

Creative Writing Studio

ARTS-3007 (3 credits)

Czech Republic: Studio Arts - Creative Writing, Contemporary Dance, and Photography

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

This studio is devoted creative writing practice and an introduction to contemporary Czech literature. Students take part in workshops based on prompts provided by the lecturer, and group critiques of their work. They also meet with Czech writers of fiction and poetry to discuss the writing process and ways in which their writing reflects topics such as Czech identity and history and current public debates around politics and social justice topics. Students keep a journal of field-observation exercises and select one work for revision and presentation at a closing literary evening that also includes a discussion of their processes, topics and inspiration from Czech authors.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the intensive course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an informed knowledge of the contemporary Czech literature;
- Create and refine works of fiction or poetry and take part in a literary reading;
- Analyze the ways in which select writers reflect and engage current Czech social and political debates.

Instructional Methods

The teaching approach of the lecturer is to introduce students to various techniques for developing their own voice and deepening their knowledge of key components of creative writing such as persona narrator, tone and mood. Students will be encouraged to explore unique corners of the city individually and with the group to draw out themes, fresh approaches to observing their physical surroundings and integrating those observations into their creative process and writing. Students are required to keep journals of these explorations and observations of other aspects of everyday life and cultural events they attend. The experiential approach allows students to experiment and create in the context of a holistic and immersive, intensive learning experience requiring observation and reflection in the field, independent creative work, and presentation and analysis.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Recommended texts: This is a short and intensive writing workshop with the books of contemporary authors they will meet provided at the school. The following texts are recommended, but not required advance reading for the course.

- Hůlová, Petra (2009) Alex Zucker, trans. *All This Belongs to Me*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.
- Lappin, Elena. (1997) *Daylight in Nightclub Inferno: Czech Fiction from the Post-Kundera Generation*. North Haven, Connecticut: Catbird Press.

Students are required to review the following websites in advance of arrival:

- The Czech Literary Center: <https://www.czechlit.cz/en/> including Czech Literature in English Translation: <https://www.czechlit.cz/en/feature/czech-literature-in-english-translation/>
- The Museum of Czech Literature: <http://www.en.pamatniknarodnihopisemnictvi.cz/>

Required Technology: None

Assessment: The final grades are based upon Fieldwork Journal, Deepening and refining at least one work of fiction or poetry for reading at the literary evening, as well as and timeliness and active participation.

Course Schedule:

Module 1: Orientation & Introduction to contemporary Czech arts & culture (4 days) The orientation & introduction module is devoted to an overview of the contemporary Czech arts and culture today including the visual, literary and performing arts and the ways in which current public discourse in politics and social justice are mirrored and engaged through the arts. The module will include a visit to the Czech museum of literature and the introductory panel of writers with specialists such as translators or publishers will introduce contemporary Czech literature and related topics such as the challenges of translation and predominance of English, the meaning and place of internationally-known Czech authors such as Franz Kafka, the Nobel-Prize winner, Jaroslav Seifert, Bohumil Hrabal and Milan Kundera, and the ways in which the new generation of writers works with historical trauma of Central Europe and reflect national and regional identities.

Module 2: (16 days)

This module comprises daily writing assignments, journaling and observation exercises, six critiques as well as four personal meetings with Czech writers about their own methods, sources of inspiration, their perspectives on contemporary Czech and global issues and the role that writers play in engaging, mirroring or provoking public debate. The module will also include excursions to the city of Brno as well as to regional arts residency centers for visits with relevant artists and for observation and writing exercises conducted in the rural landscapes and villages.

Module 3: (4 days)

Students make a selection of the writing to edit, elaborate and refine for reading at a final literary event at Prague bookstore where they will also take part in an open critique and discussion about their writing process, their sources of inspiration in Prague.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments

Creative writing assignments (50%)

Six writing assignments based upon the prompts of the lecturer and requiring active observation of places, people, everyday life and cultural events outside the classroom and participation in spontaneous writing and other methods in the classroom.

Discussions with Czech authors (30%)

Reading the fiction or poetry of five select Czech authors and preparing a short question set in preparation for active discussions around formal aspects of the texts, approaches to creative writing and engagement in political or social issues.

Preparation and Participation in a Final Literary Reading (20%)

Elaboration and substantive refinement of one text for reading and discussion at a closing literary evening.

Assessment:

Writing Assignments	50%
Discussions with authors	30%
Literary Evening	20%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64%	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.