

**Charles University, Faculty of Arts
East and Central European Studies**

Summer 2016

Modern Czech Politics across Various Political Regimes: Never-ending Transformation

CUFA POL 316

Instructor: Jiří Koubek
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Office hours: by appointment
Classes: Mon, Tue 9.00 – 11.45, J1, Wed 9.00 – 11.45, J2 (Jindřišská 27, Prague 1)

Course Description

The transformation of Czechoslovakia (and later of the Czech Republic) from a communist satellite state into a European Union member state is an exciting story, but it is also an intellectual challenge. It encompassed a profound change of political, social, cultural and economic structures while at the same time meant a radical change in people's lives. Without understanding some deeper historical conditions of this transformation this intellectual challenge cannot probably be met. The course will start with a short introduction to Czech pre-communist politics and regimes. Then a survey of communist rule follows, concentrating on the role of the party, propaganda and political life, looking also at the daily life under communism. Next two radical political changes will be discussed: The Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the "Velvet Divorce" of 1992-1993; these will be taken as models of change with much larger implications for the whole Central and Eastern Europe. The focus will be on the discussion of key political institutions and parties in comparative perspective.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

The aim of the course is to facilitate the understanding of this transformation in broader Central European context. Sharing the same geopolitical position within the East Bloc, the individual cases - i.e. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and others - differed significantly, however, in their respective points of departure, as well as in political institutional solutions chosen in course of their transitions. This comparative aspect will be studied with special focus. The students will be also encouraged to challenge the mainstream understanding of "transition" as a predictable, gradual and irreversible progress towards the standard "Western" model. The course is designed as a seminar based on a guided discussion about carefully selected texts collected in a reader; there will be no formal lectures, active participation of the students is essential.

Requirements

The main task of the students is to actively contribute to the discussion during the entire length of the course. Students are required to be familiar with the core reading of the respective session. It is crucial for the students to approach the texts in a critical way. These are some of the questions student should be asking when approaching the texts: 1) What is the problem or question that the author is dealing with? 2) Why is the problem or question significant either theoretically, or politically, or both? 3) What is the answer that the author proposes to the question, and how does that answer differ from answers that others have proposed 4) What kinds of evidence does the author present in support of the argument?

Knowledge of these texts will be tested in **two in-class tests** consisting of two parts: a) **multiple-choice questions** testing knowledge of the most important historical facts that had profound impact on the development of the Czech society, b) **free-response questions** testing the ability to analyze and contextualize the main issues of the Czech past.

Each student will write a **research paper of 2000 words**. All the students can choose a topic from the list below or something else that falls within the range of the subject matter of the course (please check with me about the topic). Each student will prepare a **10-minute presentation of the future paper**, which will be a work in progress report outlining the main points of the paper, the sources used (at least 3 academic sources), unresolved issues and questions. The paper is due on the first Monday after the end of the course (to be sent electronically).

Active class participation will be assessed. As a part of this, each student will prepare a short **presentation** (max. 20 minutes) **of one of the texts** included in the reader.

Examples of possible paper topics

1. Was the Velvet Revolution a revolution? Compare it with other radical changes of the recent past.
2. Why was communism followed by a revival of nationalism?
3. Why is the past still present in Central Europe?
4. What are the specific gender issues in Central Europe in comparison with the situation in the USA?
5. What are the fundamental differences between the Czech and the American constitution?
6. What are the reasons for Euro-skepticism of the Czech Right?
7. What is left of the Left? (Is the social democratic program still relevant in the global world?)
8. "The state is discriminating against the Roma minority." Right or wrong?

Students may also choose their own topics but in such a case consult their choice with the teacher in advance.

Assessment

Class attendance and active participation (30%), Paper (30%), Exams (each 20%).

Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is mandatory for all students. Absence of 180 minutes is allowed. Three or more absences (90 minutes each) lower the grade automatically (A to A-, A to B+ in case of 4 absences etc.). Students must attend at least 70 % of the course. If a student attends less than 70 % of the class meetings, he or she will receive the final grade 'F' on their transcript.

Presentation Policy: Missing the presentation will result in an F (when applicable). If the student wants to switch the date, he/she must find someone to do it and both students must confirm the change in e-mails to the professor at least 10 days in advance. If the student is sick and has a medical note, then the professor must agree with the student on how the work will be made up for.

Final Test or Paper Policy: Completing the final test or paper is required. Failure to submit the final test or paper according to the deadline will result in a letter grade F for the entire course.

For further details, please see the Attendance Policy at the ECES website under "Academic Policies and Procedures": <http://eces.ff.cuni.cz/>.

Student Responsibility and Code of Conduct

Standards of study and conduct in the ECES Program are set and maintained. You are subject to the general standards and requirements of Charles University in regard to attendance, examinations, and conduct, as well as to specific requirements of the program. The student is expected to assume the initiative in completing all requirements at the time specified.

It is the responsibility of the student to be informed concerning all regulations and procedures required. In no case will a regulation be waived or an exception granted because a student pleads ignorance of the regulation or asserts that he/she was not informed by an advisor or other authority.

Charles University expects all students to adhere to the highest standards of ethics and academic integrity. Students certify that all work (whether an examination, research paper, research project, form of creative expression, or any other academic undertaking) submitted for evaluation, presentation, or publication meets these standards.

