

Undergraduate Program in Central European Studies

CERGE-EI and the School of Humanities at Charles University



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Central European Philosophy

Mondays 10:00 – 13:00 / Spring Semester 2006

at CERGE-EI – Room # 9

Instructor: Juraj Hvorecky

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OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course introduces ways of philosophizing in Central Europe in the second half of the 20th century. The emphases are put on non-Marxist thinking and liberal Marxist ideas, opposing dogmatic state-endorsed philosophy of soviet-style Marxism-Leninism. The effort will be made to underlie similarities and distinctions in ways in which harshness of political regimes, ever-present ideological dominance, courage and personal stance of individual thinkers shaped the way they adopted and developed Western style of philosophizing. We will discuss the role philosophical ideas had on politics of the involved countries and their struggle for freedom. While this course is not supposed to be crucially focused on a role of philosophy in public life, many questions about the mutual relationship of these two domains will be debated. This debate will take place in a general framework of possibilities of small nation-states to produce philosophical ideas that could bear their fruit worldwide.

The course will concentrate on selected philosophical writings from five different countries of the region, namely Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania. After introducing some basic notions of Marxist philosophy and its dogmatic interpretation, we will have a closer look at ways philosophers in the region tried to escape limitations set on them by the communist nomenclature. Twofold ways of avoiding the official line will be explored for each country. First, liberal reading or outright rejection of Marxism, often leading to a total exclusion from the public space, will be investigated. Second, a technical work in specific subfields of philosophy that seemingly evade the big political questions will also be followed and evaluated. While some previous familiarity with philosophical vocabulary and method is desirable, the course is also open to students with no previous experience with philosophy. The course is intended to serve a double role of introduction to philosophy of the region *and* to very ways of philosophizing.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING POLICY:

Assignments for this course consist of a midterm (25% of the grade) and a final exam (25%), research paper (30%) and your active class participation (20%). As for the exams, both will be in-class essays, covering topic discussed during the term. Research paper should present your original approach to a topic of your choice, but your choice requires a prior approval of the instructor. You

have time till the mid-term to choose the topic and the instructor will be glad to discuss all the details and even help you to search out for the relevant literature. The paper is due to the last day of the term, i.e. Dec. 10th.

You are expected to attend all classes. If you are about to miss one, prior e-mail notification is expected, but generally no more than one absence is tolerated. Because philosophy can't be learnt passively, but only by reevaluation and a critical discussion of your own opinions, active participation is highly desirable and students might be incited to express themselves.

The final paper should be approximately eight to ten pages long, double-spaced. It is crucial that you submit your final paper on time; a penalty for late submission will be assessed at 10% of the paper grade per day past due. Needless to say, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

REQUIRED READING:

COURSE PACKET

Available on-line via the CERGE-EI web site at http://www.cerge-ei.cz/upces_data/ [Log-in is **upces** and password is **spring2002**]; hard copies are available in the CERGE-EI and Jinonice libraries].

Schedule of Topics:

Sep. 24th

Opening class

Course objectives, readings and a general outline

Oct. 1st

Marxism and its dogmatic forms

What is Marxism, why is it so influential, how it penetrated Central Europe and how it should be read

Readings: Marx: Capital, excerpts

Lenin: What ought to be done

Oct. 8th

Liberal approaches to Marxism: Hungary

The rise of the left in the Central Europe, Georg Lukacz and his update of Marx, revisionism

Readings: Lukacs: Art as Self-consciousness

Lukacs: Healthy or Sick Art?

Oct. 15th

Hungary continued

The revolution of 1956 and its ideological consequences

Divergences in philosophical thinking

Readings: Nyiri: Tradition and Bureaucratic Lore

Hajdu: Comments on Nyiri

- Oct. 22nd** **Outright opposition: The case of Czechoslovakia**
Intellectual developments under the Communist regime
Softening in the 60s and the legacy of Patočka
Readings: Tucker: Shipwrecked: Patočka's Philosophy of Czech History
Patočka: Does history has a meaning?
- Oct. 29th** **Czechoslovakia under the Soviet occupation**
The emergence of parallel philosophizing, intellectual possibilities
in the confinement and open space
Readings: Landgrebe: Jan Patočka
Pavlik: Philosophy, "Parallel Polis" and Revolution
- Nov. 5th** **Mid-term exam**
- Nov. 12th** **Slovakia: nation-building again**
Orthodoxy and liberalism in approaches to national history
Readings: Šimečka: Letters from prison, part 1
- Nov. 19th** **Slovakia continued**
Realism and its enemies
Readings: Šimečka: Letters from prison, part II
- Nov. 26th** **Polish philosophy at its best**
The rise of Lvov-Warsaw school, the relation between philosophy and logic
Readings: Lukasiewicz: On Determinism
- Dec. 3rd** **Polish Philosophy continued**
Aesthetics, Philosophy of Science and Law
Readings: Ossowska: On Moral and Legal Norms
Tatarkiewicz: Nomological and Typological Sciences
- Dec. 10th** **Final exam due and good bye**

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Ulc, O: Some Aspects of Czechoslovak Society since 1968, *Social Forces*, 57, 2, 419-435

Smith, B. (ed.): *Philosophy and Political Change in Eastern Europe*, The Hegeler Institute, La Salle, IL, 1993

Web page www.marxists.org,

Value and Inquiry web www.crvp.org

Polish Philosophy web <http://www.fmag.unict.it/~polphil/PolHome.html>