



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course Name:	Jewish Culture in Central Europe
Course Number:	CEAS 3008 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES/CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

The existence of the Jewish community in Prague was first documented in the writings of an Arab-Jewish traveler, Ibrahím ibn Yaqub, in 965 AD, while in Hungary some records even predate 895 AD. Jewish communities have been part of Central European space for over one thousand years and have influenced art, architecture, and many social and cultural artifacts throughout their history. This course explores Jewish culture in Central Europe, covering the most significant periods, movements and representations, including the importance of Renaissance rabbis and scientific discoveries in early modern Europe and the large Central European centers of Jewish thought as well as the transition of Europe from the old order of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the formation of national states and the onset of Nazism, studying the circles of Jewish writers and intellectuals in the Central European capitals. Furthermore, the course also delves into the little researched and long disappeared world of wealthy industrialists, gaining rare insights into the world of large art collections which were mostly looted by the Nazis. The “final solution of the Jewish questions” is seen through the optics of notable Central European authors and filmmakers.

Learning Objectives

By completing the course, students will be able to:

- command a critical understanding of Central European Jewish culture, including visual art, film, architecture, literature, and philosophy.
- compare the representations of Jewish culture in different Central European countries.
- contextualize the existence of the Jewish population within the plurality of cultures in the region.
- critically evaluate the course material and studies presented in academic writing and presentation skills.

Course Prerequisites



None

Methods of Instruction

This course is taught using a dynamic combination of lectures, discussions, group work, student presentations, and field trips, including a mandatory one-day trip to Kolín, one of the main centers of Jewish life in Bohemia since the 14th century. A guest speaker will offer her personal experiences with culture in the Terezín ghetto.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Discussion Leader	20%
2. Class Excursion Participation and Reflection	10%
3. Research Paper and Presentation	15%
4. Presentation of Research	5%
5. Group Presentation	10%
6. Reading Checks	20%
7. Class Participation	20%

Course Requirements

Discussion Leader

Each student will lead a presentation on a given topic or a reading assignment. Assessed areas include clarity, delivery and organization. This task includes a PowerPoint presentation with one slide presenting information about the author of the reading assignment (if relevant), five slides explaining the topic and difficult points of the text and the last slide containing questions and polemic points for moderating a class discussion. Grading takes into account the accuracy in the delivery of the main issues to the class and success in stimulating discussion. Remember that as you are presenting the content of the reading assignment (if relevant), your comments and interpretations are to be voiced in the discussion part.

Research Paper and Presentation

Projects are evaluated according to the quality of research and the ability to supply the student's own commentary. The work must be related to the topics and readings covered in class. The topic must be discussed with the instructor and approved by him/her in advance by week 6. Paper length: 1500–2000 words

Presentation of Research

Presentations of learner's research should be 10-15 minutes long including the class discussion.

Group Presentation



Students will be divided into groups, each group will prepare a presentation on an assigned topic. A group presentation should take approximately 15 minutes and the assignment includes 15 minutes of leading of a discussion. The evaluation focuses on the clarity, delivery, organization and ability to engage fellow students.

Reading Checks

Reading Checks assess students’ consistent preparation for classes. There are 10 reading checks per semester, approximately 250 words each. A check consists of two parts:

- 1. First page – check: author, title, year, and bullet points learned, quotes, names, and data. One initiated question for class discussion.
- 2. Second page – reaction: your evaluation, polemics, criticism, etc.

Reading checks are always due BEFORE the class session: the deadline is two days before the class session at 8 p.m. The submission is required via Canvas. In addition, students should bring their printed check to class.

Class Participation

Class participation involves more than mere attendance. A consistent knowledge of sources and readings is expected as well as active participation in class discussions, including the ability to formulate and ask questions during class discussions, field trips and guest lecture presentations. Class participation also includes four engagement activity checks, length: 250–500 words. These checks may be related to field trips and guest lectures. Checks related to field trips include: place(s) visited, time of construction, a text including learned facts. Checks related to guest lectures include: the name of the Holocaust survivor, bullet points learned, second page: your observations, reflections and thoughts.

