



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course Name:	Modern Czech Literature
Course Number:	LITT 3001 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES, CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

The course offers a survey of modern Czech literature in all its genres (i.e. poetry, prose and drama). It is based less on lecturing of the instructor than on students' own reading, writing responses, and class discussions of the individual texts. The selection of the studied texts aims to offer examples of the most substantial trends and movements of Czech culture in general and Czech literature in particular of the last approximately 180 years (e.g. Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism and Decadence, Avant-garde, the Theatre of the Absurd). Although the emphasis is put on analysis of individual texts, in the end, by the means of abstraction, the students will be able to get some basic idea of modern Czech history and culture. The course materials aim to provide students with as much variety as possible, however some issues will recur and will be addressed throughout the course such as various conceptions and forms of humor, grotesque, tragic, absurd, utopia, dystopia, love, and art as they are conceived and represented in literary works of different periods and genres.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students will

- be able to discuss the specifics of Czech culture in general and Czech literature in particular;
- be able to apply the specifics of different literary periods, movements and schools of thought to the Czech literary context;
- have developed and strengthened their ability to analyze and interpret literary texts;
- have broadened their critical vocabulary; and
- have improved their ability to lead critical discourse both in its oral and written form.

Course Prerequisites

The course is open to everyone who has interest in literature and enjoys reading it, discussing it, and writing about it.

Methods of Instruction



The course is built around a structured class discussion. The discussions are based on questions posed either by the presenters or the instructor. A variety of discussion activities will be used: buzz group, pyramid discussion, peer critique, role-playing, picture-making, brainstorming, etc. The aim of discussions is to examine each text from various viewpoints and in some detail.

Assessment and Final Grade

- Class participation 20 %
- One in-class presentation 15 %
- Short written responses 20 %
- Final paper 25 %
- Midterm exam 20 %

Course Requirements

Class Participation and Home Preparation

- Students are obliged to read all required reading for each class and prepare some answers to the questions posed by the presenter of the text and then actively engage in various forms of class discussion.
- Reading of secondary sources is strongly recommended (these may also inspire some ideas about possible topics for in-class presentations).

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.

Presentation

- Each student will give one oral presentation (15-20 minutes), analyzing some aspects of a particular work and introducing the author and his or her work. The topic of the presentation is chosen in the beginning of the term.
- The presenter should also consult the professor about the structure of his or her presentation at least one week before the date it is due.
- The presenter should prepare several questions, which will inspire class discussion.

Short written responses (length: 2 paragraphs – up to 250 words): Students will be asked to produce written responses (about 10) throughout the course. These lie in answering one of the questions posed by the instructor and are meant to develop students' writing abilities as well as to provide them with feedback on their reading of the required texts. The responses should also help students with preparation for the Midterm Test and Final Paper. Each student must submit 75% of responses. Otherwise it will proportionately affect the relevant part of the final grade.

Final paper (length: 2000 – 2500 words): it is an analytical paper that properly uses quotations of the primary texts and – where possible – brings in some secondary sources. The topic and the available secondary sources should be consulted with the teacher.

There will be one in-class written examination: the mid-term test. It consists of approximately 6 questions concerning the works studied up to the Midterm. Relevant quotations from the works are provided in order to help students to answer the questions. The examples of the test from previous terms can be consulted with the professor.

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>
one to two 90-minute classes	up to 10%	no penalty
three 90-minute classes	10.1–15%	reduction of the final grade by 3%
four 90-minute classes	15.1–17%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
five 90-minute classes	17.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 7%; written warning
six and more 90-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure 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>
one 180-minute class	up to 10%	no penalty
two 180-minute classes	10.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
three and more 180-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure 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

1. Introductory class.

2. Mácha's May, the Masterpiece of Modern Czech Poetry

Portrayal of Nature in Mácha's poem.

Required reading: K. H. Mácha, May, 1st Canto

Recommended literature: Vladimír Macura: "Problems and paradoxes of the national revival", in: Bohemia in History; Robert B. Pynsent: "Characterisation in Mácha's Máj"

