



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course Name:	Technology, Totalitarianism, and the Individual
Course Number:	PHIL 3001 PRAG / CEAS 3005 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES, CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

The course explores the relevance of philosophy to day-to-day social, political, economic, and cultural life. It focuses on the philosophical foundations of political and economic movements, as well as major cultural movements such as science and technology, post-modern art and literature, and popular culture in general. Among the themes discussed will be the ontology of objectivity and subjectivity, relativism, consumerism, capitalism and communism, scientific positivism, philosophy of language, and art. The meaning of “human being” in a metaphysical, psychological/psychoanalytical and ontological manner will be explored together with the idea of “administered reality”—a predominant characteristic of post-war, industrialized societies—and the possibility of individual freedom in the face of it. All philosophical ideas will be applied to and discussed in the context of the Czech society’s post-war experiences. Selected writings from the Czech poet/dramatist and political activist/leader Vaclav Havel and the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka will be studied alongside texts by Arendt, Fromm, Lacan, Marcuse, Foucault, Derrida and Žižek, among others.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify and explain key philosophical, social and cultural themes of the 20th and 21st centuries;
- compare and contrast multiple grounds of social criticism;
- be able to discuss in depth notions such as Freedom, Totalitarianism, Consumerism, Dissent, etc.;
- demonstrate skills in critical reasoning and communication of abstract ideas;
- construct a working philosophical framework of critical analysis with “real life” application.



Course Prerequisites

Previous courses in one or more of the following fields are required: Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, History, or the other humanities (6 hours, minimum; or instructor's permission).

Methods of Instruction

A combination of lecture and seminar-style open discussion. One or two class meetings will be at historical points of interest in Prague.

Assessment and Final Grade

- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam (Written or Oral): 25%
- Term paper: 25%
- Class participation: 20%
- Quizzes: 10%

Course Requirements

Required Reading

Students are expected to have finished the readings by the day on which they are listed. There will be periodic pop quizzes over the readings, as part of the "class participation" grade

Midterm exam

Short essay style: the student will answer 4 essay questions

Term Paper

The term paper on a chosen topic should be between 2,000- and 3,000-word long, double-spaced, and has to demonstrate students' use of the course materials. Online research resources should be discussed and approved prior to the paper topic registration into the CIEE essay database. Also, all related notes, outlines and drafts are to be submitted to the instructor along with the final copy.)

Final exam

The final paper on a chosen topic should be between 8 and 14 pages long, double-spaced, and has to demonstrate students' use of the course materials. Online research resources should be discussed and approved prior to the paper topic registration into the CIEE essay database.

Quizzes

Short in-class quizzes will be administered throughout the course to assess students' understanding of required readings.

Class Participation



Students are expected to contribute to class discussions regularly. To that end, students are also expected to have finished the readings by the day on which they are listed. There will be periodic pop quizzes over the readings, as part of the class participation grade.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

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>
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

Class 1

Introduction

- 20th Century Continental Philosophy
- World of Poetry, World of Prose: Continental vs. Analytical Philosophy (...after Kant)
- "Transcendental Seeing"

Class 2

Philosophical backgrounds

- Wallace's "This is Water"
- Plato's Allegory of the Cave"

Required readings:

- David Foster Wallace's "This is Water"
- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"

Week 2

Class 1

A deeper look at the meaning of “technology”

- From Aristotle to Heidegger

Required readings:

- Schadewaldt’s “The Greek Concepts of ‘Nature’ and ‘Technique’”

Class 2

- Fromm’s method: Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Marxism
- Freud on ego, Oedipal stage and sublimation

Required readings:

- Fromm, chapters 1 and 2
- Optional: Lacan’s “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the ‘I’ Function”

Week 3

Class 1

Historico-Ideological foundations of modern society

- Lutheranism, Calvinism and their Discontents
- The Ideological Foundation of Capitalism

Required readings:

- Fromm, chapter 3
- Optional: Selection from Weber’s “The Protestant Ethic”

Class 2

Modern psychological mechanisms of escape

- The Schizophrenia at the heart of the modern human being
- Authoritarianism, sado-masochism and “automaton conformity”
- A brief introduction to Structuralism (and Lacanian psychoanalysis)
- A brief introduction to Heidegger’s Existentialism

A modern formulation of freedom

- “Freedom From” and “Freedom To”

Required readings:

- Fromm, chapters 4 and 5
- Optional: Selection from Freud’s “Civilisation and its Discontents”
- Optional: Selection from Sartre’s “Existentialism and Human Emotions”



Week 4

Class 1

- The socio-economic event of Nazism
- Interpreting fascism

Required readings:

- Fromm, chapters 6, 7 (Appendix is optional)

Class 2

- Discussion of Nazism continued
- Supplementing Fromm’s analyses with some Lacanian concepts
- Fromm’s conclusions about our possible futures
- Intro to Arendt

Required readings:

- Arendt’s “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility”
- Optional: Lacan’s “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious”

Week 5

Class 1

- Arendt on “total domination,” “living corpses,” and the “banality of evil”
- Arendt’s “Eichmann in Jerusalem”

Required readings:

- Arendt’s “Eichmann in Jerusalem” (first half, pages TBD)

Class 2

- Arendt’s “Eichmann in Jerusalem” continued

Required readings:

