

Art, Architecture, and Propaganda under Socialism

Lecturers: Petr Gibas, Ph.D., Blanka Nyklová, Ph.D.

Contact: petr.gibas@soc.cas.cz, bnyklova1@gmail.com

Office hours: available upon request; feel free to use our email addresses for any comments, requests, questions, feedback, etc. at any time.

Class time: To be specified

Language of Instruction: English

Course Description

The course explores how ideologies informed and keep informing visual aspects of art and architecture produced before and after the Velvet Revolution (1989) in what is now the Czech Republic. We look at individual pieces of art, architecture and material culture, propaganda posters and excerpts from movies, and search for ways in which they are in/formed by different ideologies. To achieve this, you will be first introduced to a set of epistemological building blocks, i.e. themes and modes of thinking that have influenced the form of art and visual culture, e.g. modernity, modernism, ideology. This will provide you with a strong theoretical base. We will then proceed to the methods available for researching the visual material that will explore throughout the course and that you can even add to as you travel around the CEE region. This is so because art and architecture created under the totalitarian regime between the late 1940s and 1980s has repercussions for what the CEE region looks like today. Moreover, as the Cold War rhetoric currently undergoes a revival, the study material and its historical context will also prove relevant for your understanding of the present geopolitical situation as it is reflected in different forms of art and visual culture.

The focal point of the course is the Czech lands but since their history is closely interrelated with the surrounding and even rather distant countries, there will be many geographical excursions (metaphorically speaking). Similarly, and because the course is concerned with art, architecture and pieces of propaganda produced during the totalitarian regime, it has strong ties with the local present so that our excursions will also concern time.

The course reader includes key theoretical and methodological texts as well as texts that outline the limits of applying certain theories of foreign origin to the local setting. The visual representations, art and pieces of architecture and propaganda span historical material, fiction and non-fiction movies, posters, photographs, and TV production.

The classes will comprise of lectures, class discussions, in-class hands-on analyses and walks around Prague. The topics to be covered include but are not limited to socialist realism and Stalinism (1950s), the Thaw (1960s), normalization (1970s and 1980s), progress and the vision of the future, everyday life, gender order under socialism, Vítkov (where Klement Gottwald's mummy used to be on display), and many more.

Assessment and Final Grade

Class participation: 30%

Midterm test: 15%

Reading diary: 15%

Literature review: 20%

Final presentation: 20%

Grading scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
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
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

Course Requirements

Class attendance is strictly monitored and failing to attend courses affects grades.

Every student is allowed **two 90 minute excused absences** during the semester. For each unexcused absence, the participation portion of the grade will be lowered. Hence, it will be very difficult to receive 100% in the class when you have unexcused absences.

Please keep this in mind. If you miss class twice without a valid excuse (a note from a physician in the event of an illness), then the professors will automatically lower the final grade by 5 points (on a 100 point scale) for each class missed thereafter. Students with 6 or more unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.

Tardiness of more than 20 minutes without a reasonable excuse will be regarded as an absence. Similarly, not taking an active part in sessions (e.g. because of using electronic devices during screenings, napping etc.) is viewed as an unexcused absence.

Active Class Participation

The class functions partly as a seminar. This means that both class participation and completing the required readings before class (to enable informed participation) are essential. This is why it comprises a significant portion of your course grade: **30%**. Active participation means that you **take informed part in the discussions** – possibly every seminar, put forward your ideas on, interpretations, and analysis of the visual material/text under discussion, and engage in discussion not only with the lecturers but perhaps even more importantly also with fellow students. Participation is assessed continually throughout the whole course. Students cannot use their laptops or any other electronic device during the discussions, as the screens tend to fragment the space and isolate those behind them and thus hinder their participation in discussion. Please note that you may print the reader out at UPCES.

Midterm test

The midterm test is used to test your knowledge of terms and notions introduced in the first part of the semester, i.e. the mostly theoretical and methodological ones, but it may also include questions related to the already conducted analyses of visual material. You will be given a notion/term and will be asked to define what the indicated author understands by the term, how s/he uses the term or alternatively what the possible approaches to the term are. There will be 6 - 10 questions. The test is modeled on typical Czech university tests. Unlike most US tests it is not essay based, you are asked to provide a concise (and short) answer based strictly on the reading, i.e. you will need to reserve some time to revise for the test. The test is worth **15%** of the final grade. The test will be held on Week 8.

Reading diary

From week to week, you are required to record details of your reading and research into the theories presented. Independent research into other theories is encouraged as it will positively impact on the final grade. You are thus offered an opportunity to engage with the theories and formulate your own ideas *before* defining the topic for your literature review and final presentation. Every assigned reading should be reacted to at the latest before the lecture when the reading is due. You should write about **1 page (1,800 characters/250 words)** per reading/event/analysis.

Every entry should be your own response to the particular reading, movie or field trip. The diary gives you space to experiment with the theory in a freer way than the other parts of the grading. It is mostly used to check your understanding of the theories and your analytical skills, which should in turn lead to improved grades. Make sure you always argue how you have reached your conclusions. Drawing links between past readings and the current one is highly recommended. Keep the diary in an **electronic form as a single Word document** and have it ready before every class. It will be collected and marked at least twice during the semester. You may gain the maximum of **15%**.

