Central European History: Textual and Visual Representations

Lecturers:

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Office Hours:
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OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course will introduce the participants to the crucial phenomena of Central European history and culture. While the turmoils of the twentieth century are covered by several UPCES courses, this class concentrates on tracing the foundations of contemporary identities and the roots of modern complexity. It covers Central European history from its origins to WWI, dealing with a wide range of topics such as chivalry and courtly culture, the Reformation and confessional conflicts, or nationalism and revolutions. All these subjects witness the evolution of social order, the search for ideal political systems, transformation of intellectual paradigms, and changes in artistic sensibilities. Every topic is studied through both key texts and emblematic images which facilitate the explanation of typical features of the given period. Close reading of sources and iconographical analysis is accompanied by extracts from films and excursions to museums and historical sites. The course will provide students with an understanding of Euro-American culture and the milestones of medieval and early modern history. It will also enhance students’ interpretative skills and the competence to “read” specific cultural products which emanated from contexts quite different from their own background.

BASIC READING:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
This course is open to both history students and majors in other disciplines such as art history, literatures, as well as humanities and social sciences in general. Part of each class is devoted to chronology which allows students not specialized in history to deepen their orientation in the subject. Larger part is devoted to analysis of written and visual sources and to discussion. Students of all fields including history are expected to develop analytical and synthesizing skills and enhance their knowledge in the area of medieval and modern history.

Students are expected to read well the texts assigned prior to each class and participate actively in class work. Reader organized by weeks will be available in electronic form. Additional audio-visual materials and texts will be presented in class. Attendance is mandatory in UPCES courses.

Assignments:  - reading for each class  - oral presentation (10-15 minutes)  - midterm test (short answers)  - final paper (class exam)  - final essay (homework)

Guidelines will be given in class.

GRADING POLICY:

20% - presentation, 20% - midterm test, 10% - class participation, 25% - final paper, 25% - final essay

WEEKLY PROGRAM:

1. UPCES Orientation Lecture Series

Lectures and site visits on subjects of history, culture, politics, and the economies of the Czech Republic and Central Europe in order to establish a common interdisciplinary background and vocabulary for all courses.

2. The Origin of Nations in Central Europe: Christianity and Government

Reading:
Sources:

Iconography:
• Mural Cycle in St. Catherine’s Church, Znojmo

3. Medieval Courtly Culture: On Arms and Amours

Reading:

Sources:

Iconography:
• Codex Manesse – a manuscript with courtly poems and illuminations

Presentation: Guillaume de Machaut (poet)

4. EXCURSION
The Medieval Collection of the National Gallery, St. Agnes Convent

Reading:

Presentation: Master Theodoricus (painter)

5. The Age of Reformations: Hussites, Lutherans and the attitudes towards Church crisis

Reading:
Sources:

Iconography:
- The Law and the Grace: Iconography of Salvation between Christian confessions

Presentation: Jan Hus (preacher)

6. The Renaissance: Discovering the Magical Universe

Reading:

Sources:

Iconography:
- Rudolph II’s Kunstkammer – reconstruction of a monarch’s collection

Presentation: John Dee (scholar)

7. Midterm
Protestant Baroque: Searching for the Lost Paradise

Reading:

Sources:

Iconography:
- Orbis pictus: Seventeenth-century world in pictures

Presentation: John Amos Comenius (bishop, author)
8. EXCURSION
Catholic Baroque: The Church of St. Nicholas in the Lesser Town of Prague

Reading:

Presentation: Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer (architect)

9. Towards a New Social Order: Enlightenment and Revolutions

Reading:

Sources:
• Hester LYNCH PIOZZI, Observations and reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy, and Germany, London 1789, pp. 316-323

Iconography:
• Pictorial satire and (anti)revolutionary propaganda

Presentation: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (composer)

10. Shaping Modern Identities: Nationalism and Historicism

Reading:

Sources:

Iconography:
• Alfons Mucha, The Slavic Epic

Presentation: František Palacký (historian, politician)
11. EXCURSION
The Historical Building of the National Theater

Reading:

Presentation: Bedřich Smetana (composer)

12. From Industrial Revolution to WWI: Progress and Cataclysm

Reading:

Sources:

Iconography:
• Destruction of the Form – Modern Styles in painting and architecture

Presentation: Jaroslav Hašek (writer)

13. Class Examination: Final Paper
Closing Discussion

ADDITIONAL READING:
• T. C. W. BLANNING (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe, Oxford 1996
• Derek SAYER, The Coasts of Bohemia, Princeton 1998
• Lisa WOLVERTON, Hastening toward Prague. Power and society in the medieval Czech lands, Philadelphia 2001
• Howard KAMINSKY, A History of the Hussite Revolution, Berkeley 1967
• Euan CAMERON, The European Reformation, Oxford 2012
• R. J. W. EVANS, Rudolf II and His World. A study in intellectual history, 1576-1612, Oxford 1973
• Howard LOUTHAN, Converting Bohemia. Force and persuasion in the Catholic Reformation, Cambridge 2009
• Ivan T. BEREND, History derailed. Central and Eastern Europe in the long nineteenth century, Berkeley 2003
• Garry B. COHEN, The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germ