

Russian 291  
Golden Prague in Czech Culture  
Czech Literature, Art and Film

*No knowledge of Czech required*

*Satisfies Requirements*

Fall, 2006

Tulane University

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Wednesday and Friday, 3:00-4:15 N 15

## 1. Resources

*Literature (in bookstore)*

Jaroslav Hašek. *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk*

Karel Čapek. *War with the Newts*

Karel Čapek. *R. U. R.*

Bohumil Hrabal. *Too Loud a Solitude*

Bohumil Hrabal. *I Served the English King*

Bohumil Hrabal. *Cutting it Short* (not in store, text will be emailed to you)

Josef Škvorecký. *The Engineer of Human Souls*

*Film:*

*On DVD:*

Miloš Forman. *Loves of a Blonde*

Miloš Forman. *The Firemen's Ball*

Jiří Menzel. *Closely Watched Trains*

Jan Hřebejk. *Divided We Fall*

Jiří Menzel. *Slavnosti sněženek (Festivals of Snowdrops)*

*On Videotape:*

Jiří Menzel. *Postřižiny (Cutting it Short)*

*Art, Architecture, Politics and History:*

Selected lectures and individual presentations on topics of interest, including especially the history and architecture of Prague, graphic art, politics from Masaryk to Mečiar, journalism, and music.

## **Course Description**

*Czech* is open to all students in the University, including freshmen. This course provides a general introduction to the Czech people, their thought and culture as seen in literature and art. The Czechs are small nation (malý národ) whose homeland lies in the heart of central Europe, and whose history has close ties to the West (Germany, France and the United States) as to their Slavic neighbors to the North (Poland) and the East (Russia). From the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries they were ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Surrounded by huge and powerful neighbors, the Czechs have developed an ironic self-consciousness marked by humor, resignation, and a touch of bitterness. They are a nation of heroes, martyrs, intellectuals, artists, drunkards and clowns (with some who lay claim to most of these labels), of small businessmen, proud national achievements, rural hamlets, castles and gentle rivers. They boast one great architectural jewel, the capital city, Prague.

Materials for study include the texts and films noted above, as well as your individual presentations and my handouts and bulletins to be posted on my website. The goal of this course is to develop a notion of this nation, its art and its character.

## Course Requirements

Attendance is essential for success in this course. Unexplained absences will be reflected in the participation grade (see below); after four such absences, the final course grade will be reduced by one point (A > A-, A- > B+, B+ > B, etc.) for each absence. Students are encouraged to attend as often as possible, even if they have not completed the day's assignment, and in return they have the instructor's word that they will not be grilled, badgered, or punished for incomplete work. All students who attend this class are sure to learn about Czech culture and will be treated with gentleness and respect.

*Note: "Instructors are not authorized to excuse absences that extend calendar holidays. Only the student's dean may excuse such absences. A student who has excessive unexcused absences or ceases to attend a course without an authorized withdrawal will, at the instructor's request and with the approval of the associate dean, be withdrawn from the course and receive a grade of WF." (University Policy).*

I ask you to do written and oral assignments on time as much as possible, to participate in class recitation and discussion, to ask questions when I am unclear, to take quizzes and tests with good humor and equanimity. The key to learning is good, steady work, work that is goal-directed toward real results. Be prepared to enjoy what you are doing and to do it regularly.

Each student will make two or three individual presentations and one major final presentation, accompanied by a paper. Be sure to discuss your topic with the instructor.

## Tests

I will offer weekly or bi-weekly quizzes on material discussed in class; no mid-term; a final individual oral presentation, accompanied by a paper; no final examination.

## Grades

The final grade will be computed using

quizzes	40%		
recitation/homework/presentations		40%	
final paper and presentation		20%	

Scale:

93-100	A	72-76	C
89-92	A-	69-71	C-
86-88	B+	67-68	D+
82-85	B	62-66	D
79-81	B-	58-61	D-
77-78	C+	x-57	F

### Disabilities

If you have special needs relating to a disability that may affect your performance in the course, please speak to the instructor after class or arrange an appointment to discuss your needs privately. This should be done as early as possible in the semester.

### Schedule of Work

A full schedule will be provided on the website, along with detailed reading assignments and questions for discussion.

Weds 30 Aug	Introduction to the Course. Czech writing system and phonology. Street and metro signs in Prague	1-1
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