

Contemporary Art Odyssey in Prague

SPRING 2024

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Time and day: TBA

Office hours: by appointment

Course Description:

Welcome to *Contemporary Art Odyssey in Prague* a dynamic exploration of the city's vibrant art scene through the lens of art historical and sociological inquiry. In this semester-long journey, we will delve into the multifaceted world of contemporary art, examining how it reflects, shapes, and is shaped by the sociocultural landscape of Prague. No prior knowledge of art or art history is necessary for this course.

This course aims to bridge the gap between art and society, offering a unique interdisciplinary perspective on Prague's contemporary art scene. We will traverse museums, galleries, and art exhibited in public sphere to unravel the stories embedded in each artwork, exploring the intersections between artistic expression, societal values, and cultural identity.

Throughout the course, we will employ cultural and sociological frameworks to analyze and interpret the encountered artworks, while also examining the pivotal role of local art institutions and the public sphere in fostering dialogue with the audience. Discussions, reflections, critical analyses, and field research will be integral components of this course, encouraging students to ponder the societal implications – both at the local and global levels – of the art they encounter. Each class meeting will feature a blend of lectures and field trips to museums, galleries, and public art spaces in Prague. These excursions will provide firsthand experiences, enabling students to connect theoretical concepts studied in class with real-world examples. Guest speakers from the local art community will enrich our discussions with diverse perspectives. Get ready for an intellectually stimulating and visually captivating odyssey through the artful streets of Prague!

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will not only possess a comprehensive understanding of Prague's contemporary art scene but will also develop valuable insights into the intricate relationship between art and society. This preparation will empower them to engage critically with the broader world of contemporary art from both sociological and cultural standpoints. Upon completion of this course students should be able to gain knowledge in/and understand the following:

- Understand how contemporary art in Prague serves as a reflection of societal norms, values, and challenges.
- Evaluate the impact of public art on urban spaces and civic engagement.
- Develop a nuanced understanding of evolving trends and movements in contemporary art.
- Understand the interplay between personal expression and broader cultural contexts.
- Familiarize themselves with the ideas of major thinkers, theories, as well as concepts in contemporary art and sociological discourses.
- Critically assess and apply theoretical frameworks to real-world artistic expressions.
- Gain familiarity with qualitative research methods applicable to the study of contemporary art and culture.
- Develop skills in conducting interviews, observations, and analyses relevant to sociological investigations in the art world.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to submit all assignments and take a mid-term exam. Failure to complete any mandatory assignment as outlined in the grading policy will result in an incomplete grade for the course. Late assignments, submitted without a valid excuse, will result in a one full-grade deduction.

All course readings are accessible through the program's Moodle platform and should be completed before each scheduled class session.

Formative assessment of learning will be provided through the following:

- 1) *Museum research project*: 20% (a separate sheet will be provided explaining the requirements for the museum research project).
- 2) *Presentation of the museum research project*: each student will be asked to perform a short presentation on their museum research project 10%.
- 3) *Critical Analysis*: there will be one critical reading analysis written on the topic assigned by the teacher at the beginning of the course. This reading analysis should be **at least 2 full pages long** excluding bibliography (12-point font Times New Roman or Arial, double-spaced). The shorter response will be penalized by lower grade. The due date of the assignment is indicated on the syllabus.
- 4) *Mid-term exam*: will be on the material covered in the course (readings, lectures, class discussion, etc.) and will be given in the middle of semester as indicated on the syllabus. It will be in a form of a few short response questions related to the content of in-class readings: 25%
- 5) *Art Journal*: The deadline for submitting the art journal is one week prior to the end of the semester, as specified in the syllabus. Students must submit a journal containing a minimum of **seven entries** written over the course of the semester. Each journal entry (minimum 350 words) should take the form of reflections, incorporating at least one ethnographic research method, such as interviews, reflexivity, and/or observation of art exhibition sites visited during class or independently. Additionally, entries should include visuals such as photos, graphs, drawings, etc. 20%.
- 6) *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.
- 7) **Absences: Students must attend all classes. Excused medical absences require a written document the day of return to class. UPCES program allows only one 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.

Grading Policy:

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:

Museum Research Project	20%
Presentation of the Museum Research	10%
Critical Reading Analysis	15%
Art Journal	20%
Mid-term Exam	25%
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
	100%

Recommended books:

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. Stanford University Press.

Dolanská, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Modern and Contemporary Czech Art 1890-2010*. Narodni galerie v Praze.

Janovski, A., Marcoci, R. & Nouril, K. (2018). *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology*. The Museum of Modern Art.

Piotrowski, P. (2012). *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. Reaktion Books.

Pospiszyl, T. & Bishop, C. (2017). *An Associative Art History*. JPR Ringier.

Ševčíková, L. & Žáková, E. (Eds.) (2012), *Czech contemporary art guide, Praha: Arts and Theatre Institute*.

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

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

UPCES Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

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

Orientation Week

UPCES Orientation and Lecture Series

Week 2:

Class Topic: **Course introduction:** explanation of course topics; discussion of conventional and alternative venues of art display, the role of art in the public sphere; introduction to the museum project and research methodology; historical overview of the contemporary key art movements. Introduction to qualitative research methods in art research.

