

# **Politics, Visuality, and Experimentation : Czech and Slovak Cinema from the 1950's to Present**

Spring Semester 2013

Instructor: Nick Hudáč

Time: TBA

Room: TBA

Office: Katedra Filmové Vědy, Filozofická Fakulta 406

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Bounded by the Germanic Empires to the West, the Russian Empire and Soviet Union to the East, Hungary and the former Ottoman holdings to the South, the Czech and Slovak lands have long been a site of conflict and creation. This course will explore the incredibly rich cinematic tradition of thought provoking and entertaining films produced in the areas of the Czech Republic (the primary area of focus), and Slovakia from the years following World War II up until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition to watching films, we will also be discussing cinema theory and approaches to “reading” films, not only as movies, but also as multi-faceted cultural artifacts. 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 Czech and Slovak culture, cinematic and otherwise.

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 REQUIREMENTS:**

Attendance and active class participation is a must, as are all screenings. If emergencies arise (and they do have a habit of doing so) students should contact me directly by email or in person, and we will deal with the situation accordingly on a case-by-case basis. This means that students should alert me to situations that effect their attendance and participation at the earliest possible convenience, not weeks later when grades are due. Final grades are based on attendance and class participation (40% of the total), two midterm papers (20% or 10% each), one class presentation on a selected film or reading (10%) and one final paper on a topic of the student's choosing (30%). For late assignments 5 points will be taken off per day.

Attendance is required and all unexcused absences will count against your final grade. Again, if an emergency prevents you from making it to class, please let me know as soon as possible.

Each week, we will have an introductory lecture delivered by me on keywords and a theme, along with presentations. The rest of the class time will be spent in active discussion of the screenings and readings. Occasionally, I will also show clips from other, non-screened films in class as well.

### **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 appropriate 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 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:**

All required reading materials for this course, either required or optional, will be available in electronic form. To enhance our discussion of the texts in question, students are encouraged to bring their laptops or own photocopies of the texts to class. Readings that are marked "Required" will be the main focus of the week's lecture and discussion; students who are interested in the subject are encouraged to read the "Supplemental" selections in order to get a deeper understanding of the critical theory or historical context of the week.

### **COURSE TUMBLR:**

From time to time, links to items of interest will be posted on the class tumblr. Students are encouraged to re-blog and comment on the items, however this is not required.

## SCHEDULE (subject to change)

### **Week 1 Let's Start at the Beginning: Or, What IS Central Europe?**

Keywords: Central Europe,

**Screening:** Jiří Menzel, *Closely Watched Trains*. (CZ)

**Required Readings:**

Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe"

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

**Supplemental Readings:**

Tony Judt, *Borderlands*, "The Coming of the Cold War" pp. 140-149

### **Week 2 What is 'National' Cinema, and How Do We Talk About It?**

Keywords: Nationalism, Movie Making

**Screening:** Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos – *The Little Shop on Main Street* (SK)

**Required Readings:**

James Monaco, *How to Talk About Film*, Chapter 2 "Art and Technology" (selected excerpts)

Lubica Mystríková, *The Cinema of Central Europe*, "Obchod na korze, A Shop on the High Street" pp. 97 – 105

**Supplemental Reading:**

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

### **Week 3 Politics and Form**

**Screening :** Věra Chytilová, *Daises* (CZ)

Keywords: Formalism, Subversion, Gender

**Readings:**

Peter Hames "Věra Chytilová" p.183-201

Zdena Skupinová, „Sedikrásky / Daisies" p. 129-136

David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, p.406, 428.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Egon Bondy, Selected Poems

Vaclav Havel, et al. "Charta 77"

### **Week 4 Experimentation and Mixed Media (Midterm 1 Due)**

Keywords: Mixed Media, Surrealism

**Screenings:** Jiří Trnka, *The Hand*, Jan Švankmejer, *A Week at the House*, *Punch and Judy*, Jiří Barta, *The Disk jockey* (CZ)

Aesthetic Dictionary: *Experimental film*

**Readings:**

Fernand Leger, "The Machine Aesthetic: Geometric Order and Truth"

Peter Hames- "Jan Švankmejer"

**Supplemental Reading:** Tony Judt *Borderlands*, "Into the Whirlwind" [excerpts], pp.187-193

Pyotr Bogatryev- "Czech Puppet Theatre and Russian Folk Theatre"

