

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Prague

Course Code / Title: (PR/FILM 215) Central European Film

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Film Studies / Central European Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description

This course examines the most important trends and movements in the history of Czech and Central European cinematography. It also puts films within their historical (political and cultural) context. Chronology of the Czech film history is combined with thematic and stylistic analysis. During class sessions, students engage in discussions on specific themes and watch films or clips from films that represent these themes.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students are able to:

- Explain the most powerful forms of Czech/Central European (CE) cinematography
- Define the Czech New Wave, Polish Cinema of Moral Concern and other movements
- Explain which genres are typical for Czech/CE cinematography and why
- Analyze a Czech/CE film of interest in its socio-cultural context
- Apply film theory in writing
- Understand the most important terms in film theory

Course Requirements

Course readings average 30 pages per session and course preparation may include outside film screenings. Both readings and screenings should be completed before class. Students are expected to come to class ready to discuss the issues at hand.

Students are expected to abide by CET's Attendance Policy.

Presentation - Film & Reading: A presentation based on a film seen for the class and the required reading. Length: 60 minutes. Also prepare a presentation (Powerpoint, Prezi, Google Docs).

Review: Students write a review of any feature film directed by one of the following directors: Jan Svěrák, Jan Hřebejk, István Szabó, Roman Polanski, Benedek Fliegauf, Jiří Menzel, Jaromil Jireš, Juraj Herz, Agnieszka Holland, Alexander Hammid, Michaela Pavlátová. (In case of the last two directors, Pavlátová

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and Hammid, you should write about more of their films, as they mostly directed short films.) This assignment requires seeing one (or multiple) additional films.

Length: 2 pages, i.e. 700 words.

Midterm essay: (4 pages minimum, i.e. 1.400 words): An essay about chosen Czech/Slovak/Hungarian/Polish film(s). The usage of at least one obligatory reading is expected and the application of your own background is encouraged.

Final test: A test on material covered in class will be written during final exam week. The questions will stem from both the history of Central European cinema, as well as the film theory. Anything significant discussed in class may be a part of the final test. Part of the questions will be essay-based, part of them a multiple-choice. One class will be partially devoted to reviewing facts/information that will be needed to succeed on the final test.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Class participation	20%
Presentation – Film & Reading	20%
Review	20%
Midterm essay	20%
Final test	20%

Readings

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997 and 2010.

Burch, Noël. *Theory of Film Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, 17-31.

Freeland, Cynthia: "Explaining the Uncanny in *The Double Life of Véronique*". In *Horror film and psychoanalysis: Freud's worst nightmare*, edited by Steven Jay Schneider. Cambridge University Press, 2004. 87-105.

Lawton, Anna M. "The double... a Dostoevskian theme in Polanski," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1981): 121-129.

Lim, Bliss Cua. "Dolls in Fragments: *Daisies* as Feminist Allegory," *Camera Obscura*. 16, no. 2: 36-77.

Mulvey, Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, edited by Patricia Erens, 28-40. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Owen, Jonathan: "Slovak bohemians: revolution, counterculture and the end of the sixties in Juraj Jakubisko's films." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2010): 17-28.

Shaviro, Steven. "The Joke." <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=549>

Stan, Lavina, ed., *Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union*. Taylor&Francis, 2008. 39-45.

Additional resources

Films:

Gnome (Tomáš Vorel, 2005)

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Control (Nimród Antal, 2003)
The Shop on Main Street (Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965)
Witness (Péter Bacsó, Hungary, 1969)
Sunshine in the Net (Štefan Uher, 1962)
The Joke (Jaromil Jireš, 1968)
Loves of a Blonde (Miloš Forman, 1965)
Daisies (Věra Chytilová, 1966)
Birds, Orphans, and Fools (Juraj Jakubisko, 1969)
Knife in the Water (Roman Polanski, 1962)
Double Life of Veronique (Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1991)
Conspirators of Pleasure (Jan Švankmajer, 1996)
Walking too Fast (Radim Špaček, 2009)

Outline of Course Content

One to two weeks is spent on each of the following topics.

Topic 1 – Introduction and Chronology
Chronology of the Czech/Central European Cinema
Common history / common topics
What is cinema?

Topic 2 – Contemporary Central European Cinema / Mise-en-scene
“Velvet ” (and other) revolutions and the changes they brought about in the cinema.
What is mise-en-scene and why is it important in the movies?

Topic 3 - Workshop: How to write an essay / Framing
Dos and Don'ts: What to avoid in writing an essay
What is framing and how is it important in the movies?

Topic 4 – WWII and Holocaust in the movies / Editing
WWII and Holocaust in the Central European Cinema
Referential, explicit, implicit and symptomatic meanings

Topic 5 – Hungarian Cinema / Narration
Chronology
Miklós Jancsó
Narration and narrator / plot vs. story

Topic 6 – Czechoslovak New Wave / Off-Screen Space
New Wave – its social and cultural roots, international links, the inspiration
Traits of CNW: existentialism, sexuality, etc.
The directors of “Czechoslovak New Wave”: Věra Chytilová, Jiří Menzel, Jaromil Jireš, Juraj Jakubisko, Štefan Uher etc.

Topic 7 - Miloš Forman / Feminist Film Theory

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Miloš Forman and his CS and US career
Feminist film theory: its premises and goals

Topic 8 - Czech Cinema in the 1970s and 1980s / Editing
Obstacles of Czech New Wave directors in the 1970s and 1980s
Similarities with the 1950s
Ideology and socialistic realism
Different kind of editing

Topic 9 - Polish Cinema / Sound
Chronology
Andrzej Wajda
Krzysztof Kieslowski
Function / similarity and repetition / difference and variation / development / unity and disunity