Required readings: Lindauer, M. (2011). *The Critical Museum Visitor*. In Marstine, J. (Ed), *New Museum Theory and Practice*. Blackwell Publishing.

Week 3:

Class Topic: **Art and Social Movements: Visit to the Trade Fair Palace National Gallery in Prague.**

Examining the role of art in various social movements and revolutions. Focus on how art in the Czech Republic has evolved in response to the shifting sociopolitical landscapes, from the constraints of the communist era to the liberating atmosphere of the post-communist decade.

Required readings: Ševčíková, L. & Žáková, E. (eds.) (2012), *Czech contemporary art guide, Praha: Arts and Theatre Institute. Part on Art after Velvet Revolution.*

Bourdieu, P. (et al). (1997). *Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. Polity Press.

Week 4:

Class Topic: **Art, Technology, and Globalization: Visit to the Kunsthalle.**

Examining the intersection of art with technology and its implications for society. Art and new media. The language of new media art and contemporary art scene. How globalization has impacted the production and reception of contemporary art.

Required readings: Bishop, C. (2012). *Digital Divide on Contemporary Art and New Media*

Week 5:

Class Topic: **Art and Politics. Artistic Communities and Networks: Visit to the Rudolfinum.**

Art and politics. Exploring artistic activism in contemporary Czech art. The relationship between art and society.

Required readings: Pospiszyl, T. (2016). *How to Act*. Art Review.

Becker, H. S. (2008). *Art Worlds: Updated and Expanded*. University of California Press. (selected excerpt on Art Worlds).

Critical Reading analysis is due!!!

Week 6:

Class Topic: **Art Market Dynamics and Capitalism: Visit to David Černý's Musoleum and MEET Factory.**

Examination of art as a commodity in the capitalist system. Corporate engagement in the art world.

Required readings: Alexander, D.V. (2003). *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*. Blackwell Publishing. (Selected chapter)

Please visit the website with the artist's works: <https://davidcerny.cz> and read the following article: <https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/disaster-capitalism-the-provocative-public-art-of-pragues-david-cerny/>

Week 7:

Class Topic: **Mid Term Exam.**

Artistic Communities and Networks: Visit to the Trafo Gallery.

Exploring formation and functioning of artistic communities and networks. Alternative spaces of art display.

Required reading: Černá J., Margala M., Boučková, J., & Trčková O. (2018). *The Power of the Communication and the Gallery*. Ekopress. (selected chapter)

Week 8:

Class Topic: **Art as a Form of Protest: Guest Speaker.**

Exploring how artists use their work as a means of social and political protest. Discussion of local art groups: Rafani, Guma Guar, Pode Bal, Ztohoven.

Required readings: TBD.

Groys, B. (2014). On Art Activism. *e-flux Journal*. 56 (6).

Week 9:

Class Topic: **Social Class and Art Education: Visit to the Dox Gallery.**

Art as cultural capital and its role in signaling status. How social class influences the consumption and appreciation of art? The role of art institutions in art education.

Required readings: Inglis, D., & Hughson, J. (2005). *The Sociology of Art: Ways of Seeing*. Palgrave Macmillan. (selected excerpt)

Week 10:

Class Topic: **Art and National Memory: Public Art and Urban Spaces: Art in Public Space I. Sculptures.**

Exploring how art becomes a medium for preserving and transmitting national memory, shaping collective narratives about the past. Focus on sculptures in the public sphere: from bereft artworks of the communist past to contemporary objects of aesthetic desire.

Required readings: Pospiszyl, T. (2015). Sculptures Which Do Not Belong to Anyone. *Aliens and Herons*.

Week 11:

Class Topic: **Public Art and Urban Spaces: Art in Public Space II. Street art and Murals.**

Discussion of the local street art scene and its meaning in the public sphere. Exploring the role of public art in shaping urban environments and fostering community engagement.

Required readings: Pučerová, K. (et. al) (2022). *Outside the gallery! Art in Czech public space after 1989*. Galerie J. Fagnera & Architectura.
Baldini, A.L. (2022). What is Street Art? *Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics*. 59 (1), 1-21.

Week 12:

Class Topic: **Gender, race, and ethnicity in art: Visit to local art galleries.**

Focus on contemporary art addressing the role of gender in art creation, representation, and reception. How artists and artworks contribute to discussions on race and ethnicity?

Required readings: Grigar, E. (2007). The Gendered Body as a Raw Material for Women Artist of Central Eastern Europe after Communism. In J.E. Johnson & J.C. Robinson (Eds.), *Living Gender After Communism* (pp. 80-101). Indiana University Press.

Pachmanova M. (2019). From Within, From Without Configurations of Feminism, Gender and Art in Post-Wall Europe. In Robinson, H., & Buszek, M. E (Eds.), *A Companion to Feminist Art*. John Wiley & Sons.

Art Journals are Due!

Week 13:

Class Topic: **Final Exam Week.**

Student's presentations of their museum research project.