Urban Anthropology of Central European Cities
Anthropology / Cultural Studies

Fall 2018
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Course Description

The goal of the course is to introduce 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 outlook. It also has affected the ways in which people, urbanites as well as non-urbanites perceive these cities and urban life in general. This course wants 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. Drawing from essential anthropological studies, students learn how to look at cities through an anthropological lens and do field projects analyzing some aspect 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 discussion and papers.

Grading policy
Class participation/attendance: 30 %
Mid-term exam: 30 %
Final paper: 40 %
WEEKLY OUTLINE

Week 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.

Week 2

Introduction to the Urban Anthropology class and to the City: Field Trip 1 (with the guest speaker).

Week 3

Characteristics and Typology of Cities in History. Cultural Role of the Cities.


Week 4

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


Week 5

Multiculturalism, Ethnicity and Identities Formation of Central European Cities. Examples of Bratislava and Cracow.


Salner, P.: Peeling the Bratislava Onion (Collective Memory in Incomplete Communities).
Week 6

Migration as an Urban Topic: Migrants in CEE Cities.


Week 7

Mid-term exam or Field Trip 2 (to be specified during the course)

Week 8

Mid-term exam or Field Trip 2 (to be specified during the course)

Week 9

Cities in the Socialist Era and Transition to Post-socialist era. Urban Change and Transformation of the Cities in Central Europe.


Week 10

Culture of Poverty. Rising Inequalities in CEE City.


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

Week 11


Week 12

Popular Culture and Consumerism of CEE Cities. Movie “Czech Dream”.


Tamás Tófalvy, Trever Hagen: Popular Music and Society in Central Europe – An Introduction.

Week 13

Presentation of Final Papers.

Recommended Readings


