Class code
RUSSN–UA 9832-001 (7510)

Instructor Details
Professor Tomáš VRBA
tv18@nyu.edu, vrbanyu@email.cz
Tuesday 3:00 – 4:00 P.M., NYU Professors’ Room

Class Details
MODERN CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN LITERATURE
(Introduction to modern Czech and Central European literary and cultural history)
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30–2:50 P.M.
Location to be confirmed.

Class Description
Course description: The idea of the course is not to bring a full and detailed picture of the modern and contemporary Central and East European literature, but rather to take advantage of the unique occasion and offer students a more focused view. Examining Czech literary history as a specific example of the European history of national, cultural and political emancipation plans to guide “newcomers” along the most important cultural streams influencing the face of Czech literature in the 19th and 20th century. The larger cultural context includes the political role of art and literature in Czech history, language, religion, social and national currents and crosscurrents, as well as its Central and East European dimension.

Tuesday sessions: professor’s lecture/comments; class discussions.
Thursday sessions: reading presentations; class discussions.
Several field trips (short literary walks) corresponding with respective themes may be included.
One or two guest lectures may be included, possibly by prominent Czech authors, and the order of scheduled lectures may change slightly according to the guests’ availability.

Assessment Components
Class attendance: 30 %
Reading presentation or other assignment: 20 %
Mid-term paper and test: 20 %
Final paper: 30 %

Students will be given detailed instruction about themes and number of pages of written work in time.
Students will be assigned at least three individual reading presentations (about 15 minutes each).
Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the
Grading Policy

**Grade A:** excellent work

**Grade B:** good work

**Grade C:** satisfactory work

**Grade D:** poor, but still passable work

**Grade F:** failure

Each unexcused absence 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.

Attendance Policy

Late submission of work results in awarding a lower grade.

Late Submission of Work

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)*
see the Schedule of classes

Students are expected to do their individual research.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Session 1
Overview of course
Tuesday, February 12
1a. Time: Historical background of Czech national culture.
Start reading Hašek, Jaroslav: The Good Soldier Švejk
Start reading Kafka, Franz: America /The Man Who Disappeared/

Session 2
Thursday, February 14
1b. Time: Historical background of Czech national culture.

Session 3
Tuesday, February 19
2a. Humor: Kafka, Hašek, Hrabal. Irony, the grotesque and the absurd, the political implications of Kafka’s work in the 60’s, the Czech New Wave cinema and absurd theater.

Session 4
Thursday, February 21
Reading presentation: Kafka, Franz: America /The Man Who Disappeared/
Start reading: Němcová, Božena: Grandmother
Continue reading: Hašek, Jaroslav: The Good Soldier Švejk

Session 5
Friday, February 22
(Make up for Tuesday classes)

Session 6
Tuesday, February 26
3a. Space: Geography, geopolitics, Czech patriotism, landscape, the physical world, beer and food. (Božena Němcová, Franz Werfel, Viktor Dyk, Ota Pavel). Austrian, Hungarian and Polish neighbors (Karl Kraus, Peter Esterhazy, Witold Gombrowicz).
Start reading: Mácha, Karel Hynek: *May*

Start reading: Hrabal, Bohumil: *Closely Observed Trains*

Start reading: Hrabal, Bohumil: *Too Loud a Solitude*

**Session 7**

Thursday, February 28

3b. *Space*: Geography, geopolitics, Czech patriotism, landscape, the physical world.

Reading presentation: Němcová, Božena: *Grandmother*

Reading presentation: Hašek, Jaroslav: *The Good Soldier Švejk*

**Session 8**

Tuesday, March 5


**Session 9**

Thursday, March 7


Reading presentation: Mácha, Karel Hynek: *May*

Start reading: Čapek, Karel: *Talks with TGM*

**Session 10**

Friday, March 8

(Make up for Thursday classes)


**Session 11**

Tuesday, March 12


**Session 12**

Thursday, March 14


Reading presentation: Hrabal, Bohumil: *Closely Observed Trains*

Reading presentation: Hrabal, Bohumil: *Too Loud a Solitude*

Start reading: Lustig, Arnošt: *Dita Saxova*

Start reading: Havel, Václav: *Garden Party*

Start reading: Kundera, Milan: *Life is Elsewhere*
Session 13
Tuesday, March 19
6a. Conceptual writing I.: Political thought, political satire (Karel Čapek).

MIDTERM TEST  WRITTEN IN CLASS 19 MARCH - TODAY

Session 14
Thursday, March 21
6b. Conceptual writing I.: Political thought, political satire.

Reading presentation: Čapek, Karel: Talks with TGM

Start reading: Klima, Ivan: Love and Garbage

MIDTERM PAPER DUE 21 MARCH - TODAY

Session 15
Tuesday, March 26

Session 16
Thursday, March 28
7b. Existential writing II.

Reading presentation: Lustig, Arnošt: Dita Saxova

Spring Break
April 1-5

Session 17
Tuesday, April 9

Session 18
Thursday, April 11

Reading presentation: Havel, Václav: Garden Party

Reading presentation: Kundera, Milan: Life is Elsewhere

Session 19
Tuesday, April 16

Session 20
Thursday, April 18
(Ivan Klima, Ludvík Vaculík, Josef Škvorecký).

Start reading: Viewegh, Michal: Bringing Up Girls in Bohemia

Start reading: Topol, Jáchym: City Sister Silver

Session 21
Tuesday, April 23
9b. Dissent and Exile.
Session 22
Thursday, April 25

9c. Dissent and Exile.
Reading presentation: Klíma, Ivan: *Love and Garbage*
Start reading: Ash, Timothy Garton: *Two Essays on Central Europe*

Session 23
Tuesday, April 30


Session 24
Thursday, May 2

10b. A new social role for Czech literature after 1989
Reading presentation: Viewegh, Michal: *Bringing Up Girls in Bohemia*
Reading presentation: Topol, Jáchym: *City Sister Silver*

11a. Central Europe recreated: Concentric circles, multiple identity (Milan Kundera, Josef Kroutvor, Györgyi Konrad, Adam Michnik).

Session 25
Tuesday, May 7

11b. Central Europe recreated: Concentric circles, multiple identity.
Reading presentation: Ash, Timothy Garton: *Two Essays on Central Europe*

Session 26
Thursday, May 9

11c. Central Europe recreated: Concentric circles, multiple identity.

Session 27
Tuesday, May 14

12. Persistent message: Summary

Session 28
Thursday, May 16
(last day of classes)

FINAL EXAM:
FINAL PAPER DUE 21 MAY (TODAY)

Session 29
Tuesday, May 21
Final exam
FINA L INDIVIDUAL IN T ERVIEWS IN CLASS 21 MAY