Literature review

Each student will hand in a **literature review** on the final class (**Week 13**) upon which his/her final presentation will be based. In order to ensure high quality of the literature review and final presentations, you are required to hand in a one-page outline of your topic and at least four of the sources you intend to review by **Week 11**. The topic and research question based on the literature review have to a. concern visual material, and b. focus on the Central and Eastern European region. As the choice of topic is up to you, it is highly recommended to consult your choice with the lecturers.

You can get the maximum of **20%** for the literature review. A literature review is an objective and thorough summary and critical analysis of the relevant, available research and non-research literature on the topic being studied (Hart, 1998). A good literature review gathers information about a particular subject from many sources and offers a critical reading of the sources. A good literature review is the essential first step for forming a sound and innovative research question. You are assigned to conduct a literature review in order to get the skills necessary for any type of college work.

Structure – your literature review will consist of three key parts with headings and subheadings:

- a) A brief **discussion of the topic of your choice**, i.e. the type of visual material you would like to study and the reason why it should be studied. This section should be brief but it needs to set up the thesis and literature that follow.
- b) A critical discussion of the literature you were able to gather. This section is the core one. You need to very briefly describe how you accessed the literature and demonstrate you have used multiple sources to find relevant academic articles and books. You should discuss the sources critically; include **at least two texts from the course reader plus at least four more texts**. A critical discussion means you focus on the perspectives and methods employed in the texts of your choice. You should group the texts that share a common stance, method or any other feature so that your literature review has a logical structure. **DO NOT** discuss individual texts in isolation. You should identify any competing perspectives, gaps and inconsistencies in how your topic has thus far been discussed. This will enable you to formulate a meaningful, sound research question. Note that the research question is the conclusion of the literature review.
- c) A **research question** that follows from a **summary** of the literature review. Note that you can only formulate the question and present the summary **AFTER** you have conducted the literature review.

The literature review will be assessed as follows:

Topic and material selected (10pts), Research question and summary (20pts), Literature review (60pts: a. multiple sources are used: 5pts, b. at least six sources are discussed, out of which at least two are from the course reader: 5pts, c. critical, logically and clearly structured discussion of the texts identified as key; make sure you use subheadings: 50pts), Structure and presentation (5pts), Consistency of references: APA citation style (5pts).

The literature review should be 5 pages long maximum, excluding references (i.e. 9,000 characters/1250 words).

Final Presentation

The last session of the course (**Week 13**) will be dedicated to final presentations by the students. These will be based on the literature review (extra registration of the topic is therefore not needed). Each student will prepare a presentation including **visuals** (ppt, prezi, pdf, etc.) and a **hand-out** (1 copy is enough).

The time allocated to the presentation will be announced on Week 12 as it depends on the number of students enrolled. The presentation should start by presenting the reason for doing the literature review and saying what your topic is; you should present examples of the material to be studied, and present the main topics that emerged from your literature review, you should end with presenting your research question, which should logically follow from the literature review.

The handout should include an executive summary of the research conducted for the presentation, and bullet points of the main arguments, and the research question. It should be one page maximum long (1,800 characters/250 words).

You can get the maximum of 20% for the final presentation. The following will be assessed: Structure of the presentation (relevance and logical sequence of slides: 25%), Quality of the hand-out (25%), Presentation (how well you carry out the presentation, speed, clarity, visual contact: 25%), and Response to questions (25%). Each presenter will be assigned one student to ensure questions are posed.

Classroom Decorum

Laptops and the use of any other electronic device are banned. Before you enter the classroom, make sure your **cell phone is switched off**.

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

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series and Prague Tours

Week 2

Introduction, course outline, short field trip

Mutual introduction of the students and lecturers - outline of the course; discussion of students' expectations, grading system and feedback provision; in-class analysis of visual material, short field trip to UPCES surroundings.

Week 3

Visual culture & methodologies, socialist timeline

What is visual material and what makes it different from other sources of data? What are the approaches and methods used in analyzing it? Why and how do we need to study visual culture?

Reading

G. Rose. 2016. *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. London: Sage, pp. 1-46 (ch. 1, Researching with visual materials: a brief survey & ch. 2, Towards a critical visual methodology).

Holmes, L. 1997. *Post-communism: An introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 72-77 (ch. "Czechoslovakia").

Week 4

Modernity, modernization & modernism

What is modernity? What is the relation between modernity, modernism(s) and modernization? What is the relation of modernity to socialism, and to capitalism?

Reading

Berman, M. 1988. "Introduction: Modernity – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. " In *All that is solid melts into air. The experience of modernity*, 15-36. London: Penguin.

Marx, K. 1888 [1848]. *Communist Manifesto*, pp. 14-21.

Recommended reading:

Zarecor, K. E. 2011. *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, pp. 1-13 (Introduction).

Week 5

Ideology – field trip

What is ideology? What is the connection between ideology and propaganda? Is ideology specific for totalitarian regimes? What is the role of ideology in a democracy?

