

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

Summer 2016

**Picturing the Nation: National Filmmaking and Visual Culture  
in 20th Century Central Europe**

CUFA F 370

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**Office:** Katedra filmových studií, Filozofická Fakulta 406

**Office hours:** Friday 2.00-3.00 and by appointment

**Classes:** Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu 6.15 – 9.00, H203 (Hybernská 3, Prague 1)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The growth and development of cinema as an art form during the 20th century led to the creation of the concept of “national cinemas”, where films produced in a given country represent an essential part of a nation’s culture.

This course will focus on three of the main “national” cinemas which have been influential in Central Europe: Czechoslovak, Czech, and Slovak. There will also be a final series of lectures devoted to how these national cinemas changed in the course of dramatic upheavals of national boundaries in the late 20th century such as the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. In the course of the semester, we will examine approaches to the concept of national cinemas, how to read national cinemas in terms of nationalism and ethnic identity, and how to navigate the problems with this approach. In addition to watching films, we will also be discussing sociological and cinema theory and approaches to “reading” films, not only as movies, but also as multi-faceted cultural artifacts with an emphasis on the social and theoretical implications. To this end, our readings will contain primary source materials on cinema history, historical research, film theory, and literature intended to broaden our understanding of national cinematic cultures.

While this syllabus gives a fairly accurate portrayal of the material we will cover, additional material may be assigned (and assigned material may be dropped or altered) at any time as the semester progresses, in order to better suit the needs and interests of the class.

**COURSE GOALS:**

Throughout the semester, this course will teach students to engage with nationality and national cinemas; in addition, students will learn how to discuss and analyze films, while also applying film and cultural theory to a variety of visual media. Students will also gain a deeper appreciation of Central European cultural history in its various permutations through the dissection and analysis of Czech, Slovak, and Czechoslovak films. Students will also learn how to compose complex analyses of films and structure these analyses in a logical, concise manner, using primary and secondary sources to advance their argument in a proper academic fashion.

**CLASS STRUCTURE:**

The seminar will be almost entirely discussion-based, with excerpts from the week's featured film. What this means in practice is that each week, I will deliver a brief introductory lecture on the week's keywords (basic concepts, historical background information, and other assorted theory) and theme. We will then see excerpts from the week's assigned films. Following this, the rest of the class time will be spent in active discussion of the week's assigned readings, previously watched films, the week's current clips and so on. Film excerpts will be screened in their original languages with English subtitles, and are available in digital copy for students to finish watching on their own after class.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Attendance and active class participation is a must, as are all screenings. As outlined in ECES's attendance policy.

**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

## **PAPERS:**

One of the key skills taught in a college education is the ability to communicate clearly and *concisely*, while thinking critically about the material at hand.

Students are expected to complete two short midterm essays (3-5 pages each), and a longer final paper (7-8 Pages) on the topic of their choosing. Paper topics must be discussed with me at least one week prior to their due date to ensure that we are all on the same page. Papers that do not meet the length requirements or exceed them by 3 or more pages will be penalized. Students are always welcome to meet and discuss paper topics with me at any time, or via email.

***Academic dishonesty:*** cheating and plagiarism will be treated in the appropriately severe manner. When writing papers, always use your own words and concepts; if quoting or appropriating from any outside sources (be they the Internet, books, articles, etc.) and/or scholars, always indicate that you are quoting and provide sources (Chicago Manual of style footnotes, preferably). If you are unsure how to properly site a particular source, please ask me for advice. I'm always delighted to help.

## **TEXTS:**

The required reading for the course will be available online through Jstor and through scans of the relevant texts. Jstor is accessible through Charles University's wifi network via the login screen at <http://www.jstor.org>. To enhance our discussion of the texts in question, students are encouraged to bring their laptops or own photocopies of the texts to class

## **SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

### **Lesson 1 Czechoslovak Cinema in the First Republic**

Keywords: Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakism, National Identity

**Screenings:** Martin Frič— *Hej-Rup!*

**Required Readings:**

Andrew Higson, *Film and Nationalism* “The Concept of National Cinemas” Pp. 52-67

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, “Introduction” p.1-7,

Milan Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe”

