Literature and the Place of Central Europe
Syllabus spring 2011

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Course description: You are now in the center of Europe, where West melds with East, creating a melting-pot. What does central Europe mean in terms of literature? Which authors reveled in their location, thus inspiring others, and which longed to be free from this by-and-large geographically land-locked mass? Discover the prose and poetry of this space that has belonged to others for centuries and that now belongs to you as well. The literature will also be supplemented with various Central European photographs and culinary investigations!

Readings: All course materials are located in the reader which is available to be either purchased or checked out in the NYU library at Male naměsti 2. Please note: the readings below are suggestions – we will not be able to cover all of the readings listed – quality over quantity approach for deep class discussions.

Grading policy
Class participation: 35%
In-class presentations (2): 25%
Mid-term project: 15%
Final paper: 25%

Attendance Policy:
Missing more than two classes will result in a lower grade, e.g. from A to A-.

Schedule of classes

Week 1
24 January - Introduction to Literature and the Place of Central Europe
“5 Cities with Imperial Glory”
Miroslav Kusy – “We Central East Europeans”
Jacques Rupnik – “Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?”
Aleš Debeljak – “Reconstructing Europeanism?”

26 January - Cityscapes
Czech Republic
Franz Kafka – “On the Tram”
Jan Neruda – “The 3 Lilies”
Vítězslav Nezval – “City of Spires”
Pavel Brycz – excerpts from I, City

Slovenia
Tomaž Šalamun – “History”
Meta Kusar – “36.”
Dušan Čater – “Winters in Cities Are Quite Depressing, I Think”

Hungary
István Órkény – “Café Niagara”
“The Barber of Budapest”
Poland  “And How to Spend 72 Hours in Warsaw…”
Leszek Engelking – “In an unfamiliar town”
Czesław Milosz – “Campo di Fiori”
Slovak Republic  “City Break”

**Week 2**
31 January
Cityscapes – continued

**2 February – Homecoming-Homeleaving**
Jaroslav Seifert – “View from Charles Bridge”
Slovenia  Edvard Kocbek – “Mountain”
Andrej Skubic – “Not With This Train”
Hungary  György Spiró – “Forest”
Flóra Imre – “Psalm”
Slovak Republic  Vlado Puchala – “For Mama”

**Week 3**
7 February – Villagescapes
Slovenia  Maja Novak – “The Conspiracy”
Ciril Kosmač – “A Day in Spring”
Czech Republic  Eva Kriseová – “Our Small Town”
Jiří Musil – “Small Towns, Big Ideas”
Poland  Sławomir Mrożek – “The Hole in the Bridge”
“Poland: Examining School Reforms”

**9 February – Parables**
Czech Republic  Franz Kafka – “On Parables”
Alexander Kliment – “Mark on the Wall”
Tadeusz Rozewicz – “A Voice”
Slovak Republic  Ivan Olbracht – “Gabor, Gabor”
Peter Balgha – “People and Ants”
“T.G.Masaryk, The Founding Father of Czechoslovakia: From Vienna to Prague – the rise and fall of a nation.”
“JUDr. & PhDr. Edvard Beneš
Miroslav Kusy – “Slovaks are More…”
Ludvík Vaculík – “Our ‘Slovak Question’”
excerpt from *Czecho / Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup.*
Slovenia  Vitomil Zupan – “The Standpoint of Great Peace”

**Week 4**
14 February – Parables – continued

**16 February – On Love or Lack Thereof**
Czech Republic  Franz Kafka – “The Married Couple”
Karel Hynek Mácha – excerpt from *May*
Václav Havel – 2 Typograms
Hungary  Endre Fejes – “Blue-white Love”
Slovak Republic  Pavel Vilikovský – “Escalation of Feeling”  
Slovenia  Edvard Kocbek – “Another Abyss to Cross”  
Barbara Korun – “Kiss”  
Artur Štern – “Morning Rhymes”  
Maja Novak – “Wrong Side of Bed”  
Poland  Aleksander Jurewicz – “A True Ballad…”  
Czeslaw Milosz – “Encounter”  
Czeslaw Milosz – “Love”  

Week 5  
21 February – Bon appétit – Na zdraví!  
Hungary  Péter Esterházy – “No Title; This Isn’t It Either”  
István Órkény – “We’re a Small Nation”  
Czech Republic  Jaroslav Hašek – “The Trouble with Literary Creations,” “An Alcoholic Idyll”  
Franz Kafka – “Passers-by”  
Vladimir Just – “Mushrooms as Freedom and Mystery”  
Slovenia  Maja Novak – “Closed”  
Slovak Republic  Miroslav Válek – “An Apple”  
Stanislava Chrobáková – “I’m Silent Throughout the World”  

23 February – World Wars  
Czech Republic  Wladimir Stedry – “Still Life”  
Slovenia  Drago Jančar – “Repetition”  
Poland  Hanna Krall – “Retina”  
Imre Kertész – excerpt from Fatelessness  
Slovak Republic  Dušan Kužel – “Someone Else Will Come”  
Milan Richter – “Light?”  

