Class code

SOC-UA 9970-002

Instructor Details

Vanda Thorne, PhD
vanda.thorne@nyu.edu
mobile (for use only during field trips): 604 209 754
Office hours immediately before and after class, and by arrangement via email

Class Details

Collective Identity in a Totalitarian Regime

Monday/Wednesday 10:30 – 11:50 am

Location to be confirmed.

Prerequisites

none

Class Description

This course examines the totalitarian oppression from the point of view of ordinary citizens in communist Czechoslovakia. It focuses on the construction of collective mentality through everyday official/public and unofficial/private activities, including mass parades, public rituals, ceremonies and performances, work relations, children’s education, housing schemes or collective vacationing. Almost any nation’s history contains numerous incidents characterized by people’s mass participation, e.g., elections, demonstrations, revolutions, or wars. However, the totalitarian regime of communist Czechoslovakia took these events to an extreme, turning the elaborately planned mass events and activities into one of its primary defining characteristics. Collective mass identity was celebrated by the Czechoslovak leaders as an embodiment of the best communist qualities and a guarantee of successful and happy future. We will consider what participation in public mass activities meant for ordinary people, but also how the idea of united homogeneous masses was officially presented in propaganda and other materials. In the second part of the semester, we will examine many aspects of people’s private lives that were also forcefully structured by the ideology of mass collectivity – even the most intimate experiences of love, marriage or parenthood were to be opened to public discussion and intervention.

Lectures, discussions, video resources, fieldtrips

Desired Outcomes

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the main theoretical concepts and historical events of totalitarianism against the background of specific activities and experiences of Czechoslovak people.

2. Critically analyze the consequences of life in a totalitarian regime.

3. Contrast and compare the classic Western theories of the masses with Eastern European official and unofficial texts about mass mentality.
4. Demonstrate the ability to research and analyze historical phenomena, using academic texts as well as analyses of fiction, propaganda materials, samizdat and censured writing.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation/attendance:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Reading Presentations (one due before Midterm): 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Test (in-class written test, March 18): 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Film Analysis (5 pages, May 15): 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Test (in-class written test, May 20): 20%</td>
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**Active class participation** is necessary for this type of course; therefore, it will form a considerable part of a student’s grade (20%). You are expected to ask questions and/or comment on the issues discussed frequently.

**Reading presentations:** each student will be asked to present 2 readings from the assigned list according to her/his choice over the course of the semester. At least 1 presentation is due before the Midterm. More than 1 person, but no more than 3 people, can present the same article (please note that in the case of short texts it is not advisable to have more than 2 people presenting the same reading). As a discussion facilitator, you will shortly introduce the reading (max. 5 minutes) and then focus on your evaluation of it (10 minutes). Your task is to present your own arguments and/or comments regarding the key points discussed in the text. Come prepared with a written short summary of the text and at least half a page of your own commentary and questions or thought-provoking points that you wish to make about the reading. Please make enough copies for class distribution. Your written and spoken presentation should be focused and to the point; avoid lengthy quotations. The goal is to stimulate discussion of the readings and to make connections with previous class topics. Each presentation will be worth 10% of the final grade (5% for the questions/points sheet, 5% for the verbal presentation of the reading). Please note, however, that all students, not just the discussion facilitators, are expected to read and discuss the assigned reading each week.

**Written film analysis** (5 pages, 20% of the final grade): in-depth analysis of one of the assigned films. You should demonstrate your knowledge of previously read class materials, relate your analysis to the relevant historical, cultural and social phenomena that we discussed, and provide evidence of your own independent thinking. Please follow standard citation criteria.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Grade A:** Excellent work. Demonstrates an exceptional understanding of the topic and an active and critical approach to the subject. Written work shows original thought and research and an ability to express ideas clearly and persuasively.

**Grade B:** Very good work. Frequently participates in class discussions and shows some insight. Written work is well structured and researched but falls short of the highest level.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory work. Has done necessary class work but lacks individual insight and active class involvement. Written work accurate but not original or critical.

**Grade D:** Passable work. Meets minimum requirements.
**Grade F:** Fails to meet the requirements.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Conversion</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>65-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 65</td>
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**Grading Policy**

NYU Prague aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B- range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to ensure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-.

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that—it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

**Attendance Policy**

Each unexcused absences will result in your final grade being reduced by 3%. Absences only for medical reasons will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor’s note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). Absences due to travel will not be excused.

**Late Submission of Work**

Late submissions of written work are not allowed. Students are permitted to reschedule their reading presentation once per semester without penalty. Any further rescheduling will result in a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale for each rescheduled reading.