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/the\\_drama\\_review/v043/43.3bogatyrev.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/the_drama_review/v043/43.3bogatyrev.html)

## **Week 5 Politics and Films**

**Screening:** Jan Nemeč, *Report on the Party and the Guests* (CZ)

Keywords: Allegory, Dissidence, Show Trials

### **Readings:**

Antonín Liehm, *Closely Watched Films* “Jan Nemeč”,

Peter Hames – “Jan Nemeč” 167-183

Tony Judt, *Borderlands*, pp. 199-203, 436-449

### **Supplemental Readings:**

Franz Kafka, “The Trial” (excerpts)

## **Week 6 Visualistic Journeys, Experimental Views**

**Screening:** Karel Zeman, *A Deadly Invention*. (CZ)

Keywords: Visuality, Experimentation

### **Readings:**

Dudley Andrew, “Adaptation”

Sigfried Kracauer, “Basic Concepts” – p.147-158

### **Supplemental Readings:**

J.P. Telotte *A Distant Technology: Science Fiction and the Machine Age*, “Technology and Distance”. P.1-27

Josef Škvorecký, *All the Bright Young Men and Women*. P.14-30

## **Week 7 Surreal Slovakia: The Slovak Avant-Garde**

**Screening:** Juraj Jakubisko, *Birds, Orphans, and Fools* (SK)

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, The Slovak Problem

Peter Hames: “The Slovak Wave: Juraj Jakubisko, Elo Havetta, and Dušan Hanák” p.212-223

Martin Votruba, “Historical and National Background of Slovak Filmmaking”,

*KinoKultura*. <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/3/votruba.shtml>

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Petra Hanáková, “The Anti-Czech Agenda of Slovak Films 1939-1945” (excerpts)

Stanislaus Kirchbaum, *Slovakia : The Struggle for Survival*, “The Slovak Problem”

## **Week 8 The Genre Film (Midterm 2 Due)**

Keywords: Genre, Spectacle

**Screening:** Oldřich Lipský, *Limonádový Joe (or the Horse Opera)* (CZ)

### **Readings:**

Thomas Schatz, “Film Genre and the Genre Film”

David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*. “New Twists on Old Genres” p.314-316

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (excerpts)

## **Week 9 Folklore and Fantasy: Slovak Surrealism Revisited**

**Screening:** Elo Havetta, *Party in the Botanical Garden* (SK)

Keywords: Visual Culture, Folklore, Magical Realism

### **Readings:**

Jana Dudková, "Celebration in the Botanical Garden" *KinoKultura*.

<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/3/dudkova.shtml>

Václav Macek, "From Czechoslovak to Czech and Slovak Film", *KinoKultura*.

<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/3/macek.shtml>

Antonín Liehm : "Elo Havetta"

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962"

## **Week 10 Black Comedy**

**Screening :** Miloš Forman, *The Firemen's Ball* (CZ)

Keywords: Black Humor, Farce, Slapstick

### **Required Readings:**

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

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

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Milena Jelinek, "An Interview with Miloš Forman" *Cross Currents*.

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/crossc/anw0935.1985.001/319:ANW0935.1985.001:25?page=root;rgn=subject;size=100;view=image;q1=Forman%2C+Milos>

## **Week 11 Ethnicity, Diversity, and the Other: Minority Issues**

**Screening:** Dušan Hanák, *Rosy Dreams* (SK)

Keywords: The Other, Roma, Normalization

### **Readings:**

Jana Dudková, "The Problematic Other and the (Im)possibility of Cross-Cultural Dialogue in Slovak Cinema after 1993"

Eduard Said, *Orientalism*. "The Scope of Orientalism" pp.32-49

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Jan Bernard, "About Gypsies, With Gypsies, Without Gypsies" (excerpts)

## **Week 12 : Life After Communism?**

**Screening:** Jan Hřebejk, *Cosy Dens* (CZ)

Keywords: Nostalgia, Post-Communism

### **Required Readings:**

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

Václav Havel "In a Time of Transition"

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Slavoj Žižek, "Two Totalitarianisms", *London Review of Books*.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n06/slavoj-zizek/the-two-totalitarianisms>

## **Final Paper Due**