

Story of Religion

in the Most Secular Country

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Course Description:

Czech Republic is characterized as one of the most atheistic societies. At the same time, however, cultural and architectural faces of the country demonstrate very strong influence of religion throughout its past. This course will search for answering this paradox and its complexities. Religious influence is evident especially in the cultural and architectural richness of Prague, which mirrors the drama of European religious history. Implementing cross-disciplinary approaches we will explore influences of religion on social, cultural and political characteristics of Central Europe in different periods. We will study the emergence of medieval Christendom, its cultural and political contexts, as well as the societal impact of 16th century religious conflicts. Influences of modern socio-political emancipation and totalitarian periods on the current low level of religiosity will also be examined. Guided tours of Prague's unique religious and historic sites are an important part of the course.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

The course will provide students with an understanding of the most important religious phenomena and their influence in history. It will also enhance their skills of contextual analysis of mutual interactions between religion, culture and politics.

Course Structure and Requirements:

Sessions are composed of presentations and lectures, class discussions on study sources and guided tours. The course is open to all students and there are no special prerequisites. Students are expected to study assigned class sources (available on-line) and participate actively in all class activities, including discussions and guided tours. Other requirements include oral presentation and final paper.

Grading Policy

Class participation	20%
Oral presentation	25%
Multiple-choice test	25%
Final essay	30%

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE and AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

Course Introduction. Czechs: The Most Atheistic Nation?

Source: Religious Situation in Contemporary Czech Society

Week 3

Term of Religion and Roots of European Civilization

Source: Concept of Religio, Central Europe and the Roman Christian West

Week 4

Building a New Society, Monastic Revolution

Source: Christianization in Central Europe and Monasticism

Excursion: Christianization Site and Monastery

Week 5

Mission Accomplished: Medieval Christendom

Source: Collection on Christianitas and Medieval Society

Excursion: Medieval Religious Prague

Week 6

Cracks in the System: Crisis and Reformation

Source: Crack in the Foundation

Presentation: Jan Hus

Excursion: Reformation Sites

Week 7

From Religious Division to Cultural Revival

Source: *Collection on Thirty Years War and Recatholization*

Presentation: *Jesuits*

Excursion: *Klementinum, Baroque and Counter-Reformation*

Week 8

Rise of a Nation, Modernism and Secularization

Source: *From Nations to Nationalism, Secularization and Secularism*

Presentation: *Czech National Revival*

Excursion: *Axis of Nationalism in Prague*

Week 9

Totalitarianism and Atheization

Source: *Churches Under a Totalitarian Regime*

Presentation: *Karl Marx and Religion*

Excursion: *Communist Sites*

Week 10

Glory and Tragedy: The Prague's Story of Jews and Judaism

Source: *Jewish History in Bohemia, Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism*

Presentation: *Legend of Golem*

Excursion: *Jewish Site*

Week 11

Religion and Postmodern Paradigm

Source: *Collection: Peter Berger, José Casanova, Grace Davie*

Presentation: *Second Vatican Council*

Excursion: *Prague Academic Parish*

Week 12

Current Situation and Future Trends

Sources: *Collection: Dana Hamplová, Zdeněk Nešpor, Tomáš Halík*

Presentation: *Interfaith Dialogue*

Week 13

Final Essay, Closing Discussion

Study sources will be available before each session online in the Moodle learning platform.