

# CESTA

## From the Periphery to the Centre of Europe: Modern Czech Politics

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**Consultations:** by appointment

### **Course description:**

Modern Czech political history reflects the key events and processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century European politics. The course employs a historical perspective, rests on political theory to analyze democracy and totalitarianism (the two concepts that facilitate understanding of the most recent Czech history), applies the comparative politics methodology and the perspective of international relations in order to place the above mentioned issues in context of the international politics and European integration. The course will integrate the political and social events in autumn 2010 (for example, the scheduled elections to the Chamber of Deputies and one-third of the Senate) and engage students in the events through planned activities. The students will be individually assigned documents (analyzed in class) for class presentations (for example, Munich agreement, Communist takeover, Charter 77, division of Czechoslovakia and many others).

### **Course objectives:**

The goal of the course is to provide students with understanding of democratic and totalitarian regimes. The emphasis is put on this important distinction between the two major ways to organize state and society. This general theory is exemplified by the Czechoslovakia (the Czech Republic) and its modern political history. The Czechoslovakia repeatedly moved from democratic to non-democratic regime and its recent political history is an excellent example of fate of a small state in Central Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Czechoslovak and Czech experiences are very similar to that of other European countries that more or less successfully struggled to protect democracy from totalitarian regimes. Hence, students will gain knowledge useful not only to be able to understand Czech modern political history or Czech politics, but also they will gain insight in much more general problems of democracy and modern European political history.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **I. Building up CESTA: Roads and Pathways, Transitions and Alternatives**

##### ***Week 1***

Introduction: major issues, concepts, ideas

#### **II. European and Global Contexts**

##### ***Week 2***

*Between Democracy and Totalitarianism*

**Week 3**

*First Czech Republic – First Democratic Experience (1918-1938)*

**III. Ideas and Ideologies: Church, Nation, State and Totalitarian systems, World Heritage Towns and Vanished Villages**

**Week 4**

*Nazism in the Czech Lands: First Totalitarian Experience*

**Week 5**

*Czechoslovakia at the crossroads: What's at stake? (1945-1948)*

**IV. Central Europe in its Diversity: Transitions and Alternatives, Contacts and Conflicts; Czechs and their Neighbors**

**Week 6**

*Expulsion of Germans (1945-1946)*

**Week 7**

*Communist Takeover: Second Totalitarianism (1948) – Shift to the East*

**Week 8**

*Prague Spring of 1968 and "Socialism with a human face"*

**V. REVIEW: Basic concepts and boundaries; Planning integrative projects**

**Week 9 Fall Break**

**VI. Revolution and Social Change**

**Week 10**

*Why Velvet Revolution? Another Attempt to Build a Liberal Democracy (1989)*

**VII. From Institutions and Legal Framework to a new revolt and individualisation**

**Week 11**

*End of Czechoslovakia – "velvet" divorce of Czechs and Slovaks*

**Week 12**

*Doing politics in the Czech Republic after 1989:*

**VIII. Memory and Forgetting; Biographies and oral history**

**Week 13**

*Dealing with the Communist Heritage – Uneasy Process*

## **Week 14**

*From Periphery to the Centre of Europe: Czech Republic in the EU*

### **IX. Landscapes: Real and Imaginary**

#### **X. CESTA at its End: What's Next on the Road? Transitions and Alternatives of the Future**

## **Week 15**

*Problems of the Czech politics: Current Issues and Challenges*

### **Presenting students' integrative projects**

#### **Prague on the Go to (field trips):**

- Eurocentre (Information centre on the European Union)
- Senate of the Czech Republic Parliament
- Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament
- Museum of Communism

### **Grading**

Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than one class during the semester is going to impede your progress and affect your grade. The grade for the semester is going to be determined on the basis of:

- Occasional quizzes on concepts and terms (20%)
- Midterm test (10%)
- Interdisciplinary project (40%)
- Diary/ portfolio (30%)

### **Required readings:**

- Agnew, Hugh 2004, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*. Hoover Institution Press, ch. 11-16.
- Brooker, Paul. 2000. *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics*. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Dahl, Robert A. 2000. *On democracy*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. The End of History?. *National Interest*
- Kopeček, Lubomír (ed.). 2005. *Trajectories of the left: social democratic and (ex)communist parties in contemporary Europe*. Brno: CDK.