or be harmed as well?

Reading: *Stalin in the Mirror of the Others*, Moshe Lewin in *Stalinism and Nazism*, *No Soul* by A. A. Stone, *Burnt by the Sun*, 2 reviews

Week 10

**First meeting:** Allegory and metaphor in 'political films'

Screening: *Repentance*, Tengiz Abuladze, 1987

A well-known Georgian director had already made this melodramatic satire in 1984, but the film was not shown to the public until 1987 when reformist 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' took place in the Soviet Union. A political parable about the evils of totalitarianism dressed in a surrealistic costume attacks the malevolence of dictators who are power-greedy and mean while professing to serve the will of the people. The film celebrates ethical values of religion as well as culture itself as alternatives to tyranny. We can experience the specifics of Georgian tradition as well as modern elements of film language.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: How does art stand up to totalitarian tyranny? Can art change politics?

Is a fight for the inner integrity of a person a must if it can crush one's life? Is it possible that ethics will ever win over power? And can one fully understand a different culture?

Reading: *Stalinism and Nazism/Dictatorships in Comparison*, Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, *Stalin in the Mirror of the Other*, *Repentance* by H. Hinson, Course reader

Week 11

**First meeting:** In the grip of Nazism and Stalinism

Screening: *Ida*, Pawel Pawlikowski, 2013

A mesmerizing story of a young novice in 1960s Poland who discovers family secrets just when she is about to take her vows. The excruciating journey into her past unveils the truth about her roots and true identity. A very unsentimental, yet moving and powerful story of a painful search for one's self. This artistic jewel in black-and-white using the classical format with the aspect ratio 4:3 is the Oscar winner from 2014.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Relations between Poles and Jews in the course of WWII and afterwards, the Stalinist 50s and its later impact on the believers in communism, personal responsibility for the crimes of communism, religion and faith in question.

Reading: handouts given by the professor

Week 12

**First meeting:** Philosophical mysterious sci-fi

Screening: *Stalker*, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979

A mystery by an ingenious Russian director, based on the sci-fi story 'Roadside picnic' by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, takes us to the 'Zone', a guarded realm with a mystical 'Room', in which dreams come true.

The 'Stalker', the leader and guide, escorts the 'Writer' and 'Professor' through the foreboding territory, facing all kinds of challenges, obstacles and traps. This is a ride into the human soul, a philosophical journey as well as a visually truly outstanding film known for its very long takes. The film is the intellectual peak of the semester.

**Second meeting:**

Discussion session: Who in fact is the 'Stalker'? An insane genius, God or a misfit?

Why does he take people to the 'Zone'? What is the 'Zone' and how to deal with it? Reality and surreality in the film: is it a warning prophecy or imaginative philosophical film-essay?

What about the 'Monkey', child of the 'Stalker', the product of the 'Zone'?

Week 13

Final Exams

**Final Essay due**

Discussion session: Semester summary, question and answer session, discussion of topics for the final essay.



## **Course Materials**

### ***Required readings:***

Course Reader on Canvas

1. Peukert, Detlev J.K.: Inside Nazi Germany, Yale University Press. 1987, excerpts
2. Kershaw, Ian: The Hitler's Myth, Image and Reality in the Third Reich, Oxford University Press, 2001, excerpts
3. Kershaw Ian, Lewin Moshe: Stalinism and Nazism, Dictatorships in Comparison, Philadelphia Press, 1997, excerpts
4. Pipes, Richard: Communism, Random House 2003, excerpts
5. Primo Levi: If This Is a Man, Orion Press, 1959, entire book
6. Amis, Martin: Koba the Dread, Vintage, London 2005, entire book

### ***Recommended readings:***

6. Imre, Arniko: East European Cinema, NY, Routledge 2005
7. Iordanova, Dina: Cinema of the Other Europe, London & New York, Wallflower Press, 2003