

# NYU Prague

## RELST-UA9360P01

### Religion, Culture and Politics in Central Europe Fall 2018

#### Instructor Information

- **Petr Mucha**
- **Email:** mucha@nyu.edu
- **Office hours:** Immediately after class, and by arrangement via email
- **Telephone:** 777910551 (for use only during field trips)

#### Course Information

- RELST-UA9360P01
- **Religion, Culture and Politics in Central Europe**
- Co-requisite or prerequisite: none
- **Wednesday 1:30 – 4:20 pm**
  - Mucha classroom RD

#### Course Overview and Goals

This course explores influences of religion on key cultural values and political phenomena of Central Europe. It examines mutual interactions among religion, culture and politics in different historical periods implementing cross-disciplinary approaches. Religion is without doubt one of the most important elements that shaped history and contemporary face of this region and its influence is principally evident in cultural richness of Prague. Often characterized simply as one of the most atheistic societies, Czech lands and Prague mirror the drama of European cultural and spiritual history and represent result of complicated cultural, political and religious interactions throughout more than a thousand of years.

In the beginning, we examine the birth of this region through Christianization process and a prominent role of religion in political and cultural transformation in medieval period. Prague's unique medieval architecture and cultural artifacts serve as a convenient source for course study. Then we follow religious reformation process and its impact on societal phenomena. In the next step, we explore the development of relationship between Judeo-Christian tradition and secular world in early modern period. Struggle of religion against totalitarian regimes and spiritual transformation in the 1960s are also examined. Finally, we investigate the place of religion in current post-communist and post-modern societies.

Class sessions are composed of lectures, presentations and discussions on study sources and films. Excursions and guided tours to historical sites in Prague are an important component of the course.

#### Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Understand influences of religion on different cultural and political phenomena.

- Analyze critically the role of religion in different historical periods.
- Employ cross-disciplinary approaches in research process and interpret results through group discussion.
- Improve their skills of critical and contextual analysis of various religious and historical phenomena.
- Critically evaluate current theories of secularization and develop skills of interfaith debate.

## Course Requirements

### Active Class Participation

Students are expected to be active in class discussions and other class activities. It contributes to their overall assessment significantly. Short home assignments - **reading reports** - will be assigned by the professor throughout the semester to assess students' home preparation.

### Response Paper

This paper (about 3 pages) should take form of a personal reflection on a topic examined in any of the previous classes. Part of the assignment is class presentation (5 minutes) of main argument developed in the paper and moderated class discussion on prepared question(s). For due date see the sign-up sheet.

### Oral Presentation

It is a class presentation (5-10 minutes) on religious figure or phenomenon which student chooses from the list. PowerPoint should be used for better illustration and the presentation must be accompanied by a class discussion on prepared question(s) concerning how relevant and applicable is the presented topic nowadays. PowerPoint presentation must be submitted by email. For due date see the sign-up sheet.

### Test

A multiple choice test concentrates on key topics and terms covered in class lectures and study materials. The test has two parts: midterm and final.

### Final paper

This assignment represents major project for the term and must contain all required parts and attributes of academic papers. It is an essay or research paper about 5-8 pages long. Students are expected to develop an argument that analyzes selected topic placing it within a historical, political or cultural context. Lectures, course readings and issues raised during class discussions should serve as a basis for defining a topic for the final paper. Paper must be submitted by the last course session.

### Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class participation / reading reports	20
Response paper	15
Oral presentation	20
Test	20
Final paper	25

## Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percent
A	94% - 100%
A-	90% - 93%
B+	87% - 89%
B	84% - 86%
B-	80% - 83%
C+	77% - 79%
C	74% - 76%
C-	70% - 73%
D+	67% - 69%
D	65% - 66%
F	Below 65

## 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.

## Course Schedule

### Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
<b>Session 1</b> Wednesday, September 5	<b>Course introduction and overview.</b> Explanation of assignments and expectations.	Essay by Jonathan Sacks and Miroslav Volf	
<b>Session 2</b> Wednesday, September 12	<b>Essential terms and definitions.</b> Historical overview, regional contexts.	Essay on <i>Religion</i> by Tomáš Halík	<b>Sign up</b> for presentations
<b>Session 3</b> Wednesday, September 19	<b>Roots of European Civilization.</b> Religious, cultural and political aspects. <b>Excursion:</b> Christianization site	<i>Central Europe and the Roman Christian West</i> by Lonnie Johnson	

