

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Prague

Course Code / Title: (PR/CEST 355) Cultures of Resistance and Dissent in the Czech Lands

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Central European Studies / Sociology, Political Science, History

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: Open to all students

Description

This course offers critical insights into Czech expressions of resistance. Starting from World War II resistance against the German occupation and cultural resistance against communism 1948–1989, it focuses on hands-on examples of contemporary resistance against consumer culture. The highlights of the dissident and underground movements after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact army in 1968 include rock music as a platform for rebellion, the case of The Plastic People of the Universe and how their arrest gave rise to Charter 77, the civil rights movement headed by then-dissident Václav Havel. The topics of post-89 resistance discuss graffiti, autonomous culture, the LGBT+ movement and feminism, political art collectives, and happenings. The prime focus is on the “politics” of resistance and disclosures of power mechanisms.

Course content includes field visits to concerts, exhibits, and cultural sites around Prague.

Objectives

In this course, students learn to:

- Conceptualize and contextualize expressions of resistance
- Apply critical imagination in decoding resistance
- Read resistance in consumer culture
- Use critical theory to “read” music and popular culture
- View Czech history from the underground
- Understand contemporary Czech society

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: Attendance expectations are outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to contribute actively to class discussions, linking the concepts and terms from the readings, lectures, and presentations with their own comments and observations.

Reaction Papers: Students submit ten reaction papers (ca. 500 words each) based on the weekly readings. These papers include a basic summary of the main points of the reading, the student’s reaction and criticism, and questions for class discussion.

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Reading Presentation: Once per semester each student presents a reading to the class and leads a discussion with fellow students on that reading. The presentation should also include a slideshow with information about the author, main points of the reading, a discussion of difficult passages, and questions for discussion.

Midterm Exam: The midterm covers basic terms and issues from the first half of the course. The format is short answer.

Final Research Paper: As their final project, students write a research paper (2500 words, 8-10 pages) related to one of the topics covered in class. The papers are evaluated according to the quality of research and the student's original analysis and commentary. The work must also engage with the readings and issues covered in class. With approval, students may submit a creative project (such as a short film, songs, or poetry) as an alternative to the research paper. In this case, a two-page exegesis or explanation is required.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

- Participation 10%
- Reading/Reaction papers 20%
- Reading presentation 10%
- Mid-term test 20%
- Final paper 40%

Readings

Banksy. *Wall and Piece*. London: Random House, 2005.

Grof, Stanislav. "Heuristic Value of Psychedelic Research." Downloaded from erovid in 2006.

Havel, Vaclav. *The Power of the Powerless*. Charles University Press. Prague: 1985.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture. The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen, 1979.

Kaláb, Jan, Barenthin Lindblad, Tobias. 10-15. In *Names*. Praha, Trafačka, 2008.

Machovec, Martin. "Czech Underground Literature, 1969-1989 A Challenge to Textual Studies." In *Voice, Text, Hypertext, Emerging Practices in Textual Studies*, edited by Modiano Raimonda et al. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003.

Magid, Václav. *Crew Against People* (Bley, Crap, Dize, Key, Kto, Masker, Mosd). Praha: Bigg Boss, 2007.

Martin Machovec (ed.) *Views From the Inside. Czech Underground Literature and Culture (1948-1989)*. Praha: FFUK, 2006. (1. Ivan Martin Jirous –Music Revival; 2.

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Paul Wilson; 3. Egon Bondy – the Roots; Ivan Martin Jirous – Literature; Jachym Topol – Revolver Revue.)

Manifesto of Charter 77

Pospiszyl, Tomáš, Lékó, István. 1-19. In *Street Art Praha*. Praha: Arbor vitae, 2007.

Ramet, Sabrina Petra (ed.). *Rocking the State*. Oxford: Westview Press, 1994.

Reynolds, Simon “In Our Angelhood: Rave as Counterculture and Spiritual Revolution.” In: *Generation Extasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave*. Boston: Little Brown, 1999.

Reynolds, Simon. “Notes on the Noughties: When will Hip Hop Hurry up and Die?” (Guardian online, 2009).

Reynolds, Simon. *Rip It Up and Start Again. Postpunk 1978-1984*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005. Prologue xii –xxx.

Riedel, Jaroslav (ed.). *The Plastic People of the Universe. Lyrics*. Praha: Maťa, 1997.

Roszak, Theodore. “Counterfeit Identity.” In *The Making of a Counter Culture*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969.

Spencer, Lloyd. “Postmodernism, Modernity and the Tradition of Dissent.” In *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Stuart Sim. London, 2005.

Steiner, Petr. *The Deserts of Bohemia*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.

Stoppard, Tom. *Rock’n’Roll*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006.

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

Žižek, Slavoj. “The Two Totalitarianisms” *London Review of Books*, 2005.

Additional Resources

Recommended listening: R1, myspace: Raduza, Gipsy.cz, Gaia Mesiah, Vypsana Fixa, Oldrich Janota, UJD, Cechomor, Yellow Sisters, BBP, New Kids Underground, Birds Build Underground, Priesnitz, Jablkon, Rudovous, DG 307, Budoar stare damy, Ještě jsme se nedohodli, Chadima, Richter, Jasna paka, Psi vojaci, Tata boys, Traband, Toxic.

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1 - WWII resistance: *Dying We Live* Introductions. Definitions of Resistance

- Political Center (*Politické ústředí*, PÚ), the Committee of the Petition “We Remain Faithful” (*Petiční výbor Věrní zůstaneme*, PVVZ), and the Nation’s Defense (*Obrana národa*, ON)
- Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Operation Anthropoid and Lidice.
- Slovak National Uprising, Prague Uprising. Jesenská, Fučík, Kudeřková.

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Topic 2 - Postwar Resistance, 1950s

- Alternative, avant-garde, underground, subcultures. Theorizing popular culture. Frankfurt and Birmingham School.
- Czech Roots: Between the avant-garde and the underground. The 50s, socialist realism and the postmodern reflection of the 50s. Between the avant-garde and the underground.
- Hrabal, Boudnik, Bondy.

Topic 3 - The Invasion of August 21, 1968, Jan Palach

- Film excerpts: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- Charter 77, *samizdat*

Topic 4 - Mixing Pop and Politics: PPU and Charter 77

- The Plastic People of the Universe, their history, role in creation of Charter 77 and relevance for today.
- What is the connection between music and politics? What is the influence of the PPU on Charter 77? What forced them underground? The leading personalities and their strategies for keeping the culture alive in the midst of persecutions.

Topic 5 - Punk, the Last Subculture/Resistance

- Specifics of Czech Punk FPB, UJD. Anarchism in Bohemia, squatting.
- Why is punk is of such high interest to cultural scholars?

Topic 6 - Czech Alternative Music Scene Is there resistance post 1989? DIY

- The pre- and post-89' situation for Czech bands. How do the specific poetics compare to US bands?
- Typical band names of the period.
- How East block bands reach audiences in the West. Major trends in Czech alternative music.

Topic 7 - Introduction: Resistance in Postmodernity

- What is modernity—postmodernity—post-postmodernity?
- Postmodern movements.

Topic 8 - Resistance from Within

- Psychedelic Research Psychology—research on the unconscious.
- Therapy and its effects on popular culture.

Topic 9 - Graffiti Readings and films *Kick the Shit*, *Style Wars*, *The Can*. Street Art.

- Movements in the West vs. East.

Topic 10 - Visual Resistance

- New Czech political art collectives: Guma Guar, Ztohoven, David Cerny. Josef Bolf, Darina Alster, Radim Labuda.
- Squatting as a new form of resistance?