

Photography Studio

ARTS-3008 (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 class is devoted to practice in experimental photography with an emphasis on techniques such as montage, collage, assemblage, stop motion photography, and photogram, all of which have deep roots in Czech visual arts history and emphasizes the self-directed approach in which students work with their personal themes and approaches. Students take part in workshops, visit photography exhibitions and photographic archives, keep a journal and present their photography experiments in a public gallery space. They also meet with contemporary photographers that work with experimental and multi-media methods as well as curators or other specialists to gain insights into the Czech visual arts scene and the different ways in which Czech photographers work with their natural and urban environments and reflect contemporary social and political debates through documentary and other methods.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Demonstrate an informed knowledge of the contemporary photography scene and its roots in the Czech avant-garde;
- Develop knowledge and practice in experimental photography techniques and prepare a gallery exhibition;
- Analyze the ways in which select visual arts reflect and engage current Czech social and political debates.

Instructional Methods

The teaching approach of the lecturers is to introduce students to various techniques and provoke their creative potential by allowing each student to work independently with the themes and ideas drawn from the physical environment of the city itself through observation, documentation and processing. Students are required to keep journals, with notes documenting in writing and sketches their explorations of place, and exhibitions or other events attended. 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 and group creative work, and presentation and analysis.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English

Recommended texts: This is a short and intensive studio course with limited readings. The following books are highly recommended, but not required and are also available for review in Prague.

- Birgus, Vladimír and Jan Mlčoch. (2010). *Czech Photography of the 20th Century*. Prague: Kant.
- Birgus, Vladimír. (2002). *Czech Photographic Avant-Garde, 1918-1948*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: MIT Press.
- Students are required to review the following websites in advance of arrival:
 - House of Photography: <http://en.ghmp.cz/house-of-photography/>
 - Langhans House and Archive: <http://www.langhans.cz/dum/>
 - Studio of Josef Sudek: <https://www.atelierjosefasudka.cz/en/>
 - Fotograf Gallery: <http://fotografgallery.cz/en/>

Required Technology: Students are encouraged to bring their digital or SLR cameras, but this is not a requirement due to the experimental nature of the course and the possibility to work with your telephone camera, or to borrow or rent a camera on site in Prague.

Assessment: The final grades are based upon a Fieldwork Journal, conceptualization and implementation of a photography exhibition, as well as and timeliness, preparation and active participation in weekly critiques.

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. A lecture on the experimental techniques and the intellectual and conceptual legacy of the Czech avant-garde to visual arts today and guided tours and discussions at the House of Photography, the Langhans photography archive or The Museum of Decorative Arts.

Module 2: (16 days)

This module comprises workshops in experimental methods such as photogram, collage & assemblage under the guidance of artists using these methods in their own work; journaling and fieldwork experiences with local photographers, and guided visits to current photography exhibitions. The module will also include excursions to the city of Brno to visit arts festivals and exhibitions as well as to regional arts residencies for visits with relevant artists and for observation and photography exercises in rural landscapes and villages.

Module 3: (4 days)

Students make a selection of work and install it in a gallery, take part in a final open critique on the process and results and present their sketchbooks.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments

Portfolio: Conceptualization and Creation of Artwork (50%)

The assignment requires the preparation, collection of materials and conceptual development of artwork that will be created in three intensive workshops under the guidance of contemporary artists devoted to photogram, collage, and multi-media techniques. Concrete tasks for collecting materials in the field and other preparatory work will be assigned in advance of each workshop.

Journal (30%)

A journal and sketchbook that includes notes, clippings, drawings or other documentation of fieldwork and site visits as well as written reflection of at least five photography exhibitions attended upon recommendation of the lecturer.

Final Exhibition (20%)

Preparation, design and installation of a final group exhibition based upon a selection of work created in workshops and field exercises.

Assessment:

Portfolio	50%
Sketchbook	30%
Final Exhibition	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.