

Princeton University / Jagiellonian University
Global Seminar, Kraków 2008: “Eastern Europe through Film and Touch”
Instructors: Petre Petrov (Princeton University) and Elżbieta Ostrowska (University of Alberta)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The seminar will run for six weeks (June 16-July 25, 2008), meeting four days a week, Monday through Thursday. It will combine three types of in-class activities: lectures and seminars led by one of the two instructors; film discussions facilitated by students; and film screenings introduced by the instructors. In addition, the seminar will feature weekly guest-lectures by Polish scholars, public figures, and cinema personalities.

As part of the Kraków program, students will have the opportunity to acquire basic (“survival”) language skills in Polish. Language classes will meet in two 45-minute sessions each morning, Monday through Thursday, before the beginning of the seminar classes proper.

Fridays are reserved for field trips to sites of interest in and outside of Kraków. We will visit: **Kazimierz**, the old Jewish district of the city; the town and steel plant of **Nowa Huta**, a unique example of large-scale socialist industry, planning, and architecture; **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, the largest extermination camp built by the Nazi regime during World War II; **Zakopane**, a picturesque resort in the Tatra Mountains; and **Prague**, the beautiful and culturally rich capital of the Czech Republic.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will offer students a view into the political and social history of Central Eastern Europe since World War II through the medium of film. The underlying assumption is that shared histories—the break-up of the old European empires, the two World Wars, the establishment of socialist regimes in the region, and their almost simultaneous dissolution at the end of the 1980s—allow us to see the lands of Poland, Hungary, and former Czechoslovakia as forming a distinct cultural-historical enclave, without thereby ignoring significant differences across national boundaries. The thematic focus of the course will be double: we will follow the principal episodes that shaped the recent history of the region; at the same time, we will examine the salient movements and achievements of Polish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak cinemas in the second half of the twentieth century. We will treat film as an aesthetic phenomenon, but also as symbolic reflection of social and political realities, as an eloquent document of times and cultures. This approach is particularly justified in the case of East European cinema, whose specificity is in large part defined by persistent engagement with social and political issues.

TEXTS

1. Hames, Peter. Ed. *The Cinema of Central Europe (24 Frames)*. London: Wallflower Press, 2004. **(CCE)**
2. Berend, Ivan. *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*. London: Cambridge, 1999. **(Berend)**
3. Gale Stokes. Ed. *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945*. NY: Oxford UP, 1996. **(Stokes)**
4. Articles and other materials in Blackboard. **(BB)**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Students will be required to

- complete the readings assigned for each week;
- attend all classes and film screenings;
- participate actively and intelligently in seminar discussions;

- lead one seminar session, setting up and moderating the discussion of a particular film;
- submit weekly response papers (5 papers, approx 1000 words each);
- take one final exam, administered during the last week of classes.

Grades for the course will be determined as follows:

- Class participation: 20%
- Seminar facilitation: 10%
- 5 weekly response papers: 40%
- Final exam: 30%

CLASS PARTICIPATION: An optimal participation record in the course amounts to the following: you come to class always on time; always show clear evidence of having read the assigned texts and thought about the films we've watched; you regularly pose questions that evidence perceptiveness, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity; you contribute to each class discussion, and most of what you have to say enriches the understanding of the issue or text at hand; you speak not just to the instructor, but to your classmates as well, engaging them in a dialogue on the issues that interest you; you are an attentive listener of others, able to endorse their valuable contributions and respectfully argue views you find unconvincing; sensitivity to class organization, time constraints, and the need of others to also say something means that you do not monopolize the conversation nor indulge in long-winded, rambling soliloquies.

SEMINAR FACILITATION: Each of you will be asked to lead the discussion during one of the seminar sessions. The discussion will focus, in each case, on a film screened on the preceding day. The facilitator's goal would be to set up and chaperone a productive dialogue about the film, leading toward a deeper and more nuanced understanding of it. This can be done through a handout with questions to be addressed in class; through screening short clips of the film and offering them for discussion, or any other method you find effective. In each case, the main measure of success (and basis for evaluation) will be the facilitator's ability to engage others and sustain an ongoing intellectual exchange about the film.

