Religion, Culture and Politics in Central Europe
Syllabus Spring 2012

Petr Mucha, mucha@nyu.edu
Office hours: Wednesday, 4:30-5:00 pm, Professors’ office at Malé nám. 2

Course description:
Religion is without doubt one of the most important elements that shaped history and contemporary face of Central Europe. Religion played an important role in political and cultural development of this part of the world. The history of mutual interaction between religion and politics is evident in cultural richness particularly in Bohemia and Prague.

This course explores various religious phenomena that formed political ideas and cultural values of this region in different historical periods. We examine particularly those religious characteristics and figures that remarkably influenced the world’s history and enriched human thinking. First, we study Christianization of the Central European society and the prominent role of religion in political and cultural transformation in medieval period. Then we follow the religious reformation process and development of relationship between Judeo-Christian tradition and the secular world in early modern period. Finally, we explore the policies of communist regimes in the spheres of religion and culture and study the struggle of Christian churches against communist totalitarianism. The transformation of Catholicism in the 1960s is also examined together with the role of religion in the post-communist society. Excursions to significant historical and religious sights are an important part of the course.

Grading policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation/attendance</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response paper</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/quiz</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended readings
Course readings will be available on the internet or handouts will be distributed in class.

Schedule of classes:

Week 1
15 February - Course overview and introduction

Week 2
22 February – Religious terms and historical overview
The notion of religion. Historical and regional characteristics.

Week 3
29 February - Pre-Christian period
Characteristics of the cultural and political situation before Christianization.
**Week 4**
7 March - Christianization
Consequences of Christianization in politics and culture, Western monasticism and Byzantine mission.

**Week 5**
14 March - Medieval period
Medieval Christendom and *Corpus Christianorum*. Cathedrals, universities, religious orders, investiture etc.

**Week 6**
21 March - Reformation and Renaissance
The crisis and reform. Reformation, Renaissance, religious wars and their political dimension.

**Week 7**
28 March - Baroque period
Baroque spirituality and culture, “cuius regio, eius religio” principle, Jesuits in Bohemia.

**Week 8**
4 April - Jewish religious phenomenon
Historical overview, significant representatives in Central Europe.
**Midterm**

**Week 9 - Spring Break – no classes**

**Week 10**
18 April - Esoteric tradition
Examples and historical overview, an influence on politics and culture.

**Week 11**
25 April - Modernity and religion
Religion in contexts of enlightenment, romanticism and nationalism.

**Week 12**
2 May - Religion and totalitarianism
Struggle of religion against communist totalitarianism; religion and democracy.

**Week 13**
9 May - Sixties and the new trends
Society and religion since 1960s, new religious trends and transformation of Catholicism (the Second Vatican Council).

**Week 14**
16 May - The place of religion in contemporary society
Religion, culture and politics in post-modern and post-communist society.

**Week 15**
**Final Paper Due**