This course explores various religious phenomena that formed political ideas and cultural values of Central Europe in different historical periods. Religion is without doubt one of the most important elements that shaped history and contemporary face of this region and mutual interaction of these phenomena is principally evident in cultural richness of Prague. In the course we examine particularly those Central European religious figures and events that remarkably influenced the world’s history and enriched human thinking. First, we study Christianization of the Central European countries 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 situation of religious institutions in totalitarian societies and their struggle against communist regime. The transformation of Catholicism in the 1960s is also examined together with the role of religion in the post-communist and post-modern societies.

Excursions to significant historical and religious sights are an important part of the course next to class presentations and discussions.

The course is designed to equip students with the understanding of different religious phenomena that formed European society throughout history with particular focus on Central Europe. Students will be able to analyze critically the role of religion in different historical periods and to examine religious phenomena in various contexts.

**Desired Outcomes**

The course is designed to equip students with the understanding of different religious phenomena that formed European society throughout history with particular focus on Central Europe. Students will be able to analyze critically the role of religion in different historical periods and to examine religious phenomena in various contexts.

**Class active participation** (20%): Students are expected to be active in class discussions and other class activities. It contributes to their overall assessment significantly.

**Response paper** (15%): About 3 pages long personal reflection on a topic examined in any of the previous classes. Part of the assignment is to present the main idea of the paper to others (5 minutes) and lead a class discussion on prepared question(s). For due date see sign up sheet.

**Oral presentation** (20%): 5-10 minutes presentation on a chosen religious figure or phenomenon using PowerPoint and any possible artifacts. The presentation must be accompanied by a class discussion on prepared question(s) concerning the legacy of the researched subject and its relevance today. PowerPoint presentation must be submitted by email. For due date see course schedule and sign up sheet.

**Test** (20%): The multiple choice test concerning the key topics and terms covered in class. It is divided into two parts (session 9, final session).

**Final paper** (25%): This assignment represents major project for the term. Students are expected to develop an argument that analyzes any of the examined topics more deeply placing it within a historical, political or cultural context. Paper should be about 5-8 pages long and must be submitted by the last session of the class.

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

**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A**: Excellent work, exceptional research, papers and presentations; high level of participation in class discussions, involving original thought.

**Grade B**: Good work, necessary research and well done all required assignments, average involvement in class work.

**Grade C**: Satisfactory work, limited participation in class discussions and demonstrates lack of individual insights.

**Grade D**: Passable work, meets minimum requirements but with significant mistakes and poor class
activity.

**Grade F:** Fails to meet minimum requirements.


NYU Prague aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.

Absences only for medical reasons and for religious observance 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). To be excused for religious observance, you must contact the instructor and the Associate Director via e-mail one week in advance of the holiday. Your absence is excused for the holiday only and does not include days of travel associated with the holiday. Unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from your final course grade for every week of classes missed.

Work submitted late will affect the grade unless there is an agreed extension. Work submitted more than 7 days after the submission date without an agreed extension fails.

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)

All required texts will be available on the internet or handouts will be distributed in class.


Course overview and introduction to the class topic

Explanation of expectations and assignments.

