SOC-UA9970002

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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 – SPRING 2015
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. At the end of the semester, we will explore what fuelled post-communist nostalgia in the Czech Republic and consider the consequences of mass nostalgia for developing democracies.

Lectures, power point presentations, 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.

**Assessment Components**

Class participation/attendance/short response papers: 20%
2 Reading Presentations (one due before Midterm): 20%
Midterm Test (in-class written test, March 25): 20%
Written Analysis (5 pages, May 13): 20%
Final Test (in-class written test, May 18): 20%

*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. Short response papers (max. 1 page) will be assigned by the professor throughout the semester to assess students’ knowledge of the specific phenomena covered in discussions, films and readings.
**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 analysis** (min. 5 pages, 20% of the final grade): in-depth analysis of one of the class topics or 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.

**Grade conversion**

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**Attendance Policy**

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.

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 5 points on the 100 point scale for each rescheduled reading.
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.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.

All required texts are included in the Course Reader available in the library. In addition, students are required to read:


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

Exercise caution, relying on institutional and accredited academic sites

none

Overview of course. Definitions of Basic Concepts; Historical and Social Background to Totalitarianism in Central Europe.

Lecture: Propaganda

READING:
(21 pages)

SIGN UP FOR READING PRESENTATIONS

Session 3
Monday, February 9

Text analysis and discussion: Theories and Images of Propaganda

READING:
Class Analysis of the Nazi, Soviet and Czechoslovak political propaganda

Class simulation exercise: Propaganda methods

Film analysis and discussion: Power and Control in a Totalitarian System
FILM: The Lives of Others (Das Leben Der Anderen)

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

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


Session 10
Wednesday, March 4
Session 11
Monday, March 9

Text analysis and discussion: Participation in Organized Mass Events
READING:


Film analysis and discussion: Parades and Their Parodies
FILM: Bila Pani (The White Lady)

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

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

**READING:**

(70 pages)

### Film Analysis and Discussion: Socialist Masses Vacationing

**FILM:** Dovolena s Andelem (Holidays with Andel)

### MIDTERM TEST

### Lecture: Mass Gymnastics as a Collective Performance

### Field Trip: National Memorial Vitkov

### NO CLASSES

### Text analysis and discussion: Disciplined Communist Bodies

**READING:**

(55 pages)

### Field Trip: Strahov Stadium

### Lecture: Children as the Perfect Socialist Collective

**READING:**

(48 pages)

### Film Analysis and Discussion: Childhood during Normalization

Excerpts from Pelisky (Cosy Dens)

### Lecture: Women and Men as Unanimous Collectives – Gender Aspects of Collective Identity

### Text analysis and discussion: Ideology and Reality of Enforced Equality

**READING:**


(66 pages)

**Film analysis and discussion: N(Ost)algia for Communism?**

**FILM:** Goodbye Lenin

**Lecture: N(Ost)algia for Communism?**

**READING:**


(15 pages)

Class analysis of materials related to communist nostalgia

**Field Trip: Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes**

**Final Summary of the Course**

**WRITTEN ANALYSIS DUE**

**FINAL TEST**

Individual reviews

Eating is not permitted in the classroom. No cell phones, and no use of the Internet for other than educational purposes in the classroom. Tardiness of more than 20 minutes without a reasonable excuse will be regarded as an absence.

None

None