

## **Sociology as the Surrealistic Prague Experience**

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**Office hours:** by appointment  
**Class Meetings:** TBA

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course offers a broad introduction to the field of sociology through in-depth focus on the analysis of local society, as well as other interrelated issues such as social inequality, different human systems, and how people create meanings particularly when working together in a group.

Students will be acquainted with sociological terminology and key issues such as sexuality, class, race, gender, education, health care, religion, globalization, the media, deviance and crime, as well as environment from both the local and global perspectives to better interpret the surrounding world and different structures which shape our lives.

Students will build their sociological experience by embracing, what I would call, the Kafkaesque experience which is so often – and, indeed, very aptly – associated with the city of Prague and the life in the Czech Republic in the past and present permeated with a stream of different revolts. The memory plays here an important role: starting with the nation-building stage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the present-day globalization imbued with conflicting values with those established by the nation's forefathers.

We will examine the cultural heritage of the city marked with the traces of past centuries which witnessed the monarchy, fascism, communism, and the present day democratic capitalism. This will involve some visits to different sites in Prague, which are significant for their social and historical context, as well as cultural institutions and museums.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

This course examines the topic of sociology through local and global perspective. The course is designed to be collaborative and we will work with each other to maximize our individual and collective experiences. For this course, students will not have a specific textbook but will receive a compilation of different readings synchronized with each class topic. Therefore, students will be expected to consistently engage with the course material, including all of the sites that we visit, in order to carry engaging conversations with utmost intellectual benefits for everyone. The in-class meetings will be filled with introductory to the subject PPT presentations, film screenings, and group work with fellow students.

The material you read and discuss in class is to help you interpret the sites we visit. Additionally, you will be required to regularly write about your experiences in a journal, which each student will need to have from the beginning of the course.

Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

- define and begin using major concepts and theories related to sociology
- be familiar with the ideas of major thinkers in sociology and how they impact our outlook today
- to apply critical analysis to current events
- strengthen their intercultural skills
- use evidence to address empirical and interpretive questions

### **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1979). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Crowley, David and Susan E. Reid eds. (2002). *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

**Korgen, O. Kathleen and Maxine P. Atkinson.** (2019). *Sociology in Action*. London: Sage.

### **CLASS ASSESSMENT:**

#### **Grading Method**

Students with disabilities should speak with the professor to arrange needed accommodations.

The evaluation will be based on a final grade scale of 100% in the following as they relate to the course's objectives and outcomes:

- (1) Critical reading analysis (2): 20%
- (2) Class presentation on selected topic: 10%
- (3) Class participation 10% (as judged by the instructor, we will discuss expectations in class, this also includes attendance)
- (4) Ethnographic Journal: 20%
- (5) Mid-term Exam 20%
- (6) Final Exam 20%.

In order to contribute to class discussions and group learning, each person will prepare for class ahead of time. You will have readings and assignments for each class meeting relating to the content of the class.

- 1) **Critical Reading Analysis:** there are two reading analysis to be written by students throughout the semester. Each reading analysis should be **at least 1.5 pages long** (12-point font Times New Roman or Arial – around 350-400 words). The shorter response will be penalized by lower grade. The due date of each analysis is indicated on the syllabus.
- 2) **Class Presentation on selected sociological topic:** each student will be asked to perform a short presentation on the selected in-class topic (max. 10 slides if using PPT). The selection of topics will take place during the first week of the course.
- 3) **Class Assessment and Participation:** This part of the evaluation includes participation and discussions/debates. Active, constructive participation is required, and suggested readings will be a required and an important part of the course.
- 4) **Ethnographic Journal:** You will be required to keep a personal journal that only you and I read where you will be recording your own cultural experiences in the Czech Republic. There should be eight journal entries and each entry should be at least 300 words. The purpose of this journal is to record your personal progress toward

understanding the world around you, gaining intercultural skills, and keeping you and me in touch with each other. Best grades will be given to those journals which incorporate diverse elements of visual sociology (photos, drawings, graphs, etc.). One journal entry must cover a museum, gallery or public art display visited on your own in the Czech Republic. The journal will be turned in the last week of the semester.

- 5) **Examinations:** Mid-term examination will be on the material covered in the course (readings, lectures, class discussion, videos etc.) and will be given in the middle of semester as indicated by the instructor. Final Exam will test the knowledge starting from the second part of the class (after the mid-term exam) until the end of the course. Each exam will comprise a multiple-choice part and a few questions relating to the class readings.

**Absences:** Students must attend all classes. Excused medical absences require a written document the day of return to class. UPCES program does not allow any unexcused absence. Tardiness of more than 20 minutes without a reasonable excuse will be regarded as an absence.

The summative evaluation, in the form of a letter grade, will be based on the formative assessment, class participation, the research paper, and the results of the examinations. In regard to the latter, the students will be responsible for all the topics covered in class as well as the assigned readings and class presentations.