Main reading: an essay by Jonathan Sacks (handout)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Religious terms and historical overview</td>
<td>The notion of religion, key definitions, historical and regional contexts.</td>
<td>Main reading: Tomas Halik, <em>Religio</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Europe in Pre-Christian period</td>
<td>Characteristics of the cultural and political situation before Christianization.</td>
<td>Excursion: Prague Christianization site</td>
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<td>Main reading: Lonnie Johnson, <em>Central Europe and the Roman Christian West</em></td>
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<td>Session 4</td>
<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Phemonomen of Christianization</td>
<td>Consequences of Christianization in politics and culture, Western monasticism and Byzantine</td>
<td>Presentations due: Cyril and Methodius</td>
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<td>Excursion: Monastic site</td>
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<td>Main reading: <em>The Rule of Saint Benedict</em></td>
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<td>Session 5</td>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Medieval period</td>
<td>Medieval Christendom and <em>Corpus Christianorum</em>. Phenomena of cathedrals, universities,</td>
<td>Presentations due: Agnes of Bohemia or Charles IV</td>
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<td>religious orders, investiture etc. Medieval society and religious paradigm.</td>
<td>Excursion: Medieval Religious Prague</td>
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<td>Main reading: <em>Medieval society: The Three orders</em>; *Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux,</td>
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<td><em>Francis of Assisi</em></td>
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<td>Session 6</td>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Reformation and Renaissance</td>
<td>The crisis and Reformation, cultural influence of Renaissance. Religious wars, their political</td>
<td>Presentations due: Jan Hus</td>
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<td>dimension and cultural consequences.</td>
<td>Excursion: Prague and Reformation</td>
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<td>Main reading: Lonnie Johnson, <em>The Bulwarks of Christendom</em></td>
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<td>Session 7</td>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>Baroque period</td>
<td>Baroque spirituality and culture, “cuius regio, eius religio” principle, cultural</td>
<td>Presentations due: Ignatius of Loyola and Jesuits</td>
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<td>competition in 17th and 18th centuries, Jesuits in Bohemia.</td>
<td>Excursion: Baroque sites</td>
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<td>Main reading: Peter Demetz, <em>The Prague Baroque</em></td>
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<td>Session 8</td>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Jewish religious phenomenon</td>
<td>Historical overview, cultural role of Jews in Central Europe, significant</td>
<td>Presentations due: Rabbi Loew and the legend of Golem</td>
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<td>representatives and movements, anti-Judaism and Holocaust.</td>
<td>Excursion: Jewish Synagogue and ghetto</td>
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<td>Main reading: handout <em>Jewish History in Bohemia</em></td>
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<td>Session 9</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Esoteric tradition</td>
<td>Origin and characteristics of esotericism, examples and historical overview, influence on</td>
<td>Presentations due: esoteric movement</td>
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<td>politics and culture, esotericism and architecture.</td>
<td>Excursion: Prague’s sites with esoteric influence</td>
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<td>Main reading: Peter Demetz, <em>The Alchemists Come to Prague</em></td>
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*Midterm test*

Spring Break April 6-10
**Session 10**
**April 15**

Modernity and religion
Changing societal role of religion in the period of modern social and political transformation; religion and Enlightenment, scientific revolution and nationalism.

Presentations due: Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx

Home study/reading: material on *Freud’s and Marx’s theory of religion*

**Session 11**
**April 22**

Religion and totalitarianism
Central Europe and totalitarian regimes in 20th century, struggle of religion against communist totalitarianism, communist suppression of religion in 50s and during normalization.

Presentation due: Josef Beran

Excursion: dissent and underground church

Main reading: Zuzana Kusa, *Persecution of Churches under the Communist Regime in Slovakia*

**Session 12**
**April 29**

Religion and democracy, dissent and religious underground, canonization of Agnes of Bohemia, Velvet revolution and aftermath.

Film: Karol, *A Man Who Became Pope* (a part)

Main reading: collection, *Underground Church in Czechoslovakia*

**Session 13**
**May 6**

Sixties and the new trends
European society and religion since 1960s, new religious and theological movements, transformation of Catholicism and Second Vatican Council.

Presentation due: Second Vatican Council

Excursion: religious reform and Prague sacral architecture

Main reading: Collection of texts and study sources

**Session 14**
**May 13 (last day of classes)**

The place of religion in contemporary society
Role of religion in post-modern society, globalization and interfaith dialogue, situation in post-communist countries, roots of the secularization in the Czech society.

Main reading: Tomas Halik, *Christian experience in Central and Eastern Europe during the first decade after communism*

*Final test*

**Session 15**
**May 20**

*Final paper due*

**Classroom Etiquette**

Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies. Food & drink should be consumed during class breaks and should not be brought in class.