Prague as a Living History

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OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course, consisting largely of on-site visits, will introduce students to the history of the Czech Republic and of its capital, Prague, while also showing the development of its urban structure and main social functions. By this single - and beautiful – example, students should gain a deeper understanding of the particularities and intricacies of urban life as it evolved through the centuries.

After an introductory lecture in the classroom, most of the time shall be spent walking through the town, visiting historical sites, churches, museums and galleries, as well as other places of interest. Students should gain a certain ability to look at historical buildings and art objects, to discern their style, age and provenience, as well as to connect them with their historical and contemporary social functions. Other excursions will be devoted to interesting places, showing the recent and contemporary lifestyle of Prague inhabitants, including the social periphery.

Grading policy:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation/attendance/ quizzes</td>
<td>15 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term test</td>
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<td>Final test</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
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MIDTERM TESTS ARE DUE IN WEEK 7
FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE IN WEEK 12
Week 1

**Topic: How Statues Speak - Charles Bridge and Beyond**

**Required Readings:**
Václav Cílek, Prague Between History and Dreams, Bloomington 2004, pp. 3-53.

**Presentation:** Old Town Bridge Tower (Staroměstská mostecká věž)

Week 2

**Topic: Vyšehrad Castle - Legends and memory**
Medieval chronicles and Romantic forgeries. Cultural memory. Old Czech mythology and the “national revival”.

**Required Readings:**

**Presentations:**
• Church of St. Peter and Paul (Chrám sv. Petra a Pavla)
• Vyšehrad Cemetery (Vyšehradský hřbitov, Slavín)

Week 3

**Topic: The Castle - Power and defense, security and luxury**

**Required Readings:**
- Vladislav Dudák, Prague Pilgrim, or Prague from every side, Praha : Baset, 1995, 203 p.

**Presentations:**
• St Vitus’s Cathedral (Katedrála sv. Víta)
• Queen Anne’s Summerhouse – Belvedere (Letohrádek královny Anny)
• Old Royal Palace (Starý královský palác)
Week 4

Topic: Christianity Comes to Town - Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia
Role of the Church in pre-modern periods. Christianity and early history of kingdoms. Monastery as a centre of culture. Medieval art.

Required Readings:

Week 5

Topic: Medieval Town of Prague - Prosperity and revolution

Required Readings:
- Václav Cílek, Prague Between History and Dreams, Bloomington 2004, pp. 52-53 (“Living among Imps and Political Economy”).

Presentations:
• Bethlehem Chapel (Betlémská kaple)
• The Astronomical Clock at the Old Town Hall (Staroměský orloj)
• The Týn Yard (Ungelt) and the Church of our Lady (Týnský chrám)

Week 6

Topic: Prague as Heavenly Jerusalem - The New Town of Charles IV
Charles IV and his time. Bohemia as a centre of the Holy Roman Empire. Heavenly patterns and relic collections.

Required Readings:

Presentations:
• The Church of St Charlemagne (Karlov)
• The Slavonic Monastery Emmaus (Klášter Na Slovanech, Emauzy)
Week 7

Topic: The City Made of Paper - Municipal Museum and Langweil’s Model of Prague
History of the City of Prague in outline. Changes in downtown urbanism in the last two hundred years.

MIDTERM TESTS ARE DUE

Required Readings:

Week 8

Topic: Baroque Devotion in the Landscape - Loreto and the Infant Jesus
Pilgrimage and Baroque religious festivity. Counter-Reformation in Central Europe. Churches, chapels and Crucifixions and the emergence of a sacred landscape.

Required Readings:

Presentations:
• Wallenstein Palace (Valdštejnský palác)
• The Loreto (Loreta)

Week 9

Topic: Expanding the City: Vinohrady hundred years ago
The fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. The era of industrialization. Czech society before Czech Republic. Origins of “Great Prague”.

Required Readings:

Presentations:
• The “Art Nouveau” in Prague
• St Wenceslas’ Church in Vršovice (Kostel sv. Václava)
Week 10
Topic: Modern Architecture: from “Art Nouveau” to the Dancing House

Required Readings:

Presentations:
• The old and the new building of the National Theatre (Národní divadlo)
• The Dancing House (Tančící dům)

Week 11
Topic: Prefab Housing: Prague’s suburbs in the era of “Real Socialism”
The idea of communal housing. The socialist concept of the city. Housing standards in the time of Normalization – “Husák’s 3+1”

Required Readings:
- Sean Hanley, “Concrete Conclusions: The discreet charm of the Czech panelak,” Central Europe Review, 22-02-1999

Presentation:
• Palace of Culture (now Prague Congress Centre)
• Prague Metro

Week 12
Final Test, Evaluation, Closing Discussion

Required Readings:
RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Mythology and Revival:

- Derek Sayer, The Coasts of Bohemia, Princeton 1998, pp. 141-147 (chapter “A Discovery in Dvůr Králové”)

Middle Ages (Gothic Prague, Charles IV, Hussites):


Reformation and Counter-Reformation (Renaissance, Baroque):


Modern Times (Historicism, Art Nouveau, Cubism, Functionalism)


Socialist and Contemporary Architecture


FURTHER READINGS: