

Religion, Culture and Politics in Central Europe

Syllabus Spring 2011

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Office hours: Wednesday, 4:30-5:00 pm, Professors' office at Malé nám. 2

Course description:

Religion is without doubt one of the most important elements that shaped the history and contemporary face of Central Europe. Religion played an important role in the political and cultural development of this part of the world. The history of mutual interaction between religion and politics is evident in the cultural richness particularly in Bohemia and Prague.

This course will explore various religious phenomena that formed the political ideas and cultural values of this region in different historical periods. We will examine particularly those religious characteristics and figures that remarkably influenced the world's history and enriched human thinking. First, we will focus on Christianization of the Central European society and the prominent role of religion in political and cultural transformation. Then we will follow the development of relationship between Judeo-Christian tradition and the secular world. Finally, we will explore the policies of communist regimes in the spheres of religion and culture and will study the religion in the post-communist society. The transformation of Catholicism in the 1960s will also be examined together with the role of Christian churches in the struggle against communist totalitarianism.

The course will include many excursions and visits to significant religious sights.

Grading policy

Class participation/attendance:	20 %
Response paper:	15 %
Presentation:	20 %
Test/quiz:	20 %
Final paper:	25 %

Recommended readings

Demetz, P.: Prague in black and gold, 1997. Penguin, London.

O'Grady, D.: The Turned Card, 1995. Gracewing, Leominster, Herefordshire.

Wandycz, P. S.: The Price of Freedom, 1992. Routledge, London.

Course readings will be available on the internet or handouts will be distributed in class.

Schedule of classes:

Week 1

26 January - Course overview and introduction

Week 2

2 February - Religion and historical overview

Regional characteristics of Central Europe. The notion of religion.

Week 3

9 February - Pre-Christian period

Characteristics of the cultural and political situation before Christianization.

Week 4

16 February - Christianization

Consequences of Christianization in politics and culture, western monasticism and Byzantine mission.

Week 5

23 February - Medieval period

Medieval Christendom and *Corpus Christianorum*. Cathedrals, universities, religious orders, investiture etc.

Week 6

2 March - Reformation and Renaissance

The crisis and reform. Jan Hus, Reformation, religious wars and their political dimension.

Week 7

9 March - Baroque period

Baroque spirituality and culture, “*cuius regio, eius religio*” principle, Jesuits in Bohemia.

Week 8

16 March - Jewish religious phenomenon

Historical overview, significant representatives in Central Europe.

Week 9 - Spring Break – no classes

Week 10

30 March - Esoteric tradition

Examples and historical overview, an influence on politics and culture.

Week 11

6 April - Modernity and religion

Religion in contexts of enlightenment, romanticism, nationalism and science.

Week 12

13 April - Religion and totalitarianism

Struggle of religion against Nazi and communist totalitarianism, churches and democracy.

Week 13

20 April - Sixties and the new trends

Society and the change of paradigm in 1960s, new religious trends and transformation of Catholicism (the Second Vatican Council).

Week 14

27 April - Contemporary religious situation

Religion, culture and politics in post-modern and post-communist society.

Week 15

4 May - Future trends and conclusion

Week 16

****Final Paper Due****