- Arendt’s “Eichmann in Jerusalem” (second half, pages TBD)

Week 6

Midterm Exam
Period

Class 1

Arendt discussion continued....
Review for midterm exam

Class 2

Midterm Exam

Week 7

Midterm Exam
Period

Class 1

Contemporary democracy in light of the preceding discussions

- Fascism defeated?
- Anticipating contemporary consumerism and the “administered

society”

Frankfurt School Critical Theory

- Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s critique of modernity
- Marcuse’s critique of the consumer society
- New critical terms: “positivity,” “negativity” and “repressive desublimation”
- A note on Marcuse’s theory of art

Required readings:

- Marcuse’s “New Forms of Control” from *One-Dimensional Man* (1964)
- Optional: Selection from Horkheimer and Adorno’s “Dialectic of Enlightenment” (p. 160-163)

Class 2

Conceptual contributions from French Post-Structuralism

- Althusser’s “repressive and ideological state apparatuses” (ISAs and RSAs)
- Foucault’s “panopticism”

Historical background of post-war Czechoslovakia

- Post-war Central and Eastern Europe
- The Prague Spring
- “Normalization”

Required readings:

- Althusser’s “Ideological State Apparatuses”
- Foucault’s “Panopticism” (from “Discipline and Punish”)

Week 8

Class 1

Film: Karel Kachyna’s “Ucho” (“The Ear”)

Class 2

- Discussion of the film “The Ear”
- Power, truth and subjectivity in the totalitarian world
- Appearance vs. Reality
- Entropy and the aims of the system vs. the aims of life

Required readings:

- Havel’s “Letter to Dr. Husak”

- Optional: Judith Butler's "The Psychic Life of Power," chapters 3 and 4

Week 9

Class 1

The self-referential administered society

- The Arts in 60s Czechoslovakia
- Havel's "The Garden Party"

Paper Topics Due

Required readings:

- Havel's "The Garden Party," and "The Power of the Powerless" (p. 36-80)

Class 2

- The metaphysical dimension of dissent

Required readings:

- Havel's "The Power of the Powerless" (p. 80-122)

Week 10

Class 1

Orders of reality, transcendent and otherwise

- "Anti-political politics"
- "Deep ecology"
- Husserl's concepts of "*lebenswelt*" and "*mathesis universalis*"
- A brief introduction to Heidegger's "history of Being"

Required readings:

- Havel's "Politics and Conscience"
- Selection from Husserl's "The Crisis of European Sciences"

Class 2

Guest Speaker



Week 11

Class 1

- Heidegger's philosophy of being and philosophy of technology
- An introduction to Patocka

Required readings:

- Heidegger's "Essay Concerning Technology"

Class 2

- Patocka's brief history of philosophy (ontology), from Plato to Heidegger
- Husserl's, Heidegger's and Patocka's critique of the modern project of "*mathesis universalis*" and technological (or instrumental) rationality
- Modernity's particular disclosure of Being

- **Outline of final paper due!** (worth 5% of final grade)

Required readings:

- Patočka's "Is Technological Civilization Decadent and Why?"

Week 12

Class 1

Reformulating the ontological dimensions of economic and moral life, Part I:

- Discussion of Patocka's "Is Technological Civilization Decadent and Why?" continued
- The place of sacrifice in a technical world
- A brief history of philosophy, from Plato to Heidegger

Required readings:

- Patočka's "On the Dangers of Technicization"

Class 2

Reformulating the ontological dimensions of economic and moral life, Part II:

- Deconstructionist ethics?
- The "Ecstatic Sacred": Derrida on "Justice," "Gift," "Hospitality" and "Sacrifice"
- Kafka the prophet

First Draft of Final Paper due!!! (worth 10% of paper grade)



Required readings:

- Derrida interview from “Deconstruction in a Nutshell”
- Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony”

Week 13 **Class 1**
Final Exam Week Review session

Class 2
Final exam
Final Paper Due!!! (worth the remaining 85% of paper grade)

Course Materials

Required Reading:

Fromm, Erich. *The Fear of Freedom*. Oxon: Routledge Classics, 2001.

A course reader supplied by the instructor made up of selections of texts by the following authors: Vaclav Havel, Jan Patočka, Martin Heidegger, Hanah Arendt, Franz Kafka, Immanuel Kant, G. F. W. Hegel, Karl Marx, Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Sartre, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Zygmunt Bauman and Slavoj Žižek.

Recommended Reading:

Books

- Day, Barbara. *The Velvet Philosophers*. London: The Claridge Press, 1999.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of Prison and Punishment*. Alan Sheridan, transl. New York: Random House, 1975.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. James Strachey, trans. & ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005 (1930).
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1964.

Films and Documentaries

- de Botton, Alain. *Philosophy: A Guide to Happiness* (BBC, 2000)
- de Botton, Alain. *Status Anxiety* (BBC, 2004)
- *Cold War* (1998), a documentary series produced by Pat Mitchell and Jeremy Isaacs. Episodes 6, 7, 14, 16, 19, 23 and 24.
- Hřebejk, Jan. *Pupendo* (2003).



- Kachyna, Karel. *The Ear* (Ucho) (1970)
- Kaufman, Philip. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988) (based on the book by Milan Kundera)
- Marker, Chris. *A Grin Without a Cat* (Le fond de l'air est rouge) (1977).