Class code: MAP-UA 9548 - 001

Instructor Details: Petr Mucha
mucha@nyu.edu
Office hours: Wednesday 4:30-5:00 pm; Professors’ office at Malé nám. 2

Class Details: Cultures and Contexts: Prague - In the Heart of Central Europe
Thursday 1:30-4:20 pm
Location to be confirmed.

Prerequisites: No special prerequisites.

Class Description: Prague is certainly one of the key historical, geopolitical and cultural capitals of Central Europe. The concept of Central Europe is somewhat elusive and it is difficult to define it by geographical or political categories. Often characterized simply as a space on the edge between the West and East, most scholars see, however, a distinct Central European culture based on values and characteristics shared by the countries of this geopolitical entity. It is the result of complicated cultural, ethnic, political and religious interactions throughout more than a thousand years of history. Identified as having been one of the world’s richest sources of creative talent between the 17th and 20th centuries, Central Europe was represented by many distinguished figures such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Kant, Goethe and Hegel; later followed by Kafka, Rilke, Freud, Mendel and Dvorak, to mention only a few.

We explore the characteristics of Central Europe primarily from the perspective of Prague and its cultural history, which is so typical and almost archetypal for this region. Students study geopolitical characteristics and various phenomena that co-create the idea of Central Europe. Taking advantage of the course’s location in Prague, students examine primary sources and artifacts (art, literature, music, architecture, film) in their contexts and environment.

Class sessions are composed of class presentations and discussions on weekly readings and other study sources. Guided visits and excursions to sights related to the course are also an important part of the course.

Desired Outcomes: As a typical Core course it is based on a cross-disciplinary approach to the regional study, concentrating on main ideas and their contextual analysis. It is designed to equip students with the understanding of different historical phenomena that formed Central European culture. Students will improve their skills of critical and contextual analysis of primary materials and will develop abilities to interpret artifacts through group discussion and effective writing.

Assessment Components: (15%) Frequent class discussions are the key part of the course. Students are expected to be active in class discussions and other class activities.

Response papers (altogether 15%): Students write 3 page response papers every two weeks. The
papers should take the form of a personal reflection and their focus must be on topics discussed in the class with the stress on ideas and context rather than on specific data. Due dates will be announced in class.

**Oral presentation** (10%): 5-10 minutes class presentation of a topic reflected in a response paper or class discussion. Any possible artifacts and PowerPoint can be used for better illustration. The presentation must be accompanied by a class discussion on prepared question(s) concerning the reflected topic. For due date see the sign-up sheet.

**Mid-term paper** (15%): It is a 4 page take-home essay. Themes discussed in the class so far can serve as a topic for this essay or students can extend research on any of their response paper topics. The paper is due in the session 7.

**Test** (20%): It concentrates on key terms and regional cultural characteristics covered in class as well as on their contexts and consequences. The test is expected in the middle of a semester (session 8).

**Final paper** (25%): The final paper is 8-10 pages long in-depth exploration of a theme discussed in response papers or in the class. It is both more detailed and aimed at a higher level of abstraction than previous papers. Students are expected to develop an argument that analyzes the examined topic more deeply, placing it within a broader context. This paper represents major project for the term and must contain all required parts and attributes of academic papers. Lectures, course readings and issues raised during the class discussions should serve as a basis for defining the thesis for the final paper. The instructor will assist you in choosing your topic for this final course project. The paper must be submitted by the last session of the class.

**Reading report**: optional.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade A</strong>: Excellent work, exceptional research, papers and presentations; high level of participation in class discussions, involving original thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade B</strong>: Good work, necessary research and well done all required assignments, average involvement in class work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade C</strong>: Satisfactory work, limited participation in class discussions and demonstrates lack of individual insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade D</strong>: Passable work, meets minimum requirements but with significant mistakes and poor class activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade F</strong>: Fails to meet minimum requirements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade conversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYU Prague aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attendance Policy

Each unexcused absences will result in your final grade being reduced by 3%. Absences only for medical reasons will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor’s note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). Absences due to travel will not be excused.

Late Submission of Work

Work submitted late will affect the grade unless there is an agreed extension. Work submitted more than 8 days after the submission date without an agreed extension fails.

Plagiarism Policy

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as though it were one’s own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one’s own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer’s work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student’s intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science’s Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

"presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt."

"Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university." (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Required Text(s)

Primary texts’ excerpts and other required texts will be available on the internet or handouts will be distributed in class.

Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)


Internet Research Guidelines

Additional Required Equipment
| Session 1 | Thursday, | Course overview and introduction to the class topic.  
|          | Feb 6     | Explanation of expectations and assignments.  
|          |           | Main reading: Timothy Garton Ash, *The Puzzle of Central Europe* |
| Session 2 | Thursday, | Geographical concepts of Central Europe,  
|          | Feb 13    | Geopolitical determinants and dynamics,  
|          |           | Central Europe as a cultural intersection.  
|          |           | Excursion: “Cultural puzzle of Prague”  
|          |           | Main reading: Milan Kundera, *Tragedy of Central Europe* |
| Session 3 | Thursday, | Historical foundations and the birth of the region,  
|          | Feb 20    | Regionalization of Central Europe and “space between powers.”  
|          |           | Central Europe in different historical periods.  
|          |           | Excursion: Prague in historical epochs  
|          |           | Readings: Jiří Sláma, *Boiohaemum-Čechy*,  
|          |           | Miroslav Hroch, *Central Europe - The Rise and Fall of a Historical Region* |
| Session 4 | Thursday, | “In the heart of the European heart” – medieval Central Europe and Prague,  
|          | Feb 27    | Feudalism, religion and the medieval idea of the Central European society,  
|          |           | Cultural development in medieval period.  
|          |           | Excursion: Prague medieval religious site  
|          |           | Readings: František Kafka, *Politics and Culture under the Charles IV*,  
|          |           | Excerpts from the medieval texts |
| Session 5 | Thursday, | Reformation in Central Europe and religious disintegration,  
|          | March 6   | Societal and cultural emancipation process and its political consequences,  
|          |           | Central Europe as a battlefield and “Region on the boundary.”  
|          |           | Excursion: Prague Protestant sites  
|          |           | Readings: T. G. Masaryk, *Jan Hus and the Czech Reformation*  
|          |           | Excerpts from *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* by Comenius |
| Session 6 | Friday,   | Central European culture from 17th to early 20th centuries,  
|          | March 7   | “Golden time of thoughts” and factors of the cultural development,  
| Make up class |           | Political, religious and economic circumstances.  
|          |           | Excursion: Baroque, Mozart and Prague  
|          |           | Readings: Peter Demetz, *Mozart in Prague*  
|          |           | Excerpts from *Two Stories of Prague* by R. M. Rilke |
| Session 7 | Thursday, | “Rise of a nation” - nationalism in the Central European context,  
|          | March 13  | Notion of nationalism, its sources and characteristics, cultural and political consequences.  
|          |           | Pan-Slavism and German nationalism.  
|          |           | Excursion: National sites and monuments  
|          |           | Readings: Lonnie Johnson, *From Nations to Nationalism*,  
|          |           | Excerpts from *Old Bohemian Legends* by Alois Jirásek |
| Session 8 | Thursday, | German hegemony in Central Europe,  
|          | March 20  | Buffer space and region “among the giants”,  
|          |           | Concept of Mitteleuropa, German nationalism and Nazism, WWI and II.  
|          |           | Readings: Raffael Scheck, *Building up German Hegemony in Central Europe*  
|          |           | Excerpts from *Democracy and Humanity* by Tomáš G. Masaryk |
| Session 9 | Friday, March 21 | Make up class  
Jewry in Central Europe in historical perspective,  
Ashkenazi tradition and its contribution to Central European culture,  
Anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism and tragedy of Holocaust; “the lost culture.”  
Excursion: Prague Jewish Town  
Readings: Helena Krejčová, *Czechs and Jews*  
Excerpts from *Selected Stories* by Franz Kafka |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 10</td>
<td>Thursday, March 27</td>
<td>Film and discussion on Jewish culture in Central Europe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Session 11 | Thursday, April 3 | Russian hegemony and Communism and Central Europe,  
Principles of totalitarianism in Soviet satellites in Central Europe,  
Czechoslovakia in 1950s, Prague Spring and Normalization,  
Social and cultural consequences of totalitarianism.  
Excursion: Prague in the period of totalitarianism  
Reading: Václav Havel, *Power of the Powerless* |
| Spring Break | April 7-11 | |
| Session 12 | Thursday, April 17 | Struggle for democracy in Communist countries,  
The phenomenon of dissent, forms and representatives,  
Velvet Revolution and its legacy.  
Film: *Citizen Havel*  
Main reading: Tomáš Halík, *Essay on Reconciliation* |
| Session 13 | Thursday, April 24 | Post-communism and transition period in Central Europe,  
Challenges in building democracy, political culture and problem of corruption,  
Political, social and cultural characteristics.  
Reading: Milada Vachdova, *Corruption and Compliance in the EU’s Post-Communist Members and Candidates* |
| National Holiday | May 1, no classes | |
| National Holiday | May 8, no classes | |
| Session 14 | Thursday, May 15 (last day of classes) | Restoring its European identity – Central Europe in international context,  
European Union and NATO, relations with Russia, globalization.  
Readings: Ingmar Karlsson, *European Identity and the Enlargement of the European Union*  
Václav Havel, *New Democracies for Old Europe* |
| Session 15 | Thursday, May 22 | *Final paper due* |
Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies. Food & drink should be consumed during class breaks and should not be brought in class.