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

Architecture of Synagogues

Week 1

This module examines the institution of the synagogue at the time of the Jerusalem Temple and its role after its destruction. The synagogue developed into a typical Jewish form of architecture. In the Middle Ages, Jews were often inspired by existing architecture that they adapted to their needs, creating a specific form. The Jews of Eastern and Central Europe developed their own architectural concepts especially between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

Reading: Fiedler, 1991.

Jewish Liturgical Items

Week 2

This module explores ancient Jewish history reflected in Jewish holidays and traditions and their representation in liturgical items created in Central Europe from the 17th through the 20th centuries.

Reading: Kosáková, 2005.

Representation of Jews in the Middle Ages and Jewish Illuminated Manuscripts

Week 3

The topics covered in this module include the Crusades and medieval anti-semitism as well as the changes in the position of Jews and their representation, demonstrated on illuminated manuscripts, mural paintings and sculpture. Richly illuminated Hebrew manuscripts, namely *Megilat Ester* and *Haggadot shel Pesach*, are examined in the second part of the module.

Reading: Lipton, 2014, Metzger, 2007.

The Maharal of Prague and His Followers, Centers of Jewish Literacy

This module explores prominent Renaissance rabbinical personalities in Central Europe and their influence on the Jewish as well as non-Jewish communities. In the Habsburg Empire, Prague was a city bustling with rich cultural exchanges as the imperial court attracted scholars from various parts of Europe. Being the capital of the Empire around the year 1600, Prague became one of the foremost Jewish centers of the 17th century.

Week 4

The famous *yeshivot* in Moravia and present-day Slovakia are examined in the second part of the module. The 18th-century Chassidic movement is demonstrated on the figure of Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg (Mikulov) in Moravia, while the Jewry in Slovakia is explored using the example of *the Pressburger Yeshiva* (Bratislava) established by Chatam Sofer, which developed into one of the largest and most influential centers of Jewish education in Central Europe in the 19th century.

Readings: Ruderman, 1995; Schreiber, 2002–2003.

Cultural engagement activity check I due

Week 5

Field Trip to the Jewish Museum in Prague

Excursion to the oldest functioning synagogue in Europe dating from the 1200s. In its rich collections, the Jewish Museum in Prague houses a number of synagogue curtains, silverware and other liturgical objects, particularly from the baroque era and the 19th century. The wealth of Central European Jewry was accumulated there by the Nazis who, according to Egon Erwin Kisch, planned to establish a museum of “an extinct nation” in Prague.

Reading: Rybar, 1991.

**Week 6
Midterm Exam
Period**

Prague Jewish Writers

Prague of the *fin de siècle* was a city of Czechs, Germans and Jews. The German speaking Jewish authors, such as Franz Werfel, Max Brod and Franz Kafka, were also very active as translators of Czech literature into German and, therefore, served as mediators between the often mutually hostile cultures, building bridges of understanding.

Reading: Spector, 2000.

Viennese Circles and the Disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

The transition of Europe from the old order of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the formation of nation states and the arrival of Nazism is demonstrated on writings by Joseph Roth, Stephen Zweig, and philosopher Martin Buber

Week 7
Midterm Exam
Period

This module also includes screening and a discussion of the contemporary Israeli movie about Martin Buber, *The Way of Man*, by Yaakov Lifshin.

Reading: Roth, multiple editions.

Cultural engagement activity check II due

“Judapest”

This module focuses on the rich heritage of Hungarian Jewish authors, such as Ephraim Kishon, Imre Kertesz, and Joseph Pulitzer, and includes screening extracts from *Fateless*, a film based on a novel written by Imre Kertesz, a Nobel Prize Laureate, and Ephraim Kishon’s *Sallah Shabbati*.

Week 8

Reading: Kertesz, 2004.