RESPONSE PAPERS: You will be asked to submit five of these in the course of the seminar—one after each of the first 5 weeks of the program. The paper should be around 1000 words (four double-spaced pages) and address two or more films we've watched during the current week, establishing significant connections between them against the background of the socio-historical moment to which the films relate. The response papers, typed in Microsoft Word, are **due by midnight on Sunday** of each week (except the last); they should be submitted via email to both ppetrov@Princeton.edu and e_ostrowska@hotmail.com.

FINAL EXAMINATION: This will be administered before the end of the course, on **Wednesday, July 23**. The exam will last two hours and be based on both the readings assigned for the course and the films screened during it. It will consist of three categories of questions: 1) short factual identifications; 2) questions requiring 3-4 sentence responses (characterizations, definition of terms, etc.); 3) questions requiring essay-length responses. A worksheet listing the items to be covered for the exam will be distributed a week in advance.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory for all events on our program, and this includes seminar meetings, as well as film screenings. If you are absent for more than one seminar session without medical excuse, your final grade will be adversely affected. Medical excuses should be documented upon return to class. Lateness will not be tolerated beyond singular occurrences. Instructors will strive to begin sessions always on time. Recurrences of being late for class will count as absences.

In case of absence, it is your responsibility to obtain **from your classmates** any information from the session(s) you missed.

If you are experiencing special problems in the course, do not hesitate to notify the instructors and schedule an appointment to discuss these problems.

SYLLABUS

Week 1

Welcome! Course description and syllabus. Historical introduction: defining the geopolitical and cultural borders of Central Eastern Europe. East vs. West, center vs. periphery. Early twentieth-century history of the region. World War I and the dissolution of the old European empires. The Soviet revolution and communist utopia. Inter-war regimes in Central-Eastern Europe. The bankruptcy of liberalism and the lure of fascism.

SCREENINGS

- (T) Agnieszka Holland, *Europa, Europa!* (Germany/France/Poland, 1990)
- (W) Emir Kusturica, *Underground* (Yugoslavia, 1995)
- (Th) Miklos Jancso, *My Way Home* (Hungary, 1965)
- (F) Andrzej Wajda, *Kanal* (Poland, 1956)

READINGS

- Jano Szucs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe” (BB)
- Gale Stokes, “Eastern Europe’s Defining Fault Lines” (BB)
- R. J. Crampton, “Ideological Currents in Inter-War Eastern Europe” (BB)
- Milan Kundera, “The Tragedy of Central Europe” (Stokes 217-23)
 - Jacques Rupnik, *The Other Europe*, 4-60 (BB)
 - Herbert Eagle, “East European Cinema” (BB)
- Dina Iordanova, “Kusturica’s *Underground*: Historical Allegory or Propaganda?” (BB)
- Penelope Houston, “The Horizontal Man” (BB)
- John Simon, “Kanal” (BB)
- Tadeusz Miczka, “Andrzej Wajda's Duties to the Audience (Oscar 2000)” (BB)

Week 2

World War II and its consequences for Central Europe. Collaboration with and resistance to Nazi occupation. Pro-Nazi regimes and resistance movements. The Warsaw Uprising. Soviet liberation of Central European countries. The experience of the Holocaust. The destruction of traditional Jewish culture(s) in Central Europe. Ghettoes and concentration camps. Historical guilt and ethical reflections in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

SCREENINGS

- (T) Andrzej Munk, *Eroica* (Poland, 1958)
- (W) Elmar Klos and Jan Kadar, *Shop on High Street* (Czechoslovakia, 1965)
- (Th) Jiri Menzel, *Closely Observed Trains* (Czechoslovakia, 1966)

READINGS

- J. Crampton, “The Second World War in Eastern Europe” (BB)
- Stokes 12-27
- Ewa Mazierska, “Eroica” (CCE, 55-63)
- L’ubica Mistriková, “A Shop on the High Street” (CCE 97-105).
- Peter Hames, “Closely Observed Trains” (CCE 117-127).
 - Mira & Antonin Liehm, “The Polish School...” (BB)

Week 3

Post-war Stalinist regimes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The Big Soviet Brother and his East-European siblings. Popular fronts and national democracies. Consolidation of communist power in the region. Building socialism. Collectivization, purges, and repressions. New social and cultural elites. Dealing with the heritage and traumas of Stalinism.

