

**\*\* Draft syllabus \*\***

*Histories of Prague*

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Every city, historians often claim, has a personality of its own. Now the capital of the Czech Republic, it is easy to see Prague as a Czech city that exudes a peculiarly Czech history and culture. Still others have envisioned a timeless “magic Prague” full of mystery and improbable legends—a vision of the city’s past and present that informs many tourist brochures today. Our course will challenge these characterizations as we explore the Prague’s history from the medieval era to the present day. Along the way we will chart out our own biography of the city and explore the various ways in which scholars write urban history. We will learn how art and architecture can provide a window on past cultures; how large historical forces such as nationalism and industrialization take form in the city; what public monuments can tell us about memory construction in the city; and how outsiders construct images of the city and its people. Our readings will include secondary sources as well as a number of primary documents that will allow us to interpret Prague’s history for ourselves. We will end the course with a couple of questions. Does Prague have a personality of its own? And, if so, how might we describe it?

Grading:

Participation: 25%

Four thought pieces (two pages), each of which reflect on a single secondary source: 20%

Two short essays (three-four pages) that interpret a primary document, discussing the author, the context in which the document was written, intended audience, and intent of the document: 20%

Ten-page review essay that compares two books on the history of Prague, paying particular attention to source base, research question, how the author’s answer that question, and why the answer matters.

## Week 1: Introductions

In addition to introducing ourselves, we will take a tour through Prague using a number of maps, Google Earth, and Czech website ([http://www.virtual-zoom.cz/praha\\_mag\\_mapa/praha.html](http://www.virtual-zoom.cz/praha_mag_mapa/praha.html)) that provides on-the-ground and bird's eye view perspectives on the city

## Week 2: The History of the City

Selections from Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*

Selections from Paul Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe 1000-1994*

## Week 3: What is Urban History?

Charles King, *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams*

Markian Prokopvych et al, Introduction to special issue on urban history in the journal *East Central Europe* (2006)

Thought piece #1 due

## Week 4: Grand Times: Medieval Prague

Selections from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art's Exhibition Catalogue *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437*

Demetz, 67-170

Thought piece #2 due

## Week 5: Alchemy and Rudolf II

R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History*

Demetz, 170-232

Week 6: Baroque Prague

Howard Louthan, "Religious Art and the Formation of a Catholic Identity in Baroque Prague"

Demetz, 232-237

Thought piece #3 due

Week 7: The Travelers, Part II: Prague before the 1848 Revolution

Selection of primary documents in Walter and Catherine Allison Phillips, *Mozart on His Way to Prague*

Selections from Henry Reeve, "Sketches of Bohemia, and Slavonic Provinces of the Austrian Empire" (1837)

Selections from John Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Southern Germany*

Demetz, 237-313

Short paper #1 interpreting a primary source due

Week 8: Street Fighting: Nationalism in Prague

Selections from Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: The Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*

Selections from Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands became Czech*

Week 9: Prague Modern

Selections from Scott Spector, *Prague Territories*

Demetz, 314-322

Thought piece #3 due

Week 10: Prague between the Wars

Poetry by Vítězslav Nezval from *Prague with Fingers of Rain*

In-class showing of “Workers, Let’s Go” by Jan Werich and Jiří Voskovec

Demetz, 323-364

Week 11: A City in the Age of Extremes

Heda Margolius Kovály, *Life under a Cruel Star*

Selections from Mary Heinemann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed*

Short paper #2 interpreting a primary source due

Week 12: Communist Spaces

Kimberly Ellman, “Designing for the Socialist Family: The Evolution of Housing Types in Early Postwar Czechoslovakia”

Selections from Heinemann, *Czechoslovakia*

Week 13: Monuments, Communist and Post-Communist

Selections from Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas*

Week 14: Tourism and the Historian

*The Rough Guide to Prague*

Introduction to John Urry, *Consuming Places*

Ten-page paper due