Week 6  
28 February – Lahaim & Beneath the Communist Fist  
Poland  Piotr Szewc – “Annihilation”  
Agata Tuszyńska – “A Family History of Fear”  
Władysław Szpilman – “The Hour of the Children and the Mad”  
“Paradoxes of the Polish Transformation”  
Hungary  Mihály Korns – excerpt from Lifebook  
Péter Zilahy – “Eternity”  
Attila Bartis – “Engelhard, or the Story of Photography”  
Czech Republic  Arnošt Lustig – “Hope”  
Ivan Diviš – “Invasion Day”  
Slovak Republic  Ján Johanides – “Memorial to Don Giovanni”  

2 March – Lahaim & Beneath the Communist Fist, continued  

Week 7  
7 March – Black Humor  
NOT: MIDTERM PROJECT DUE  
Hungary  István Órkény – “November”  
Czech Republic  Marta Kadlečiková – “Ode to Joy”  
Bohumil Hrabal – “World Cafeteria”
9 March - NOTE: MIDTERM PROJECT DUE by 9am by email

**Week 8**
**14 March - Rivers**
- Czech Republic: Ota Pavel – Selections from his book *The Golden Eels*
  - Ivan Vyskočil – “Jacob’s Well”
  - Vladislav Vaněura – “All’s Well that Ends Well”
  - Zdeněk Kriebel – “There, At Our Place”
- Slovenia: Meta Kusar “3.”
  - Dušan Čater – “Our Things”
- Hungary: Péter Esterházy – “Down the Danube”
  - Szabolcs Várady – “Chairs above the Danube”
- Poland: Tadeusz Rozewicz – “In the Middle of Life”
  - Czesław Miłosz – “Dedication”
  - Czesław Miłosz – “Forget”
- Slovak Republic: Daniel Simko – “Still Life”
  - Věra Prokešová – “Cut”

**16 March – Snow, Frost and Frozen People**
- Slovenia: Meta Kusar – “6.”
  - Šalamun – “Jonah,” “To Metka”
- Hungary: László Nagy – “Squared by Walls”
  - István Baka – “Passing Through”
  - Károly Bari – “Winter Diary”
  - Flóra Imre – “Snow Covers the Garden”
  - András Gerevich – “Seasons”
- Poland: Michał Gowinński – “A Footbridge Over Time”
- Czech Republic: Vladimír Holan – “Snow”
  - Karel Čapek – “Footprints”
  - Karel Čapek – “Footprint”
- Slovak Republic: Daniel Simko – “January”
  - Ivan Štrpka – “A Second”

**Week 9 - Spring Break – no classes - Go visit Central Europe!**

**Week 10**
**28 March – On the Craft of Writing**
- Slovenia: Meta Kusar – “4.,” “8.,” “19.,” “26.,”
  - Edvard Kocbek – “Death of Words,” “Microphone in the Wall”
  - France Prešeren – “To the Poet”
- Poland: Tadeusz Rozewicz – “Proofs”
  - Leszek Engeling – “Briefing”
  - Zbigniew Herbert – “Elegy for the Departure of Pen, Ink and Lamp”
  - Czesław Miłosz – “Ars Poetica?”
- Hungary: Mónika Mesterházi – “Echo (I Distance Myself)”
- Slovak Republic: Rudolf Sloboda – “The White Dog”
- Czech Republic: Vladimír Holan – “She Asked You”

**30 March - Haiku**
- Slovenia: Meta Kusar – “16.,” “23.,” “54.,”
  - Primož Repar – “Haiku”
Brane Senegačnik – “Sonata Facile”
Poland   Leszek Engelking – “Weather-Forecast”
Hungary  Iván Mándy – “At the Movies with Father”
Czech Republic Věra Linhartová – “I am looking for something to give you,” “Finally words are simple”
Franz Kafka – “Absent-minded Window-gazing”
Slovak Republic Braňo Hochel – “Microstories”

Week 11
4 April- Dream Sequences in the Center of Europe
Czech Republic Franz Kafka – “A Dream”
Daniela Hodrová – “I See a Great City…”
Jaroslav Seifert – “Fingerprints”
Slovenia Meta Kusar – “5.”
Branko Gradišnik – “Oeopath”
Poland   Czeslaw Milosz – “Esse”

6 April – The Influence of Irrationality
Czech Republic Franz Kafka – “Give it Up!,” “Resolutions”
Michal Ajvaz – “Bird”
Hungary Péter Nádas – “Family Portrait against a Purple Sunset”
Lajos Grendel – “The Contents of Suitcases”
Poland  Tadeusz Rozewicz – “Transformations”
Agnieszka Drotnick – “Paris London Dachau”
Slovak Republic Dominik Tatarka – “Mystery”
Dušan Mitana – “On the Threshold”
Slovenia  Tomaž Šalamun – “Feast”

Week 12
11 April - Timescapes
Slovenia    Tomaž Šalamun – “Lacquer”
Prežihov Voranc – “The Self-Sown”
Hungary    Zsuzsa Beney – from On Two Banks
István Vas – “Dialogue between Strangers”
Poland    Czeslaw Milosz – “Window”
Slovak Republic Daniel Simko – “The Arrival”
Stanislava Chrobáková – “Autumn Motif”

13 April – Timescapes, continued

Week 13
18 & 20 April – To Think or Not to Think
Slovak Republic Milan Šimečka – “On Uncertain Reality”
Karol Chmel – “Skepticism”
Czech Republic Václav Havel – “Family Singsong”
Hungary  Gábor Görgey – excerpt from “Interview”
Péter Kántor – “On Truth”
Győrgy Petri – “Credit Card”
“Slovakia and Hungary: Trouble in Felvidek”
Poland

Czesław Milosz – “Incantation,” “A Poem for the End of the Century”

Week 14
25 April – National holiday – No class

27 April - Review Day

Week 15
2 May – Review Day

4 May – Review Day – FINAL PAPERS DUE 4 MAY by 9am by email