SCREENINGS

- (M) Mikhaïl Chiaureli, *The Fall of Berlin* (Soviet Union, 1949)
- (T) Andrzej Wajda, *Man of Marble* (Poland, 1976)
- (W) Peter Bacso, *The Witness* (Hungary, 1969)
- (Th) Karel Kachyna, *The Ear* (Czechoslovakia, 1970)

READINGS

- Berend 1-93
- Stokes 28-77
- Paul Coates, “Man of Marble” (CCE 181-190)
- Jan T. Gross, “Unwelcoming Jewish Survivors” (BB)

Week 4

Post-Stalinism and de-Stalinization. Political and cultural “thaws” in Eastern Europe. Relaxation of political and cultural regimes. Popular protest and resistance against Soviet domination. Abortive anti-Soviet revolutions (Hungary-1956, Prague-1968). “Socialism with a human face.” Failed attempts at democratization and independent “road to socialism”

SCREENINGS

- (M) Jan Nemeč, *Oratorio for Prague* (Czechoslovakia, 1968), *Report on the Party and the Guests* (1965)
- (T) Milos Forman, *The Loves of a Blonde* (Czechoslovakia, 1965)
- (W) Istvan Szabo, *Father* (Hungary, 1967)
- (Th) Roman Polanski, *Knife in the Water* (Poland, 1962)

READINGS

- Berend, 94-152
- Stokes 80-93, 100-14, 122-30
- Peter Hames, “The Party and the Guests” (CCE 139-150)
- David Kehr, “Loves of a Blonde” (BB)
- Paul Coates, “Knife in the Water” (CCE 77-86)
 - Mira & Antonin Liehm, “The Miracle and the Young Wave...” (BB)

Week 5

State socialism after 1968. Political and economic stagnation. Social unrest in Poland and the formation of “Solidarity.” Incursions of popular taste into culture.

SCREENINGS

- (M) Miklos Jancso, *The Round-Up* (Hungary, 1965)
- (T) Bela Tarr, *Family Nest* (Hungary, 1977)

- (W) Krzysztof Zanussi, *Illumination* (Poland, 1972)
(Th) Juliusz Machulski, *Sexmission* (Poland, 1984)

READINGS

- Berend 153-82, 222-300
- Stokes 136-55, 163-80, 193-99, 204-15
 - “Images of Power and the Power of Images: The films of Miklós Jancsó” (BB)
- András Bálint Kovács, *The Round-Up* (CCE 107-114)
- Boleslaw Michalek, “The Cinema of Krzysztof Zanussi” (BB)
- Ewa Mazierska, “Polish Cinematic Dystopias: Metaphors of Life under Communism...” (BB)
 - Mira & Antonin Liehm, “The Possibilities of Art...: Hungary after 1963” (BB)

Week 6

Collapse of the Soviet system and dissolution of the Eastern bloc. Resurgence of nationalism and re-forging of post-communist identities. Turning toward the West and away from the East; settling scores with the socialist past. De-communization and the road to democracy. Dramatic cultural and social transformations. New economic elites and social values.

SCREENINGS

- (M) Wladyslaw Pasikowski, *Pigs* (Poland, 1992)
(T) Ibolya Fekete, *Bolshe Vita* (1996)
(W) Krzysztof Kieslowski, *Three Colors: White* (Poland/France, 1993)
(Th) Jan Hřebejk, *Up and Down* (Czechoslovakia, 2004)

READINGS

- Berend 301-81
- Stokes 232-53
- Michael Stevenson, “I don’t feel like talking to you anymore...” (BB)
- Christina Stojanova, “Bolshe Vita” (CCE: 255-263)