Week 2

Mácha's May, the Masterpiece of Modern Czech Poetry

1. Conceptions of human action, guilt, freedom and responsibility in Mácha's poem.

Required reading: Mácha: May 2nd Canto

2. Mácha's poem as a tragedy, various interpretations and visual representations of the work

Required reading: Mácha: May, the rest of the poem

Week 3	<p>Short stories of early modernism</p> <p>1. Realist and naturalist short story. Representation of village community, gender and social relations, role of public opinion, notion of evil. Required reading: Preissová: “Eva”; Tilschová: “Sad Time” Recommended literature: Kathleen Hayes, “Introduction. Conceptions of Woman and the Woman Question of the Fin de siècle, in A world Apart, pp. 7–26.</p> <p>2. Decadent short story. Concepts of Decadence and Modernism, flâneur, Czech version of Decadence, representation of modern city, notions of history and of “fleeting” present. Required reading: Karásek: “Stagnant Waters”. Recommended literature: Urban, Otto M.: In Morbid Colours: Art and Idea of Decadence in Czech Art 1880-1914. ;Robert B. Pynsent:”Conclusory Essay”</p>
Week 4	<p>1. Fin de siècle conceptions of art and love, life as an art: dandy. Required reading: Jesenská: ““A World Apart”. Breisky: “Quintessence of Dandyism”</p> <p>2. Kafka’s The Trial. Law, guilt, absurdity and humor in Kafka’s novel. Required reading: Kafka, The Trial (Chapters 1-5). Recommended literature: Politzer, “The Trial”</p>
Week 5	<p>1. Law, guilt, absurdity and humor in Kafka’s novel. Required reading: Kafka, The Trial (Rest of the novel).</p> <p>2. Technological dystopia Reason, love, work and sacrifice in Karel’Čapek’ s drama. Required reading: Čapek, R. U. R. Recommended literature: Ivan Klíma: Karel Čapek.</p>
Week 6 Midterm Exam Period	<p>1. Midterm Test</p> <p>2. Midterm discussion</p>
Week 7 Midterm Exam Period	<p>Jaroslav Hašek’s The Good Soldier Švejk</p> <p>1. Humor and absurdity in Hašek’s novel, human being and authorities.</p>

Required reading: Hašek: The Good Soldier Švejk, 1st part (first half of it)

Recommended literature: Entry on Hašek in DLB.

2. Josef K. and Švejk, some comparisons.

Required reading: Hašek The Good Soldier Švejk, 1st part (the rest of it)

Week 8

Avant-Garde Poetry

1. Czech contribution to Avant-Garde movements: Devětsil and Poetism

Required reading: Seifert: On the Waves of TSF.

Recommended literature: Švácha, Rostislav (ed.): Devětsil: the Czech Avant-Garde of the 1920s and 30s

2. Nezval's myth of poet and poetry

Required reading: Nezval: Akrobat.

Week 9

1. Halas' response to Avant-garde optimism.

Required reading: Halas: "Selected poems".

Recommended literature: Ludvík Kundera: "František Halas"

2. Ladislav Klíma's original contribution to Czech literature and philosophy

Klíma's employment of high and low genres of literature, narrative devices, dream, madness and reality in the novel

Required reading: Klíma: The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch. (1st half of the novel)

Recommended reading: Josef Zúmr in The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch

Week 10

1. Some aspects of Klíma's philosophy as represented in the plot and characters of his novel, egoism and altruism

Required reading: The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch (rest of the novel)

2. 1960s Literary concerns with identity, alienation, and political misuse of Language

1. Identity, mind and body dualism and the notion of game in Milan Kundera's short stories

Required reading: Kundera: "The Hitchhiking game" and "Nobody will

Laugh”

Recommended reading: Maria NĚmcova Banerjee, Terminal Paradox. The Novels of M.K., John O’Brien, Milan Kundera and Feminism.

Week 11

1. Czech contribution to the Theatre of the Absurd, notion of identity and workings of language in Havel’s drama

Required reading: Havel: The Garden Party

Recommended reading: Esslin: The Theatre of the Absurd

2. What matters?

2. Books, morals, technology and socialism in Bohumil Hrabal’s novel

Required reading: Hrabal: Too Loud a Solitude (First half of the novel).

Recommended literature: Josef Škvorecký: Introducing Bohumil Hrabal in J. Š.: Talkin’ Moscow Blues.

Week 12

1. Hrabal’s narrative technique, mind and body, Shoah, guilt and love

Required reading: Hrabal: Too Loud a Solitude (Second half)

2. Jáchym Topol’s fictional account of Prague post 1989 transformation

Required reading: Topol: A Trip to the Train Station

Recommended literature: Machovec: Views from the Inside. Czech Underground Literature and Culture (1948-1989)

Final Exam Week

**Revision and end-of-course discussion
Final paper submission deadline.**

Course Materials

Required Reading

Breisky, Artur: “Quintessence of Dandyism” (draft translation by Kathleen Hayes) (reader)

Čapek, Karel: R. U. R., in *Toward the Radical Center: A Karel Čapek Reader*, ed. by Peter Kussi, New Haven, Catbird Press, 1990, pp. 34–109. (reader)

Hašek, Jaroslav: *The Good Soldier Švejk*, transl. by Cecil Parrott, London, Penguin Books, 1973, pp. 1–216. (CIEE library)

Halas, František: “Selected poems”, transl. by Lynn Coffin and Zdenka Brodská, in *Cross Currents* 11, 1992, pp. 71–78. (reader)

Havel, Václav: *The Garden Party*, transl. by Vera Blackwell, in *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, New York, Grove Press, 1993, pp. 2–51. (reader)

Hrabal, Bohumil: *Too Loud a Solitude*, transl. by Michael Henry Heim, San Diego, New York, London, Harvest Books, 1990. (CIEE library)

Jesenská, Růžena: “A World Apart”, transl. by Kathleen Hayes, in *A World Apart and Other Stories*, Prague, Carolinum, 2001, pp. 46–57. (reader)

Kafka, Franz: *The Trial*, transl. by Willa and Edwin Muir, New York, Schocken Books, 1988. (CIEE library)

Karásek, Jiří: *Stagnant Waters*, transl. by Kirsten Lodge, in *Word and Sense* 7, 2010, 14, pp. 248–260.