Jewish Industrialists and Art Collectors

This module explores the hitherto-little researched world of wealthy Jewish families that were prominent in various fields of industry (e.g., sugar making, textile production and brown coal mining). It also provides rare insights into the world of big art collections that were mostly looted by the Nazis. Jewish industrialists also had their villas and palaces built by the foremost architects of their respective time periods. Prague, Brno as well as the Bohemian countryside were significantly shaped by their contributions.

Week 9

One-day Mandatory Trip to the Kolín region

The city of Kolín was one of the main centers of Jewish life in Bohemia from the 14th century. In addition to the synagogue, we will also visit the 15th-century Jewish cemetery which is the second most important one in the country, eclipsed only by the Old Jewish Cemetery in

Prague. The second part of the trip will explore affluent Jewish families in the region, including the Petscheks, the Bauers, exploring the Bauers' Cubist villa in Libodřice, and the Mandelíks, visiting the Château Kotěra, originally the Mandelík family palace.

Reflection of the Holocaust in Central European Film

This module introduces theme of the “final solution of the Jewish question,” through screening the 1965 Academy Award-Winning film, *The Shop on Main Street* by Ján Kadar and Elmar Klos and a subsequent discussion on Slovakia, the first country to start deporting Jews.

Week 10

Readings:

Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), 1995, pp. 637–639, 646, 647, 651, 655, 662 and 696.

Cultural engagement activity check III due

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Polish Movie and Literature

An act of Jewish resistance in the largest of all of the Jewish ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II is the main theme of this module. The class examines the reactions of the international community and their position in the Polish political discourse, alongside its representations by Academy Award-Winning film directors Roman Polanski, Andrzej Wajda, and prolific Polish author Jerzy Andrzejewski.

Week 11

Reading: Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), 1995, pp. 675, 682, 683.

Culture in Terezín

Terezín is an example of an exceptional Jewish ghetto and a transitory concentration camp, which gathered some of the most prominent European personalities such as conductor Karel Ančerl. The Terezín ghetto is known for its extensive, high-quality cultural activities that included visual arts, music, theatre, and philosophy lectures. The module also includes a meeting with Holocaust survivor Michaela Vidláková.

Week 12

Reading: Friesová, 2011.

Final Exam Week Presentations of students' projects



Final Exam

Cultural engagement activity check IV due

Course Materials

Readings

Fiedler, Jiří. *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia*. Prague, 1991.

Friesová, Jana Renée. *Fortress of My Youth: Memoir of a Terezín Survivor*. 2011.

Kertesz, Imre. *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*. Translated by Tim Wilkinson, 2004.

Kosáková, Eva. *Dictionary of Judaica*. Prague, 2005.

Lipton, Sara. *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*. New York, Metropolitan, 2014.

Mendes-Flohr, Paul and Jehua Reinharz (Eds.) *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.

Metzger, Thérèse and Mendel. *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages: Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries*. New York, Alpine Fine Arts Collection, 1982.

Roth, Joseph. *Radetzky March*. Multiple editions.

Ruderman, David B. *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*. Yale University, 1995.

Rybar, Ctibor. *Jewish Prague, Guide to the Monuments*. Most, 1991.

Schreiber, Aaron M. "The Hatam Sofer's Nuanced Attitude towards Secular Learning, Maskilim, and Reformers". *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 11, 2002-2003, p. 123-173.

Spector, Scott. *Prague Territories, National Conflict and Cultural Innovation on Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000.

Tahan, Ilana. *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image*. London, British Library, 2007.

Films:

Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, *The Shop on Main Street*, 1965.

Imre Kertesz, *Fateless*, 2005.

Ephraim Kishon, *Sallah Shabbati*, 1964.



Yaakov Lifshin, *The Way of Man*, 2015.

Roman Polanski, *The Pianist*, 2002.

Andrzej Wajda, *Ashes and Diamonds*, 1958.

Andrzej Wajda, *A Generation*, 1955.

Andrzej Wajda, *Holy Week*, 1995.

Andrzej Wajda, *Kanał*, 1956.

Andrzej Wajda, *Korczak*, 1990.