



## **CIEE Prague, Czech Republic**

<b>Course Name:</b>	Contemporary Czech Culture: Alternative Literature, Music, and Lifestyles
<b>Course Number:</b>	CEAS 3002 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>	Spring 2020

### **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, etc. The instructor, an anthropologist with hands-on experience in local subcultures, assists in the application of 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 a part of this course.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 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
- explain 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 a background in culture anthropology, culture 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. Class participation 20%
2. Reading check and reaction papers 10x 2%= 20%
3. Reading presentation and debate leader 10%
4. Midterm Test 20%
5. Final Project on the topics covered in class (graffiti and street art, music, etc.) 30%

### **Course Requirements**

1. **Class participation.** See the CIEE Prague Participation Policy

#### **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.

2. **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.

3. **Reading presentation and debate leader for one class.** Grading takes into account the accuracy in delivering main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Extra



images are a plus.

4. **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).

5. **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.

#### **CIEE Prague Attendance Policy**

CIEE Prague Attendance Policy is in line with the attendance policy as outlined in the Participant Contract. The current version is on the Canvas Course Site and on the Canvas Community Site.

#### **CIEE Academic Honesty Statement**

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                      **Class 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 2 Vyšehrad field trip: five Czech greats**

#### **Required reading:**

Jonssonova

#### **Recommended reading:**

Kellner (2003)

Rojek (2003)

Week 2                      **Class 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 Field trip concert TBA**

Week 3

**Class 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 2 Underground Poetry: Topol, Pavel Z, Magor**

Week 4

**Class 1 PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH.** Addiction and Anxiety. In Pot We Trust: legalization of medicinal marihuana 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 2** Excerpts: Katka, One Way Ticket, The Substance

Week 5

**Class 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 what to say by Burning Bush?

**Assignment: R4 Human Rights**

**Class 2**

field trip to One World film festival

Week 6  
Midterm Exam  
Period

**Class 1** HIPSTERS OLD AND NEW. RECYCLING.

**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 characteristic 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 PrenzlauerBerg

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u\\_o0xp4OT0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u_o0xp4OT0)

Vice Hipsters?

**Class 2** Guest speaker

Week 7  
Midterm Exam  
Period

**Class 1** Midterm test

**Class 2** The Can graffiti film

Week 8

**Class 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 2**

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

Week 9

**Class 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 2** Thu Site visit: Tesnov legal graffiti site visit

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

Week 10

**Class 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**

Week 11

**Class 2: EASTER BREAK, NO CLASSES.**

**Class 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 2 field trip DOX**

Week 12

**Class 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 2 St Agnes sculpture garden field trip**

Week 13

Final Exam Week

**Class 1**

Presentation of final projects

**Class 2**



## End-of-course discussion

### Course Materials

#### **Required Reading**

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.

Zizek, Slavoj. "The Impossible Happens". In *Demanding the Impossible*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

### ***Recommended reading***

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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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.

Zábransky, Tomáš. Methamphetamine in the Czech Republic. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 37(1), 155-180. Retrieved Sept. 27, 2007.