Central Europe: Shaping a Modern Culture

Dr. Tomáš Hříbek
Fall 2009
Thu 2:00-5:00pm

Course Description:

This course will discuss the emergence of major modernist movements and ideas in the three Central European cities: Prague, Vienna and Budapest. In the period between the late 19th century and the beginning of the WW2, these cities were the main centers of the then disintegrating Austrian-Hungarian Empire and, later, the capitals of three independent states—Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary, respectively. Despite the political turmoil, all the three cities became a watershed of the ideas that remain to be the sources of the Western culture even today, including the dominant trends in the current North American culture. Thus, we shall see how the dominant ideas in the fields as diverse as religion, philosophy, science, psychology, art and architecture that have shaped the 20th century culture in the West can all be traced back to the works of the Austrian, Czech or Hungarian intellectuals such as Franz Brentano, Sigmund Freud, Adolf Loos and Georg Lukács. We shall have the extraordinary opportunity to study the fermentation of these ideas “on site,” in the very places in which these ideas originated, as we shall trod the streets of Prague, Vienna and Budapest to experience the complex relationships between the ideas and the urban geography.

Course Objectives:

To provide the students with a good grasp of the ideas that originated in the Central European region in the era of modernism, and an understanding of their historical as well as contemporary relevance. This is not an art history course, but a course on the history of ideas.

Structure:

The course will consist of lectures, seminar discussions of readings, and city walks and trips.

Requirements:

Students are required to attend all classes as well as out-of-class activities. The course is primarily structured around class discussions of readings, so that everybody is expected to follow those in order to be able to actively participate in discussions. There are both required readings and optional readings, the former are usually primary sources, while the latter are mostly secondary sources. Whatever lecturing about history and context of the ideas from the primary sources there is, it will be anchored in the optional readings. Thus, if students don’t catch everything from lectures, they are strongly encouraged to go to the relevant optional readings as well as the required readings. Ahead of each class, study questions for the upcoming required reading will be sent out to students by email. Occasionally, questions that we shall have no time to tackle in class will be assigned as homework to be turned in in writing. The main work for the class will consist of a paper on a topic chosen from a list of suggested topics. The paper should not exceed 10 typed pages (excluding any documentation, such as photos,
drawings, etc.). The style of formatting is optional, but whatever style is chosen should be adhered to consistently. Finally, there will also be a multiple-choice in-class exam based on readings and lectures. Make-up exams will be allowed only in the case of medical or family emergencies. The same applies to late papers.

**Academic Honesty:**

Although the students are encouraged to exchange ideas in and outside class, everybody is required to submit their own work. That means that copying the work of other students or published materials is strictly prohibited.

**Selected Bibliography in English:**

**Primary sources:**


The dates in the square brackets indicate the first edition in the original language.

**Secondary sources:**


**Grading System:**

- Class participation/attendance: 13%
- Homeworks: 20%
- Final exam: 30%
- Final paper: 37%

**Course Schedule:**

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Oct 1</th>
<th>Introduction. Class trip around downtown Prague: modernization of an ancient city.</th>
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<td>In class: Modernization of Vienna, Prague and Budapest – architectural, cultural and social aspects.</td>
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<td><strong>HAVE READ:</strong></td>
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<td>Hanák, “Urbanization and Civilization: Vienna and Budapest in the Nineteenth Century”, from Hanák (1998, 3-43) (R1)</td>
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<td>Švácha, “Modern Style in the Streets of Prague”, from Švácha (1995, 18-97) (R1)</td>
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<td><strong>OPTIONAL READING:</strong></td>
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<td>Janik and Toulmin, “Habsburg Vienna: City of Paradoxes”, from Janik and Toulmin (1973, 33-66) (R2)</td>
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<td>Hanák, “The Garden and the Workshop: Reflections on Fin-de-Siecle Culture in Vienna and Budapest”, from Hanák (1998, 63-97) (R2)</td>
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<td>Sayer, “Mirrors of Identity”, from Sayer (2000, 82-153) (R2)</td>
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<td>Class trip to Café Louvre, the favorite hangout of the Prague Brentanists.</td>
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<td><strong>HAVE READ:</strong></td>
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<td>Brentano, “The Concept and Purpose of Psychology”, from Brentano (1973 [1874], 3-27) (R1)</td>
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<td>Brentano, “The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena”, from Brentano (1973 [1874], 77-100) (R1)</td>
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<td>Kafka, “The Metamorphosis” (1995 [1915], 76-126) (R1)</td>
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<td><strong>OPTIONAL READING:</strong></td>
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<td>Smith, “Austrian Philosophy and the Brentano School”, from Smith (1994, 7-34) (R2)</td>
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<td>Smith, “Kafka and Brentano: A Study in Descriptive Psychology”, from Smith (1981, 113-144) (R2)</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Oct 15</th>
<th>Ernst Mach on theory of science and T. G. Masaryk on modernity and suicide.</th>
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<td><strong>HAVE READ:</strong></td>
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<td>Mach, “Introductory Remarks: Antimetaphysical”, from Mach (1959 [1886], 1-37) (R1)</td>
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</tbody>
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Week 4
Oct 22  Sigmund Freud’s new science of the mind.