**Plagiarism Policy**

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as though it were one’s own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one’s own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer’s work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student’s intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make
appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science’s Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:
“presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”

“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Required Text(s)
All required texts are included in the Course Reader available in the library. In addition, students are required to read:

Further Reading (recommended)
Bojar, Tomas, Jan Trestik and Jakub Zelnicek, (eds.) Power of Images, Images of Power (Galerie u Krizovniku: 2005) 802394310-3

Internet Research Guidelines
Exercise caution, relying on institutional and accredited academic sites

Additional Required Equipment
none

Session 1
Overview of course
Monday, February 11

Session 2
Definitions of Basic Concepts; Historical and Social Background to Totalitarianism in Central Europe.
Wednesday, February 13
SIGN UP FOR READING PRESENTATIONS

Session 3
Lecture: Propaganda
Friday, February 15
READING:
### Session 4
**Monday, February 18**

**Text analysis and discussion: Theories and Images of Propaganda**

**READING:**


(60 pages)

Class Analysis of the Soviet and Czechoslovak political posters

### Session 5
**Wednesday, February 20**

**Film analysis and discussion: Power and Control in a Totalitarian System**

**FILM:** *The Lives of Others (Das Leben Der Anderen)*

### Session 6
**Monday, February 25**

**Lecture:** Western Theories of the Masses – Are They Applicable in the Context of Eastern European Communist Systems?

### Session 7
**Wednesday, February 27**

**Text analysis and discussion: Western Theories of the Masses**

**READING:**


(39 pages)

### Session 8
**Field Trip: National Memorial Vitkov**
Friday, 
March 1
(make up for
Wednesday
classes)

Session 9  
Lecture: The Ideology of Collective Identity in Czechoslovakia

Monday, 
March 4

Session 10  
Text analysis and discussion: Public and Private Aspects of Imposed Collective Mentality in Czechoslovakia

READING:


(73 pages)

Session 11  
Lecture: Official Mass Ceremonies and Performances

Monday, 
March 11

Session 12  
Text analysis and discussion: Participation in Organized Mass Events

READING:


(93 pages)

Session 13  
Film analysis and discussion: Parades and Their Parodies

Friday,  
March 15
(make up for

FILM: Bila Pani (The White Lady)
Wednesday classes)

Session 14  MIDTERM TEST

Monday, March 18

Session 15  Lecture: Collectivization of Life in the Private Sphere. Spending Free Time with the Masses – Weekend Housing and Vacationing

Wednesday, March 20

Session 16  Film Analysis and Discussion: Socialist Masses Vacationing

Friday, March 22 (make up for Wednesday classes)

Session 17  Text analysis and discussion: Construction of the Socialist Home. Collective Vacationing

Monday, March 25

READING:


(70 pages)

Session 18  Field Trip: Strahov Stadium

Wednesday, March 27

Spring Break

April 1 – 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Monday, April 8</td>
<td>Lecture: Mass Gymnastics as a Collective Performance</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
  (55 pages) |
| 21      | Monday, April 15 | Guest Lecture                                                         | Dr. Petr Roubal - Spartakiads as Mass Collective Exercise               |
  (48 pages) |
<p>| 23      | Monday, April 22 | Film Analysis and Discussion: Childhood during Normalization         | Excerpts from Pelisky (Cosy Dens)                                      |
| 24      | Wednesday, April 24 | Lecture: Women and Men as Unanimous Collectives – Gender Aspects of Collective Identity |                                                                         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 25</th>
<th>Text analysis and discussion: Ideology and Reality of Enforced Equality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, April 29</td>
<td>READING:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(66 pages)</td>
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<th>May 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>no classes</td>
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**Session 26**  
Film analysis and discussion: N(Ost)algia for Communism?  
**Monday, May 6**  
FILM: Goodbye Lenin

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<tr>
<th>National Holiday</th>
<th>May 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no classes</td>
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**Session 27**  
Lecture: N(Ost)algia for Communism?  
**Monday, May 13**  
READING:  
(14 pages)  
Class analysis of materials related to communist nostalgia

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**Session 28**  
Final Summary of the Course  
**Wednesday, May 15**  
FILM ANALYSIS DUE

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**Session 29**  
FINAL TEST  
**Monday,**
May 20

**Session 30**  
Wednesday,  
May 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Etiquette</th>
<th>Eating is not permitted in the classroom. No cell phones, and no use of the Internet for other than educational purposes in the classroom. <strong>Tardiness of more than 20 minutes without a reasonable excuse will be regarded as an absence.</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required Co-curricular Activities</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested Co-curricular Activities</td>
<td>none</td>
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