Klíma, Ladislav: *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch*, transl. by Carleton Bulkin, Prague, Twisted Spoon Press, 2008. (CIEE library)

Kundera, Milan: “The Hitchhiking game” and “Nobody will laugh”, in *Laughable Loves*, transl. by Suzanne Rappaport, London and Boston, Faber and Faber, 1991, pp. 3–25, 55–92. (CIEE library)

Mácha, Karel Hynek: *May* (draft translation by James Naughton)(reader)

Nezval, Vítězslav: *Akrobat*, transl. by Jerome Rothenberg and Miloš Sovák, in *Antilyrik and Other Poems*, Green Integer, 2001, pp. 115–141. (reader)

Preissová, Gabriela: “Eva”, transl. by Kathleen Hayes, in *A World Apart and Other Stories*, Prague, Carolinum, 2001, pp. 109–139. (reader)

Seifert, Jaroslav: *On the Waves of TSF*, transl. by Dana Loewy, in *The Early Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, Evanston, Illinois, Hydra Books, Northwestern University Press, 1997, pp. 95–158. (reader)

Tilšchová, Anna Maria, “Sad Time”, transl. by Kathleen Hayes, in *A World Apart and Other Stories*, Prague, Carolinum, 2001, pp. 192–199. (reader)

Topol, Jáchym: *A Trip to the Train Station*, transl. by Alex Zucker, Brno, Petrov, 1995. (CIEE library)

Recommended literature

Anderson, Mark M.: *Kafka’s Clothes. Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg Fin-de-siècle*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994. (CIEE library)

Beckson, Karl: “Introduction”, in K. B. (ed.): *Aesthetes And Decadents Of the 1890s. An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose*, second, revised edition, Academy Chicago, 1981

Bohemia in History, Mikuláš Teich (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998. (CIEE library)



Czech and Slovak Writings in Translation, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/transl.html>; (MCL. Selected articles)

Demetz, Peter: *Prague In Black And Gold: The History Of a City*, London, The Penguin Press, 1997. (CIEE library)

Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 25: *Twentieth-Century Eastern European Writers*, ed. by Steven Serafin, The Gale Group, Detroit, San Francisco, London, Boston, Woodbridge, Conn., 1999 = DLB (CIEE library)

Esslin Martin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Harmondsworth, Pelican Books, 1965. (National Library)

French, Alfred: *The Poets of Prague. Czech Poetry between the Wars*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969.

Gibian, George, "Introduction", in *The Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, ed. by George Gibian, transl. Ewald Osers and George Gibian, North Haven, Catbird Press, 1998, pp. 11-27. (CIEE library)

Harkins, William and Trensky, P. I. (eds.): *Czech Literature Since 1956: A Symposium*, Columbia Slavic Studies, 1980 (National library)

Klíma, Ivan: *Karel Čapek: Life and Work*.(CIEE library)

Kundera, Milan: *The Art Of the Novel*, London, Faber and Faber, 1990 (CIEE library)

Loewy, Dana, "Introduction", in *The Early Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, Evanston, Illinois, Hydra Books, Northwestern University Press, 1997, pp. XI–XXIV. (CIEE library)

Němcová-Banerjee, Maria: *Terminal Paradox. The Novels of Milan Kundera*, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1990. (CIEE library)

Novák, Arne: *Czech Literature*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1986. (CIEE library)

Politzer, Heinz: "Juvenilia: The Artist As a Bachelor" + "The Breakthrough: 1912" + "The Trial", in H. P.: *Franz Kafka. Parable And Paradox*, second, revised edition, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1966.) (CIEE Library)

Pynsent, Robert B.: "Characterisation in Mácha's *Máj*", in *Czech studies: Literature, Language, Culture*, ed. by M. Grygar, Amsterdam – Atlanta, Rodopi 1990, pp. 229-267. (Course materials on the web)

Pynsent, Robert B.: "Conclusory Essay: Decay, Decadence and Innovation", in *Decadence and Innovation*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1989, pp. 111-248. (Course materials on the web)

Pynsent, Robert B.: "Introduction. A Survey of Czech Literature from 1774 to 1939", in: Pynsent, Robert Burton (ed.): *Czech Prose and Verse. A Selection with an Introductory Essay*, London: University of London – The Athlone Press, London East European Series (Language and Literature), 1979, p. xi–lxxxiii (National library)



Pynsent, R. B. + Kanikova, S. I.: *The Everyman Companion to East European Literature*, London, Dent, 1993.

Urban, Otto M.: *In Morbid Colours: Art and Idea of Decadence in Czech Art 1880-1914*, Prague 2006. (CIEE library)

Trensky, Paul: *Czech Drama since World War II*, White Plains, Sharpe, 1978. (National Library)
Views from the inside. Czech Underground Literature and Culture (1948-1989). (ed.) Martin Machovec, Prague 2006. (CIEE library)

A World Apart and Other Stories. Czech Women Writers at the Fin de siècle, selected and translated by Kathleen Hayes, Prague, Carolinum, 2001. (CIEE library)