

Fall 2011
11

T/Th 9:30-

CZ 330 Irony and Dissent: Kafka to Havel

Instructor: Veronika Tuckerova

Course Description:

Czech literary characters are often outsiders or dissidents. Hašek's Švejk, Hrabal's Hant'a, Kafka's K. or Havel's Vaněk display an irresistible resilience, irony, and sense of humor, often while dramatic political and social upheavals surround them. Do they consciously try to be subversive, or are they forced into their roles? Are they heroes or fools? What is the role of language in their responses to their particular predicaments? This course follows 20th century Czech literature and culture in their broader Central European (and exilic) contexts. It explores questions of identity and language. We will examine the interplay between politics and aesthetics: how did literature and arts not only react to political, social and cultural conditions, but how did they help to shape them? We will consider humor and irony, dissidence and censorship. We will thus both discuss literature in its broader context, but also do close readings of the assigned texts. The reading list includes authors such as: Franz Kafka, Adolf Loos, Jaroslav Hašek, Karel Poláček, Bohumil Hrabal, Kundera, Josef Škvorecký, Václav Havel, and Ivan Blatný.

By the end of this class, students will have a good knowledge of modern Czech literature, and will have developed their skills of literary interpretation and critical writing.

Requirements:

Class participation 15 %; Midterm 25%; Essay 25%; Final Exam 35%

Required Texts:

The Czech Reader (ed. Bažant), Hrabal, *Too Loud a Solitude*, Hašek, *Good Soldier Švejk*; Kundera, *The Joke*, Havel, *Largo Desolato*, Blatný, *The Drug of Art*, Škvorecký, *The Engineer of Human Souls*.

Week 1, August 25th

Introduction

Week 2, August 30th, September 1st

Humor and Irony. Kafka, "A Report to an Academy" (1912)

Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed*

Week 3, September 6th, September 8th

Humor and Language. Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk*

Week 4, September 13th and 15th

Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk*

Week 5, September 20th and 22nd

Kafka, "The Judgment" (1912)

Week 6, September 27th and 29th

Kafka, *The Trial*.

Week 7, October 4th and 6th

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Literature and Politics. Kundera, *The Joke*

Week 8, October 11th and 13th

Kundera, *The Joke*

Week 9, October 18th and 20th

Censorship. Hrabal, *Too Loud a Solitude*

Week 10, October 25th and 27th

Dissent. Havel, *Largo Desolato*

Havel, “The Power of the Powerless”

Week 11, November 1st and 3rd

The Merry Ghetto. Jirous, “Report on the Third Musical Revival”

Week 12, November 8th and 10th

Exile and Languages I. Škvorecký, *The Engineer of Human Souls*

Week 13, November 15th and 17th

Škvorecký, *The Engineer of Human Souls*

Week 14, November 22

Exile and Languages II. Ivan Blatný, *The Drug of Art*

Week 15, November 29th, December 1st

Review