NYU in Prague

Seminar in Czech Cinema and Culture

Syllabus Fall 2011

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office hours: Tuesdays 3.30-4.30 p.m.

Course description

The goal of the course is to give students picture of main streams in development of Czech filmmaking from its origins to present times. The main phenomena will be explained in the international context regarding the influences and original innovations in style and in national economical and political relations. The major interest will represent new tendencies from “velvet revolution” of 1989 till contemporary situation. Lectures will be supplied by screening of characteristic excerpts from films, eventually of entire movies. Additional discussion with film director or excursion is usually available. Students are expected to know basic names of Czech directors and titles of their most important films including the context of their production and release, to work with basic literature about Czech filmmaking and to find necessary information on web sites.

Grading Policy and Course Requirements

Students are required to write a midterm paper [essay or analysis of chosen aspects of some film screened, approx. 7 pages] later possibly presented on NYU web sites. The paper will be based on the lectures, assigned readings and films. Midterm and Final tests are also based on the lectures, assigned readings and screenings. They will require no outside research. Required readings [see Class Topics] will be discussed in relation to films screened.

Class participation/attendance:  10%
Activity in discussions  10%
Midterm test  10%
Midterm essay  50%
Final test or oral exam  20%
Schedule of classes

Week 1
14 February
**Overview of Course** +
**Brief historical survey:** Origins of Czech filmmaking in Austro – Hungarian Monarchy.
Introduction to the mature period at the beginning of sound cinematography and personality of Gustav Machaty.
The Post-War Psychological School of Czech film. Totalitarianism and Socialist Realism of Fifties – Fairytales and Reality.
Renaissance of Psychological School in period of Khruschovian thaw and modern Classics of Czech cinema (Kadar-Klos, Jasny, Kachyna,Vlacil)

Week 2
21 February
**Czech [and Slovak] New Wave in times of political liberalization and its turns.**
I) Cinema vérité and authenticity
II) Stylisation and allegory
Reading: Peter Hames: The Czechoslovak New Wave
**Screening:** I. Passer: Intimate Lighting, V. Chytilová: Ceiling, Daisies, P. Juráček: Joseph K., Pearls at the Deep

Week 3
28 February
**Disidents and Velvet Revolution:**
**Screening:** Kouř, Zemský ráj to na pohled, Občan Havel, Občan Havel přikuluje , Kawasakiho růže, Pouta, Pupendo
Reading: P.Hames: The Velvet Transformation

Week 4
6 March
**Parallel Society before and after Velvet**
**Screening:** P. Nikolaev´s It Only Gets Worse, Klub osamělých srdcí, Svěrák´s Ride, Sláma´s Something Like A Happiness

Week 5
13 March
**Hero as a loser**
Reading: Singularly Collaborative(Interview with D. Ondříček), www.ce-rewiev.org
**Screening:** Ondříček´s Loners, Grandhotel; Prague seen through eyes of.; V. Morávek: Boredom in Brno, M. Najbrt: Champions, Sláma´s Wild Bees
Week 6
20 March: Midterm Test
Semantics of Country and City.
Reading: J. Bernard: The Picture of Forrest in the Czech Film of Sixties, A.J. Horton: Hard Stuff (Michalek’s Andel Exit), I. Kosulić: From Depression to Hope (Out of The City), A.J. Horton: Misty Melancholia in the Czech Mountains (The Way through the Bleak Woods)-last three on www.ce-review.org
Screening: Vorel’s Stone Bridge and Out of the City, Tuček’s Girlie, Vojnár’s The Way through the Bleak Woods, Michalek’s Exit Angel

Week 7
27 March: Deadline for midterm essay!
Mystification as an approach, research and provocation
Reading” The “Czech Dream” That Wasn’t, Presence, Autumn 2004, vol.76, no 3, pp.38-41
Screenings: Zelenka’s Happy End, F. Remunda - P. Klusák: Czech Dream, J.Svěrák: The Oilgobblers

Week 8
3 April
Films of introspection.
Screening: Gedeon’s Indian Summer, P.Václav’s Marián, Parallel Lives, Little Girl Blue and Mamas and Papas by A. Nellis

Week 9
Spring break

Week 10
17 April
Films of genre: New face of Comedy and Melodrama, Horror
Reading: A.J. Horton: Winning Isn’t Everything(Hřebejk’s Divided we Fall), M.Preskett: A Little bit of Money and a Lot of Love (A. Nellís - Eeny Meeny), all on www.ce-review.org,
Screening: Hřebejk’s Cosy Dens, Divided we fall, Pupendo, Teddy Bear; Nellises The Trip, M. Dobeš: Choking Hazard

Week 11
24 April
Czech Rom’s and other Minorities:

Week 12 and Week 13
No Class, National Holiday

Week 14
15 May
Czech School of Film animation in fifties (Týrlová, Zeman, Trnka), Jan Švankmajer and representants of contemporary animation (Bárta, Koutský, Pavlátová, FAMU graduates)
Screening: At the Attic, Survive Life
Reading: P.Hames: Dark Alchemy, pp.1- 5,48 – 77,96 - 118
Week 15
22 May
Final Test

Books
(The following books and reader with texts are available in NYU Library, Prague)

Josef Skvorecky: All The Bright Young Men And Women: A Personal History Of The Czech Cinema, Peter Martin Association, Toronto 1973


Peter Hames: Czech and Slovak Cinema. Theme and Tradition, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2010


Peter Hames (Ed.): The Cinema of Central Europe. Wallflower Press 2004

Peter Hames: The Velvet Transformation (manuscript, in Reader)


Usefull websites: www.filmcenter.cz
www.kinoeye.org
www.ce-review.org