

Sociology as the Surrealistic Prague Experience

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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 19th 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.

Giddens, Anthony and Philip Sutton. (2013). *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goffman, Erving. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing

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) Reading analysis (3): 15%
- (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) Restaurant report: 15%
- (5) Mid-term Exam 20%
- (6) Final essay 25%.
- (7) Final presentation 5%

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) **Reading Analysis:** there are three reading analysis to be written by students throughout the semester. Each reading analysis should be at least 1.5 page 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 topic:** each student will be asked to perform a short presentation on the selected in-class topic.
- 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) **Restaurant Report:** This field research report should be minimum 3 pages (double-spaced) long in APA or MLA style and must incorporate a discussion (not just quoting!) of at least **two** authors covered in our class. Shorter response will be penalized by lower grade. The restaurant report must include a clear research question.
- 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.
- 6) **Final Research Paper:** The final research paper will have the character of a research project based on selected topic by each student and will require to implement some readings used/discussed in our class. In the middle of semester (date will be announced by the teacher) each student will need to submit a one-page outline of his/her proposed research topic. The final paper should be at least 8 pages in length, excluding bibliography.
All papers must contain appropriate citations in APA or your chosen format (an example sheet will be provided). **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!** All papers must be handed in no later than during the final class meeting. **Plagiarized papers will receive a grade "F" with no exceptions.**
- 7) **Final Paper presentation:** each student is required to present a short in-class presentation of their final paper. This presentation will take place on the last day of the class.

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	93-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-92	
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
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
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

Week 1

UPCES Orientation and Lecture Series

Week 2

Tuesday: Introduction to the course. The Sociological Imagination.

Thursday: Sociological Theory.

Understanding Sociological Theory: Structural Functionalist, Conflict, and Symbolic Interactionist. Defining major theories of sociologists.

Readings

Kathleen S. Lowney (2018). "Chapter 2: Understanding Theory" from *Sociology in Action*.

Week 3

Tuesday: Sociological Perspectives and Methods of Research: Putting Prague into Research Context.

Focus on different research methods used in conducting a sociological research.

Readings

Giddens, "Asking and Answering Sociological Questions" in *Sociology*, 7th ed., Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

C. Wright Mills (1959), *The Sociological Imagination* (excerpt)

Thursday: Society and Groups.

Understanding past and present societies. The question of nationalism. What defines Czech and American nation?

Readings

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

Week 4

Tuesday: Socialization and Social Interaction

Focus on the development of social self and communication.

Readings

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (excerpt)

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

Thursday: Visit to the National Museum to see *The Celts*

1st Reading Analysis is Due!

Week 5

Tuesday: Religion

Readings

Max Weber (1929), *The Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism* (excerpt)

Dana Hamplova, *Are Czechs the least religious of all?*

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/jun/24/czech-republic-religious-atheism>

Thursday: Gender and Sexuality

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.

Readings

Jacqui True, *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism* (excerpt).

Video

TBD

Week 6

Tuesday: Economics, Politics, and Social Structure

Focus on different forms of government and political systems; division of labor in society; the case of Bata concern

Readings

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848), *The Communist Manifesto* (excerpt)

Ondrej Sevecek, *The Case of Company Towns of The Baťa Concern*

Video

Vera Chytilova, *The Panel Story* (1979)

Selected documentary on Bata

Thursday: Social Class. Inequalities. Education.

Focus on stratification in the US and the CZ, as well as education (a comparison of education system in both countries). The impacts of class position on education, health, and other social outcomes.

Readings

Sandra Enos" *Confronting Economic Inequality*" (Chapter 7 in *Sociology in Action*)

Radka Löwenhöfferová: <http://www.reviewarticle.org/professional-studies/some-issues-in-the-development-of-education-in-the-czech-republic/>

2nd Reading Analysis is Due!

Week 7

Tuesday: Social Change

The Consequences of Social Change. Discussion of different types of social movements in the CZ and the US.

Readings

Vaclav Havel (1978), *The Power of the Powerless*

Paulina Bren, *Weekend Getaways: the Chata, the Tramp and the Politics of Private Life in post 1968 Czechoslovakia.*

Video

The Yes Man Fix the World

Thursday: Mid-term Exam

Week 8

Tuesday: The Transmission of Culture

Focus on culture and elites; Culture and Media; Street Art and its role in the CZ
The case of Konev statue.

Readings

Interview with Tomas Pospiszyl, *Public, Private, and Political Art*

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

Daniela Lazarova: Fresh Controversy over Konev Statue at <https://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/fresh-controversy-over-konev-statue>

Video

Česky Sen (Czech Dream)

Thursday: Dress well! Street Art tour.

Week 9

Tuesday: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration.

Focus on race and minority groups in the Czech republic and the U.S. Current immigration issues in both countries. Discussion of the animosity of Europeans and Americans towards Muslim refugees.

Readings

Chapter 9: "Recognizing the Importance of Race" from *Sociology in Action*

Jan Culik (2017), *Why is the Czech Republic So Hostile to Muslims and Refugees?* At:

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

Thursday: Visit to the old Jewish quarter.

Readings

Eli Valley, *A History of the Jews in Prague* (excerpt)

Week 10

Tuesday: Deviance, Conformity, and Collective Memory

The question of Holocaust and collective memory.

Readings

Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

Tomas Sniegon (2014), Chapter 5: *Pig Farm as a Porrajmos remembrance site from Vanished history: the Holocaust in the Czech and Slovak historical culture* (excerpt)

Video

The Eichmann Trial, Milgram Experiment

Thursday: Visit to the National Memorial to the Heroes of the Heydrich Terror.

Restaurant report is due!!!

Week 11

Tuesday: Formal Organizations and Globalization

Focus on globalization/glocalization of society.

Readings

George Ritzer, *The MacDonalidization of Society* (excerpt)

David Streitfeld and Jodi Kantor, *Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace* (We will discuss the case of Amazon in the Czech Republic in relation to this article).

Video

TBD

Thursday: *Surveillance and Society*

The analysis of social, economic, and political forms of surveillance in the CZ and the U.S. The methods of surveillance before and after Communism.

Surveillance and social networking sites. Big Data.

Readings

Prague Through the Lens of Secret Police (excerpt)

Michael Foucault (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (excerpt)

Video

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, *The Life of Others*, 2006

Karel Kachyňa, *Ucho (The Ear)*, 1970

3rd Reading Analysis is Due!

Week 12

Tuesday: Food production, food culture, and health

Contemporary food production system. The issue of class and taste. Food disorders and scares. The faces of GMOs.

Readings

Roland Barthes, *Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*.

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

Video

TBD

Thursday: Environment.

Environmental Activism. Climate Change.

Reading:

Anthony Giddens, *The Environment* (chapter excerpt)

Week 13

Final Week

Student's Presentations (Final Classes).

All final papers are due!