HAVE READ:  
Freud, “The Method of Interpreting Dreams”, from Freud (1999 [1900], 78-97) (R1)  
Freud, “The Dream is a Wish-Fulfilment”, from Freud (1999 [1900], 98-105) (R1)  
Freud, “Dream-Distortion”, from Freud (1999 [1900], 106-125) (R1)  

OPTIONAL READING:  
Schorske, “Politics and Patricide in Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams”, from Schorske (1981, 181-207) (R2)  
Hopkins, “The Interpretation of Dreams”, from Neu (1991, 86-135) (R2)  

Week 5
Oct 29  Otto Weininger on women and the Jews.

Freud on female sexuality.

HAVE READ:  
Weininger, “The Nature of Woman and Her Purpose in the Universe”, from Weininger (2005 [1903], ) (R1)  
Weininger, “Judaism”, from Weininger (2005 [1903], ) (R1)  
Freud, Three Essays on Sexual Theory (1905), from Freud (2006, 118-153) (R2)  

OPTIONAL READING:  
Luft, “Otto Weininger’s Vision of Gender and Modern Culture”, from Luft (2003, 45-88) (R2)  
Chodorow, “Freud on Women”, from Neu (1991, 224-248) (R2)  

Week 6
Nov 5  Adolf Loos on modern design and urban lifestyle.

HAVE READ:  
Loos, “Ornament and Crime” (1908) (R1)  

OPTIONAL READING:  
Colomina, “City”, from Colomina (1994, 17-73) (R2)  
Colomina, “Interior”, from Colomina (1994, 233-280) (R2)  

Week 7
Nov 12  Class trip to the Mueller House, the last and the best work of Loos.

Week 8
Nov 19  Finis Austriae and the aftermath of the WW1.

OPTIONAL READING:  
Sayer, “Modernisms and Modernities”, from Sayer (2000, 154-220) (R2)

From Ludwig Wittgenstein to the Vienna Circle on language, science and value.

HAVE READ:
“Wissenschaftliche Weltfauffassung: Der Wiener Kreis” (1929) (R1)

OPTIONAL READING:
Janik and Toulmin, “The Tractatus Reconsidered: An Ethical Deed”, from Janik and Toulmin (1973, 167-201) (R2)

Week 9
Nov 26
Georg Lukács on Marxism and totality, Karl Mannheim on ideology and utopia.

HAVE READ:
Lukács, “Class Consciousness”, from Lukács (1971 [1922], 46-86) (R1)
Mannheim, “The Utopian Mentality”, from Mannheim (1929) (R1)

OPTIONAL READING:
Lukács, “Introduction”, from Lukács (1974 1911) (R2)
Lukács, “Metaphysics of Tragedy”, from Lukács (1974 1911) (R2)
Congdon, “The Tragic Sense of Life: Lukács’s ‘The Soul and the Forms’”, from Nyíri (1981, 43-74) (R2)
Gluck, “The Sunday Circle”, from Gluck (1991) (R2)
Eagleton, “From Lukács to Gramsci” (2007, 93-123, esp. 93-106, 107-110) (R2)

Week 10
Dec 3
Karel Teige on Art and Architecture.

HAVE READ:
Teige, “Constructivism and the Liquidation of Art” (1926), from Teige (2000, 331-340) (R1)

OPTIONAL READING
Švácha, “Scientific and Emotional Functionalism” (1995, 240-301) (R2)

TOPICS FOR THE FINAL PAPER AND STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE FINAL EXAM MADE AVAILABLE IN CLASS.

Week 11
Dec 10
Sigmund Freud on religion and civilization.

HAVE READ:
Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, from Freud (2002 [1930], 3-82) (R1)

OPTIONAL READING:
Deigh, “Freud’s Later Theory of Civilization: Changes and Implications”, from Neu (1991) (R2)

Week 12
Dec 17
FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS, FINAL EXAM IN CLASS.