Reading

Eagleton, T. 1991. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, pp. 1-31 (ch. 1, What is ideology?).

Week 6

Socialist realism & Stalinism

Understanding of historical context of Stalinism and socialist realism in former Czechoslovakia. What is the relation between socialist realism and ideology? Is socialist realism an expression of modernity (is it modernist) or a movement against modernity? What is the relation of socialist realism to the contemporary avant-garde?

Reading

Clark, K. "Socialist realism and the sacralizing of space." In *The landscape of Stalinism: The art and ideology of Soviet space*, edited by E. Naiman and E. Dobrenko, 3-18. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.

Petišková, T. 2012. "Socialist realism in Czechoslovakia." In *Realismo socialista Cecoslovacchia 1948-1989 = Socialist realism Czechoslovakia 1948-1989 = Socialistický realismus Československo 1948-1989*, edited by F. A. Razetto and O. M. Razetto, 1-5. Praha: Fondazione Eleutheria.

"Socialist Realism Proclaimed. August 1934." In *Russian Life* 2009, 52, 4: 21-23

"Socialist realism." In *Modern and contemporary Czech art*, K. Dolanská et al., 40-44. Prague: National Gallery.

Recommended reading:

Moc obrazů, obrazy moci : politický plakát a propaganda : Galerie U Křížovníků 26.1.-30.3.2005 = Power of images, images of power : political poster and propaganda : Gallery U křížovníků 26.1.-30.3.2005 (Catalogue)

Week 7

The Thaw & 1960s

What was the Thaw and what made it possible? What was the visual impact and expression of the Thaw? What is the relation between the Thaw, socialism and consumerism? What was the role of consumerism under state socialism?

A brief revision session based on questions regarding the midterm test you pose will be held at the beginning of the session: have your questions ready!

Reading

Fehérváry, K. 2009. "Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialist Material Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51(2): 426–459.

"Brussels 1958." In *Modern and contemporary Czech art*, K. Dolanská et al., 44-52. Prague: National Gallery.

Kramerová, D. 2008. *Bruxelles 1958: Exposition Universelle et Internationale*. Prague: Arbor Vitae, pp. 13-59.

Week 8

Midterm test

Week 9

Normalization

What is normalization? In what sense does normalization represent a restoration of order? What is the visual expression of normalization? What impact did normalization have on socialist everyday life?

Reading

Šimečka, M. 1984. *The restoration of order*. London: Verso, pp. 13-27 (Introduction & ch. 1, Disorder).

Bren, P. 1999. "Envisioning a socialist way of live: Ideology and Contradiction in Czechoslovakia, 1969-1989." In *A Decade of Transformation*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 8. Vienna.

Recommended reading:

Husák, G. 1986. *Speeches and writings*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 19-34 (ch. 2, Report on the activities of the Party).

Week 10

Progress & socialist visions of the future – field trip

What is the connection between the idea of modernity, socialism, and progress? How is progress embedded in socialism? How is progress (visually) represented in socialism? What are the potential consequences of transposing visual ideology into the real social world? What are the contemporary remnants of past progress?

Reading

Gibas, P. 2012. "Uncanny underground: Absences, ghosts and the rhythmized everyday of the Prague metro," *cultural geographies* 20, 4: 485-500.

Week 11

Socialism in the making

What are the visual building blocks of socialism? How is socialism represented as a successful project, and as a whole? What is the role of activity in socialism – how is socialism imagined to be built, defended, cherished and cared for? What makes socialism alive?

Reading

Gottwald, K. 1948. *Long-Term planning in Czechoslovakia*. Prague: Czechoslovak Ministry of Information.

Crowley, D. and S. E. Reid. 2002. "Socialist spaces: Sites of everyday life in the Eastern bloc." In *Socialist spaces: sites of everyday life in the Eastern bloc*, edited by D. Crowley and S. E. Reid, str. Oxford: Berg.

Week 12

Socialism and after – field trip

How did socialism impact on the present of the Czech Republic? Is there any connection between neoliberal post-social capitalism and socialism? And what is the relation of socialism to capitalism seen after the fall of the former?

Reading

Hann, C., C. Humprey, and K. Verdery. 2002. "Introduction: Postsocialism as a topic of anthropological investigation." In *Postsocialism: Ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia*, edited by C. M. Hann, 1–11. London: Routledge.

Berdhal, D. 1999. "(N)Ostalgie' for the present: Memory, longing, and East German things." *Ethnos*, 64, 2, 192-211.

Recommended reading:

Good Bye Lenin! (movie)

Lahusen, T. 2006. "Decay or Endurance? The Ruins of Socialism." *Slavic Review*, 65, 4: 736-746.

Oates-Indruchová, L. 2000. "Male bodies resisting the west and the past. Body and Masculinity in advertising in the Czech Republic." *East Central Europe*, 27, 2: 21-36.

Weiner, E. 2007. *Market Dreams. Gender, Class, and Capitalism in the Czech Republic*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press

Week 13

Finals

Final presentations of literature reviews; deadline for sending literature reviews via email