

Story of Religion in the Most Secular Country

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Course Description:

The Czech Republic is widely recognized as one of the most secular societies in the world. Yet, its cultural landscape and architectural heritage tell a completely different story—one deeply rooted in religious history. This course explores this fascinating paradox and its historical complexities.

Focusing on Prague, a city whose rich architecture mirrors the dramatic shifts of European religious history, we will employ a cross-disciplinary approach to examine how religion has shaped the social, cultural, and political identity of Central Europe. Students will investigate the rise of medieval Christendom, the profound societal impacts of the 16th-century religious conflicts, and the ways in which modern socio-political emancipation and 20th-century totalitarian regimes contributed to today's low levels of religiosity. Finally, we will examine current trends and explore possible future developments in the field of religion. A core component of the course includes guided tours of Prague's unique religious and historic sites.

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, Western Religious Tradition

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

Week 4

From Christianization to Medieval Christendom

Source: Christianization in Central Europe, Monasticism and *Christianitas*

Excursion: Medieval Religious Prague, Monastery

Week 5

Crisis and Division

Source: Crack in the Foundation

Presentation: Jan Hus

Excursion: Reformation Sites

Week 6

From Religious Conflicts to Cultural Revival

Source: Collection on Thirty Years War and Recatholization

Presentation: Jesuits

Excursion: Klementinum and Baroque Culture

Week 7

Modernity, Search for a new Religion

Source: From Nations to Nationalism, Secularization and Secularism

Presentation: Czech National Revival

Excursion: Axis of Patriotism in Prague

Week 8

Religion and Totalitarianism

Source: Churches Under a Totalitarian Regime

Presentation: Karl Marx and Religion

Excursion: Prague under Totalitarianism

Week 9

Judaism and Jews in Bohemia

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

Presentation: Legend of Golem

Excursion: Jewish Site

Week 10

Religion and Postmodern Paradigm

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

Presentation: Second Vatican Council

Excursion: Prague Academic Parish

Week 11

Current Trends in Religiosity

Sources: Collection: Tomáš Halík, Massimo Faggioli

Presentation: Interfaith Dialogue

Excursion: Examples of Contemporary Spirituality in Prague

Week 12

Possible Future Prospects

Sources: Collection: Charles Taylor, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Jürgen Habermas

Week 13

Final Essay, Closing Discussion

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