**Please be aware that the use of laptop and mobile phones during class session is strictly prohibited! This includes message texting!**

### Grading scale

Letter Grade	Percent (%)	Generally Accepted Meaning
A	95-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	Good work, distinctly above the average
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

#### UPCES Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The UPCES program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristic, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

#### UPCES Diversity Policy

UPCES fully embraces diversity and strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students from all backgrounds. Prague is a wonderfully diverse community and UPCES is no different. All students should feel at home while studying abroad and UPCES will do its utmost to make sure that becomes a reality. Although unique challenges may arise, we believe that students from all walks of life will encounter wonderful opportunities for enrichment as they explore a new culture while studying abroad.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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### WEEK 1

**Class 1: Introduction to the course. The Sociological Imagination. Sociological Theory. Methods of Research: Putting Prague into Research Context. Understanding Sociological Theory: Structural Functionalist, Conflict, and Symbolic Interactionist. Defining major theories of sociologists.** Focus on different research methods used in conducting a sociological research.

Readings: Sociology in Action: “Chapter 3: Using Research Methods.”

Mills, C. Wright (1959). *The Promise* (will be read and discussed in-class)

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### WEEK 2:

**Class 1: Socialization and Social Interaction. Society and Groups.**

Focus on the development of social self, communication and social memory. Modernity, social cohesion, and suicide. **Understanding past and present societies. The question of nationalism. What defines Czech and American nation?**

Readings:

Emile Durkheim (1897), Suicide: A Study in Sociology (excerpt)

Benedict Anderson (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (excerpt)

**Class 2: Social Class and Inequalities. Social Change and Social Movements.**

Focus on social stratification in the US and the CZ. Discussion of gender, race, and class position and how these affect the chances of social mobility in both countries. The Consequences of Social Change. Discussion of different types of social movements in the CZ and the US.

Readings: Sociology in Action: “Chapter 14: Changing Society through Social Movements.”

Vaclav Havel (1978), The Power of the Powerless

Video: The Yes Men Fix the World.

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### WEEK 3:

**Class 1: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration.**

Current immigration issues in both countries.

Readings: Sociology in Action: “Chapter 9: Recognizing the Importance of Race.”

Jan Culik (2017), “Why is the Czech Republic So Hostile to Muslims and Refugees?”

Available at: <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2017/02/09/why-is-the-czechrepublic-so-hostile-to-muslims-and-refugees/>

Eli Valley, “A History of the Jews in Prague.” (excerpt)

## **Visit to the Jewish Museum Quarter in Prague.**

### **Class 2: Religion**

Readings: Max Weber (1929), *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (excerpt)  
Dana Hamplova (2010), “Are Czechs the least religious of all?”

### **1<sup>st</sup> Reading Analysis is Due!**

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## **WEEK 4:**

### **Class 1: Mid-term Exam. Gender and Sexuality. Family and Education.**

Social construction of gender and the role of socialization agents in its understanding. How is gender viewed upon in the US and the Czech Republic? The status of women in the Czech Republic and the US. Comparative analysis of the legal status of same sex partners in both countries. What shapes the modern-day families? Historical and comparative perspective of the family structure in the US and the CZ. Gender roles in the family. Education system in both countries.

Readings: *Sociology in Action*: “Chapter 8: Constructing Gender, Sex, and Sexuality”  
Jacqui True, “Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism” (excerpt).

### **Class 2: Economic and Politics.**

Focus on different forms of government: The case of the Czech Republic vs the U.S.

Readings: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848), *The Communist Manifesto* (excerpt)  
Ondrej Sevecek, *The Case of Company Towns of The Bat’a Concern*  
Video: Vera Chytilova, *The Panel Story* (1979)

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## **WEEK 5:**

### **Class 1: Deviance, Conformity, and Collective Memory.**

The question of Holocaust and the case of Jewish population in the pre-war Czechoslovakia, Europe, and the present-day US. Discussion of the forgotten site of the former concentration camp for the Roma population at Lety u Pisku.

Readings:

Zygmunt Bauman (1989), *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

Tomas Sniegon (2014), “Pig Farm as a Porrajmos Remembrance Site from Vanished History: The Holocaust in the Czech and Slovak Historical Culture.” (excerpt)

Video: Milgram Experiment and Stanford Prison Experiment

Nazi Hunters 9, The Eichmann Trial

### **Visit to the National Memorial to the Heroes of Heydrich Terror.**

### **Class 2: Formal Organizations and Globalization. Food and Environment.**

Focus on globalization/glocalization of society. McDonaldization theory. Contemporary food production system. Food disorders and scares. GMO. Green Consumption in the US and the CZ. Globalization. The case of sugar.

Readings: George Ritzer. *Globalization Theory: Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption*

Robert Albritton. *Between Obesity and Hunger: The Capitalist Food Industry*.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Analysis is Due!**

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**WEEK 6:**

**Class 1: The Transmission of Culture and the Role of Media: Focus on culture and elites; Political Art. Art Activism. Street Art and its role in the CZ. Focus on the role of media in contemporary Czech society. Digital society.**

Readings: Interview with Tomas Pospiszyl. *Public, Private, and Political Art*.

Kaneva, Nadia and Elza Ibroscheva. *Media and the Birth of the Post-communist Consumer*.

Video: Czech Dream (Česky Sen)

**Journals are due!**

**Class 2: Final Exam. Visit to the DOX contemporary art gallery.**

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