### **Lesson 2 Slovak Bandits and Ethnic Identity**

Keywords: Nationalism, Movie Making, Ethnic Identity

**Screening:** Martin Frič — *Jánošík*

**Required Readings:**

Eric Hobsbawm—*Bandits*, p.127-134

Martin Votruba, “Hang Him High: The Elevation of Jánošík to an Ethnic Icon”

### **Lesson 3 The Czech Perspective**

Keywords: Czech Identity, Collaboration, Austrohungarian Empire

**Screenings:** Karel Steklý—*The Good Soldier Švejk*

**Required Reading:**

Erica Weitzman, “Imperium Stupendium: Švejk, Satire, Sabotage”

### **Lesson 4 Socialist Czechoslovakia - pt. 1 Czech Traumas and Collaboration**

Keywords: Allegory, Cinematic Style, Collaboration, Fascism

**Screening:** Jiří Menzel — *Closely Watched Trains, I Served the King of England*

**Required Reading:**

Michael Walsh, “National Cinema, National Imaginary”

## **Midterm 1 Due on Sunday**

### **Lesson 5 Socialist Czechoslovakia pt. 2— Urban Life**

Keywords: Slovakia, 1968, Trauma, Nationalism

**Screening:** Miloš Forman — *Loves of a Blonde*

**Required Reading:**

Peter Hames “The Forman School: Milos Forman” pp.106-127

David Bordwell, *Film History : An Introduction*. Pp.426-427

### **Lesson 6 Who are the Real Czechoslovaks? Pt.1 Slovakia and its Exotic Status**

Keywords: Documentary Films, Folklore, Exoticism, Slovakia

**Screenings:** Karel Plicka— *The Earth Sings*, Josef Mach - *Native Home*

**Required Readings:**

Karel Plicka - "Songs of the Slovak Mountains"  
Jaroslav Boček "Twenty Years of Czechoslovak Film"

### **Lesson 7 Who are the Real Czechoslovaks? Pt. 2 Slovakia and its Frustrations**

Keywords: Slovakia, National Identity, Nationalism,

**Screening:** Dušan Hanák, *Pictures of the Old World*,

**Required Readings:**

Alexander Dubček, "Action Program"

Peter Hames "On *Pictures of the Old World*"

### **Lesson 8 Who are the Real Czechoslovaks? pt. 3 The National Joke**

Keywords: Satire, National Hero, Czech Nationalism,

**Screening:** Ladislav Smolijak, *Jára Cimrman Lying, Sleeping*

**Required Readings:**

Craig Smith, *New York Times*: "Feeling Short of Heroes, Thus Fond of a Fake One"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/17/world/europe/17pil-sen.html?ex=1337054400&en=8764b8f9ea46d5b2&ei=5088&r=0>

Ladislav Holý *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*. (excerpts)

### **Midterm 2 Due on Sunday**

### **Lesson 9 Who are the Real Czechoslovaks? pt. 4 Socialist Traumas**

Keywords: Show Trials, Folklore,

**Screening:** Jaromil Jireš—*The Joke*, Jan Neměc—*A Report on the Party and the Guests*

**Required Reading:**

Milan Kundera, "The Czech Deal"

### **Lesson 10 The Velvet Revolution**

Keywords: Cultural Divide, Velvet Revolution, Change

**Screening:** Tomáš Vorel—*Smoke*

**Required Readings:**

Petra Hanáková, "Imagining National Identity in Czech Postcommunist Cinema",

Václav Havel "In a Time of Transition"

### **Lesson 11: Fighting for Survival in Post-Socialist Slovakia**

Keywords: Ethnic Minorities, Slovakia, Roma

**Screenings:** Ivan Ostrochovský - *Goat*, Martin Šulík — *The Garden*

**Required Readings:**

David Scheffel—"Ethnic Micropolitics in Eastern Europe: A Case Study from Slovakia's Gypsy Archipelago" & "Slovak Roma on the Threshold of Europe"

### **Lesson 12 Remembering the Past, Czech Ostalgie**

Keywords: Ostalgie, 1968, National Trauma

**Screenings:** Jan Hřebejk—*Cozy Dens*

**Required Readings:**

Slavoj Žižek "Two Totalitarianisms"

### **Final Paper Due**