

# Undergraduate Program in Central European Studies

CERGE-EI and the School of Humanities at Charles University

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Address: Politických vězňů 7, 110 00 Praha 1  
Tel. : +420 224 005 201, +420 224 005 133, Fax : +420 224 005 225  
E-mail: [upces@cerge-ei.cz](mailto:upces@cerge-ei.cz)  
Web: <http://www.cerge-ei.cz/abroad>



## Course title: **Kafka in Prague** Instructor: **Richard Stock, Ph.D.**

### *Course description:*

Franz Kafka (1883–1924) has become recognized as one of the leading figures in world literature. Perhaps more than any other major author, Kafka is associated with one geographical location: the city of Prague.

Kafka's works themselves are not explicitly about Prague, nor are they set in Prague. But we cannot say that Prague is irrelevant to Kafka's works, for Kafka spent almost all of his life in the city. Therefore, we cannot "read" Prague through or into Kafka's works, but comparing the two is surely fruitful. The most obvious connection between Kafka's works and the city of Prague is Franz Kafka the historical person. While one always wants to be cautious about biographizing creative work, this course will take into consideration Kafka's life and times in reading and analyzing his fiction. Such an adventure is best undertaken in the city of Prague itself.

The course will focus on several of Kafka's many short stories and, depending on student interest, also his most important novel, *The Trial*. Critical material to provide context and insight on Prague, Kafka's works, and Kafka himself will also be studied. Kafka's works will be studied in the best English translations available; they were originally written in German.

Two main course papers are planned. The first will be the major paper of 2000 to 4000 words, due about three-quarters into the semester (after midterm exam week and before final exam week). The second will be shorter, 1500 to 2000 words, and will be a bit more informal. Specific assignments for each paper will be given in class. Weekly reading and/or writing assignments will also be given.

### *Grading Policy:*

The following will be considered in assigning the final course grade:

- Attendance
- Preparation for class (doing the reading and/or assignments)
- Participation/attentiveness/effort
- Paper 1
- Paper 2
- Academic honesty

Attendance at each meeting, except for extraordinary health reasons, is expected, as is class participation and attentiveness. Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will cause immediate failure of the course and referral to the UPCES Director.

***Textbook:***

Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*

This is available in the library. The best version is the one with a foreword by John Updike, but the other version that is in the library is OK.

Optional: Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

Many translations of *The Trial* exist. The best is by Breon Mitchell, published by Schocken Books.

The schedule appears on the next page.

*Schedule: subject to change*

**Week 1**

Introduction to the course

“Before the Law”

*Assignment for week 4: Read first 30 pages of “The Metamorphosis”*

**Week 2**

David Foster Wallace, “Laughing with Kafka”

Franz Kafka, “The Judgment”

*Assignment: Read first 15 pages of “In the Penal Colony”*

**Week 3**

Hand out assignment for Paper 1

“In the Penal Colony”

**Week 4**

“The Metamorphosis”

**Week 5** Midterm exam week

Watch Orson Welles, *The Trial*

**Week 6**

“A Report to an Academy”

How to write a paper

**Week 7**

“A Country Doctor”

*Assignment due: Short description of Paper 1*

**Week 8**

Short description of Paper 1 due

*Assignment: Paper 1*

**Week 9**

“A Hunger Artist”

Paper 1 due

*Assignment: Read first 20 pages of “The Burrow”*

**Week 10**

“The Burrow”

Hand out assignment for Paper 2

*Assignment: Short description of Paper 2*

**Week 11**

Course evaluations

“Josephine the Singer”

Conclusion to the course

Short description of Paper 2 due

*Assignment: Paper 2*

**Week 12: Final exam week**  
Paper 2 due