

HI 353H “Magic Prague? Biographies of Central European City”

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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 legends take hold; 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 and insiders narrate their experiences within the city. 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?

Our common readings will include a mix of primary and secondary sources, which we will read and discuss throughout the semester. Short lectures at the end of seminar time will provide background information on the region’s history and the readings. In addition to several shorter writing assignments, you will be asked to write a seven- to eight-page research proposal that that, if pursued, could result in a 30-page paper that uses primary and secondary sources to make an argument about the history of Prague. As the course progresses, we will discuss strategies for creating a research question, researching your topic, constructing an argument, and finally organizing and writing the research proposal.

Required Texts:

Peter Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes from the Life of a European City*

Gustav Meyrink, *The Golem*

Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century*

These books are or will be available for purchase soon at the Ram’s Head. They are also available on reserve at the undergraduate library.

The other reading assignments will be available on Sakai.

Grading:

Participation: 30%

Short writing assignments, such as response papers: 10%

Short essay (four to five pages): 20%

A class presentation describing your proposal for a research project that draws on primary and secondary sources to answer a research question related to the history of Prague: 5%

A ten-page proposal describing your research project: 35%

Class Discussion

You are required to complete each session's reading assignment and to come to class with ideas, insights, and/or questions for the group. The success of the class depends upon everyone arriving prepared, remaining open to other's ideas, and offering arguments based upon a thorough understanding of the reading assignments. Your presence in class, in other words, is crucial. Three unexcused absences will result in your participation being lowered by one grade level. (A "B" will become a "C," for example.) Four unexcused absences will result in an "F" for the course. Excused absences require some form of written documentation, such as a doctor's note. Even if you are absent, you will be responsible for any assignments due that day.

As the semester progresses, I will post readings, discussion questions, and any short writing assignments for each of our readings on the "announcements" page on Sakai. Each reading assignment asks a variation of the following questions: What questions do the readings inspire? How do the readings relate to larger historical themes? How do they relate to previous readings? If the assignment was a secondary source, what is its argument, and how was it made? How might you criticize it? If it is a primary source, what kind of source is it? What can we learn from the document? What are the weaknesses of the document as an historical source?

Before spring break you will be asked to complete a five-page analysis of a primary source relating to the history of Prague. Your final, longer paper assignment will be to write a research proposal for an imaginary research project on the history of Prague. Students will be presenting their research findings to the rest of the class during the last two weeks of the semester.

All written assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class or by the time stated on the syllabus. For each day that the assignment is late, that assignment's letter grade will be lowered by one-third. (A "B" will become a "B-," for example.)

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Remember that when writing, taking exams, or performing other assignments you are bound by the Honor Code. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-administered honor system and judicial system for over one hundred years. The system is the responsibility of students and is regulated and governed by them, but faculty share the responsibility. If you have questions about your responsibility under the honor code, please ask me or consult with the office of the Dean of Students or the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. This document, adopted by the Chancellor, the Faculty Council, and the Student Congress, contains all policies and procedures pertaining to the student honor system. Your full participation and observance of the honor code is expected. For more details, see http://honor.unc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=53. Information on citing correctly can be found at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/>. For an entertaining video on the subject, go to <http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/>.

Finally, please do not hesitate to come to me with questions, concerns, or requests for help. I will hold office hours in Hamilton 468 on Mondays from 1:30 to 3:30. You can also contact me via email or schedule an appointment. Other sources of assistance are the Writing Center (www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/); Learning Disabilities Services (www.unc.edu/depts/acadserv/lds.html); and Counseling and Wellness Services (<http://caps.unc.edu/>). I also strongly encourage you to help each other.

January 13: Introductions and Urban Biographies

January 20: Czech Prague?

Demetz, xi-135

Selections from Alois Jirásek, *Old Czech Legends*

January 27: Magic Prague?

Demetz, xi-236

Selections from Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Magic Prague*

February 3: Travelers and a Nation without a State

Demetz, 272-284

Peter Bugge, “‘Something in the View Which Makes You Linger’: Bohemia and Bohemians in British Travel Writing, 1836-1857” *Central Europe* 7, no. 1 (2009): 3-29

J.G. Kohl, *Austria, Vienna, Prague, ect., ect.*, 10-48 -- available at http://books.google.com/books?id=tUxnZ3H2CB0C&pg=PA34&dq=Austria,+Vienna,+Prague,+ect.,+ect&hl=en&ei=bfZwTp3OFYHj0QGYypGaCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false

Yours truly, “Zap’s Prague: The City, the Nation, and Czech Elites before 1848,” *Urban History*, forthcoming

Yours truly, “A Tale of One City: Topographies of Prague before 1848,” *Bohemia* 52, 1 (2012)

February 10: Modern Prague, Czech Prague

Demetz, 314-343

Claire E. Nolte, "Celebrating Slavic Prague: Festivals and the Urban Environment, 1891-1912," *Bohemia* 52, 1 (2012): 37–54

Cathleen Guistino, "House Numbered 207-V: Ghetto Clearance and Municipal Activism in Prague around 1900," *Austrian History Yearbook* (2003)

Paces, *Prague Panoramas*, xi-139

February 17: Magic Prague, again?

Meyrink, *The Golem*

Jindřich Toman "Making Sense of a Ruin: Nineteenth-Century Gentile Images of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague," *Bohemia* 52, 1 (2012): 108–122

February 24: Prague Moderns

Demetz, 343-361

Selections from Thomas Ort, *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Capek and His Generation, 1911-1938*

Selections from Rostislav Švácha, *The Architecture of New Prague 1895-1945*

March 3: Prague under Nazi Occupation

Selections from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*

Discussion of film "Distant Journey"

***** Short paper due *****

March 10 – Spring break

March 17: Communist Prague, part I

Selections from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*

Igor Lukeš, "The Rudolf Slansky Affair: New Evidence," *Slavic Review*, 58, 1 (Spring 1999):160-187

In-class showing of "A Trial in Prague"

March 24: Communist Prague, part I

Selections from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*

Selections from Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*

In-class showing of “Panel Story”

March 31: Individual meetings with professor – work on your presentations and final paper

April 7: Post-Communist Prague: What the Guidebooks Say, and Don’t Say

Selection from Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity*

Selection from John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*

Selections from *The Rough Guide to Prague*

April 14: Student presentations

April 21: Student presentations

April 28: Final papers due