Urban Anthropology of Central European Cities

*** Available Fall 2012 ***

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Course Description

The goal of the course is to introduce the main concepts of urban anthropology, emphasizing the urban life and culture of Central European cities. Central European cities have been undergoing rapid social and economic change, which has had major effects on their physical makeups. It has also affected the ways in which people – urbanites as well as non-urbanites – perceive these cities and urban life in general. This course aims to investigate how, in the post-communist context, city dwellers perceive, define and use this rapidly transforming urban space, as well as how they try to shape and appropriate it. We will focus on the urban experience in the post-communist period and contrast it with the communist period, i.e. the ways people have lived their urban lives and how they have lived through the changes. Other topics the course will deal with are urban landscape, urban culture, property issues, social cleavages, class divisions, city migration, and transnationalism. Students will have a chance to learn more about the cities they will explore on their trips: Prague, Bratislava, Cracow, and Cesky Krumlov. Students learn how to look at cities through an anthropological lens and do field projects analyzing some aspects of city behavior. We will look at the strategies people use to cope with the demands posed by urban environments. The approach will be comparative, drawing on research mainly focused on Central and Eastern Europe.
Requirements

Students will be required to have completed the required readings by their assigned date and be ready to discuss them in class. Students should endeavor to critically engage the readings for class discussions and papers.

Grading policy

Class participation/attendance: 20%
Mid-term exam: 40%
Final paper: 40%

Week 1

Definition of Urban Anthropology: Characteristics and Typology of Cities in History. Cultural Role of Cities. Emergence of Cities in Central Europe.

Wirth, L. Urbanism as a Way of Life (1938)


Róža Węclawowicz. KRAKOW: GENIUS LOCI OF THE TOWN SPACE. Jagiellonian University, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, 44-53.

Week 2

Development of Urban Anthropology in the US (Chicago School), in Europe (Manchester School) and in the Czech Republic.

Clyde Mitchel: The Kalela Dance. Aspects of Social Relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia. The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Manchester University Press. 1956


Week 3

Urban-Rural Migration. From its Beginnings to the Present.


Week 4

Urban Classes and Division in Central European Cities.


Adrian Smith, Stennin, Rochovská, Świętek: The Emergence of a Working Poor: Labor Markets, Neoliberalisation and Diverse Economies in Post-Socialist Cities.


Week 5

Movie: Moscow Doesn’t Believe in Tears. Directed by Vladimir Menshov, 1980, Russia.

The movie is set in Moscow from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. It tells a story about three provincial girls who come to Moscow. We will use this movie to analyze the rural-urban migration in Russia as well as cultural and class division patterns of Russian society under the Communist Regime.
Week 6

Mid-term Exam

Week 7

Urban Change and Transformation of Cities in Central Europe.

Transformation of the cities. Pablo B. Markin The Role of Urban Space in Berlin’s Transformation into a City of Culture after Reunification. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem European Forum Center for German Studies, 2010.

Walter MATZNETTER. The Vienna and Bratislava Urban Regions – COMPARING URBAN DEVELOPMENT UNDER (WELFARE) CAPITALISM AND (POST-) COMMUNISM


Week 8

Myths and Realities of Central-European Cities: The Examples of Cracow and Prague.


Mythical Vision of the City: Kraków as the ‘Pope’s City’! Anna Niedźwiedź, Jagiellonian University, Anthropology of East Europe Review. 27(2): 2009.


Week 9

Culture of Migration and Immigrants in Post-Communist Cities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.


Week 10

Transnationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Cities.


Andrew Cook. Becoming Czech becoming Other? Theorizing everyday life course transformation(s) amongst expatriates in Prague, 2010.


Week 11

Presentation of Final Papers

Recommended Readings