All forms of academic fraud are strictly prohibited. An automatic grade of F will result for the entire course if a student is found guilty of academic misconduct. These include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism
- Cheating
- Falsification
- Violation of professional ethics
- Misrepresentation or research data

Required readings

Holy, Ladislav. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. National identity and the post-communist transformation of society*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. (Chpt.1 – part I)

Linz, Juan, Stepan, Alfred. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996 (chapters 21, 16, 17)

Agnew, Hugh. *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*. Hoover Institution Press, 2004 (Chapter 15).

Žák, Václav. “The Velvet Divorce – Institutional Foundations,” in Jiří Musil (ed.) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995;

Rupnik, Jacques. “The International Context,” in Jiří Musil (ed.) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995.

Appel, Hilary. “Anti-Communist Justice and Founding the Post-Communist Order: Lustration and Restitution in Central Europe,” *East European Politics and Society* 19, n. 3 (2005), 379-405.

Havelková, Hana. “Women in and after a ‘classless’ society,” in: *Women and Social Class – International Feminist Perspectives*, eds. C. Zmroczek and P. Mahony, London: Taylor and Francis/UCL, pp. 69-82

Mudde, Cas. “Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe,” *East European Politics and Society* 19, n.2 (2005), 161-184.

Constitution of the Czech Republic

Suda, Zdeněk. “Is The Right-Left Polarity Nation-Specific? Glimpses into The Czech Case,” in Jiří Musil and Zdeněk Suda (eds) *The European Left after 1989 – West and East*. Prague: Central European University, 2000.

Hanley, Seán. “From Neo-Liberalism to National Interests: Ideology, Strategy, and Party Development in the Euroscepticism of the Czech Right,” *East European Politics and Society* 18, n. 3 (2004), 513-548;

The Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism. Document from the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) conference on party principles and ideology. April 2001.

The Lecturer

Jiří Koubek (born in 1979) received his Mgr. at the Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Institute of Political Science. He specializes in Central European comparative politics, party systems, transitions, and consociational democracy. Currently he is teaching Central European political systems and consociational democracy at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the Charles University in Prague.

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Outline of the Course

1 – INTRODUCTION CLASS

Mutual introduction of the teacher and students • Course requirements, rules, readings, etc.

2 – FROM THE EMPIRE TO THE REPUBLIC: BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN CZECH POLITICS

Political system of Austria-Hungary: liberal autocracy and ethnic fragmentation • Czech politics between liberalism and nationalism

3 – FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC: THE ISLAND OF DEMOCRACY

First Czechoslovak Republic • New democracy plus some old inherited features (multiculturalism, multiple fragmentation, statehood and identity problems, etc.) • Munich Agreement and Nazi occupation

Reading:

Holy, Ladislav. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. National identity and the post-communist transformation of society*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. (Chpt.1 – part I)

4 - COMMUNISM AND REGIME CHANGE 1989 IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Differences between CEE non-democratic regimes • Post-totalitarian regime • Various types of regime change

Reading:

Linz, Juan, Stepan, Alfred. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996 (chapters 21, 16, 17)

Agnew, Hugh. *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*. Hoover Institution Press, 2004 (Chapter 15).

5 - VELVET DIVORCE AND DEALING WITH THE PAST

Institutional weaknesses of Czechoslovak federalism • Cultural and perceptual causes of the split of Czechoslovakia • Different approaches to dealing with past

Reading:

Žák, Václav. “The Velvet Divorce – Institutional Foundations,” in Jiří Musil (ed.) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995;

Rupnik, Jacques. “The International Context,” in Jiří Musil (ed.) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995.

Appel, Hilary. “Anti-Communist Justice and Founding the Post-Communist Order: Lustration and Restitution in Central Europe,” *East European Politics and Society* 19, n. 3 (2005), 379-405.

6 – MIDTERM TEST

After the test: watching a BBC documentary The Lost World of Communism

7 - GENDER ISSUES IN CZECH SOCIETY

Ambiguities (paradoxes) of women's position in Czechoslovak socialist society • Gender consequences of 1989 regime change

Reading:

Havelková, Hana. "Women in and after a 'classless' society," in: *Women and Social Class – International Feminist Perspectives*, eds. C. Zmroczek and P. Mahony, London: Taylor and Francis/UCL, pp. 69-82

8 - ROMA MINORITY AND DISCRIMINATION

Complexity of the Roma issue in the Czech Republic • Patterns of rightist extremism in the West and East

Reading:

Mudde, Cas. "Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Society* 19, n.2 (2005), 161-184.

9 - CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Comparison of parliamentarism and presidentialism • Federal and unitary government • Patterns of bicameralism • Electoral systems used in the Czech Republic • Power relation between the two chambers of Czech Parliament

Reading:

Text of the *Constitution of the Czech Republic*

Visit to one of the Parliament chambers with a lecture.

10 - STUDENT PAPER PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

11 - POLITICAL PARTIES: LEFT AND RIGHT

Variety of meanings of Right and Left across the CEE region • Contemporary Czech party system and its stability •

Reading:

Suda, Zdeněk. "Is The Right-Left Polarity Nation-Specific? Glimpses into The Czech Case," in Jiří Musil and Zdeněk Suda (eds) *The European Left after 1989 – West and East*. Prague: Central European University, 2000.

Hanley, Seán. "From Neo-Liberalism to National Interests: Ideology, Strategy, and Party Development in the Euroscepticism of the Czech Right," *East European Politics and Society* 18, n. 3 (2004), 513-548;

The Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism. Document from the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) conference on party principles and ideology. April 2001.

12 - FINAL EXAM; STUDENT PAPERS – DISCUSSION, COMMENTS