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
<b>Session 4</b> Wednesday, September 26	<b>Phenomenon of Christianization.</b> Context and consequences, Western monasticism, Byzantine mission. <b>Excursion:</b> Monastic site	Materials: <i>Monasticism, Rule of Saint Benedict, St. Gall Plan Project.</i>	Presentation: <i>Cyril and Methodius</i>
<b>Session 5</b> Wednesday, October 3	<b>Medieval Christendom.</b> Society and religious paradigm, Corpus Christianorum, cathedrals, universities, religious orders, etc. <b>Excursion:</b> Medieval Prague	Materials: <i>Three Orders, Building the Great Cathedrals documentary.</i>	Presentation: <i>Agnes of Bohemia, Charles IV</i>
<b>Session 6</b> Wednesday, October 10	<b>Renaissance and Reformation.</b> Crisis and reform, Renaissance culture, schism and aftermath. <b>Excursion:</b> Reformation site	<i>The Bulwarks of Christendom</i> by Lonnie Johnson	Presentation: <i>Jan Hus, Comenius</i>
Fall Break October 13-21	Fall Break		
<b>Session 7</b> Wednesday, October 24	<b>Baroque culture and spirituality.</b> <i>"Cuius regio, eius religio"</i> , recatholization, cultural revival, Jesuits in Bohemia. <b>Excursion:</b> Baroque Prague	<i>The Prague Baroque</i> by Peter Demetz, <i>Principles of Baroque documentary</i>	Presentation: <i>Ignatius of Loyola and Jesuits</i>
<b>Session 8</b> Wednesday, October 31	<b>Judaism and Jewish Culture.</b> Central European Jewry, roots of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, historical and political contexts. <b>Excursion:</b> Jewish Town	Collection on <i>Jewish History in Bohemia and Holocaust</i>	<b>Midterm test</b> Presentation: <i>Rabbi Loew and Golem</i>
<b>Session 9</b> Wednesday, November 7	<b>Phenomenon of Esotericism.</b> Origin and characteristics, historical examples, influence in culture and politics. <b>Excursion:</b> Esoteric inspirations	<i>The Alchemists Come to Prague</i> by Peter Demetz, <i>Western Esotericism collect.</i>	Presentation: <i>Selected esoteric movement</i>
Make-up Day Friday, November 9 (9am-5pm)	Make-up day for missed classes		
<b>Session 10</b> Wednesday, November 14	<b>Modernity and Religion.</b> Religion and change of paradigm, Enlightenment, scientific revolution, nationalism.	Materials: <i>Freud and Marx: views on religion, Civil Religion document.</i>	Presentation: <i>Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx</i>
<b>Session 11</b> Wednesday, November 21	<b>Religion and Totalitarianism.</b> Principles of totalitarianism in Central Europe, struggle of religion against communist regime. <b>Excursion:</b> Prague and totality	<i>Persecution of Churches under the Communist Regime in Slovakia</i> by Zuzana Kusa	Presentation: <i>Josef Beran</i>
<b>Session 12</b> Wednesday, November 28	<b>Velvet Revolution and Religion.</b> Religion and democratic dissent, Velvet revolution and aftermath. <b>Film:</b> Karol, A Man Who Became Pope (a part)	Collection: <i>John Paul II and Communism</i>	
<b>Session 13</b> Wednesday, December 5	<b>Sixties and New Trends.</b> Religion in Europe since 1960s, new religious and social movements, Second Vatican Council. <b>Excursion:</b> Current sacral art	<i>Peter Berger and Jose Casanova on secularization theories (collection)</i>	Presentation: <i>Second Vatican Council, Ecumenism</i>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
<b>Session 14</b> Wednesday, December 12 (last day of classes)	<b>Religion in Contemporary Society.</b> Post-modern religiosity, globalization and interfaith dialogue, Czech secularism.	<i>Religion in Dialogue</i> Essay by Tomas Halik	<b>Final test</b> Presentation: <i>Interfaith Dialogue</i>
<b>Session 15</b> Wednesday, December 19	<b>Final Session, Conclusion.</b>		<b>Final papers due</b>

## Course Materials

### Required Textbooks & Materials

- All required texts and study sources will be available in an **electronic format on NYU Classes**.

### Supplemental Text (not required to purchase, copies available in NYU P Library)

- Demetz, P.: Prague in black and gold, 1997. Penguin, London. ISBN 978-08090-1609-9
- O'Grady, D.: The Turned Card, 1995. Gracewing, Leominster, Herefordshire. ISBN 1-86371-606-8
- Wandycz, P. S.: The Price of Freedom, 2001. Routledge, London. ISBN 0-415-25491-4

### Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](https://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](https://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](https://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](https://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)
- **NYU Prague library:** [Tritius Catalog](https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN) (https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN)

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Tardiness

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 Academic 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 2% percent deduction from your final course grade for every week of classes missed.

**Please note that Friday, November 9 (9am – 5pm) is reserved as a make-up day for missed classes. Do not schedule any trips for this day.**

### Late Submission of Work

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.

## **Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

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)**

## **Classroom Etiquette**

Mobile phones must be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies. No use of the Internet and computers in the classroom for other than educational purposes. Eating is not permitted in class. Food should be consumed during class breaks only.

## **Disability Disclosure Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.