



Czech Republic

Post-Communist Transition and the Arts

Credits 16

Program Base Prague

Language Study Czech

Homestay Prague, 8 weeks

Rural Visit/Homestay Bohemia or Moravia, 1 week

Educational Excursions Bohemia and/or Moravia, Český Krumlov, Slovakia, and Poland

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

Prerequisites None. Previous survey courses in Western civilization or European history, art history, and/or comparative literature recommended.

Post-Communist Transition and the Arts Seminar

EURO 3000 / 6 credits / 90 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted in English examining contemporary arts in the Czech Republic as well as the role art played as an agent of social change throughout the country's twentieth-century history. The course includes required readings and lectures, as well as discussions, film screenings, music and dance performances, and site visits to artists' studios, theaters, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community centers. Resources utilized in the delivery of course content include the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes; arts venues in Prague such as the Alfred in the Courtyard Theatre; and NGOs in Prague working in areas such as the integration of minorities, the environment, and community development. Lectures and discussions for this course generally include the following topics:

Czech History, Politics, and Society

The First Republic and interwar period; the legacy of the Munich agreement; the 1968 Prague Spring and 1970s normalization; Vaclav Havel and Charter 77; the Velvet Revolution—myth and reality; sociology of transition; Central European identity; migration and the “new Europe”; Roma “Decade of Inclusion or politics of exclusion?”

Arts and Cultural Studies

Readings in Czech literature; modernism and the Czech interwar avant-garde; the postwar Sovietization of Czech culture and society; cultural resurgence of the 1960s; official and unofficial cultures of the 1970s and 1980s; Czech rock music under communism; how theater staged the Velvet Revolution; highlights in Czech film history; Czech visual arts, dance, and theater today; festivals and workshops for social change; Prague as a historical cultural capital in postsocialist creative and social crisis.

NGOs, Civil Society, and Community Revival

Creation and structure of civil society organizations in postcommunist society; grassroots initiatives in rural communities; civic initiatives for human rights and civil rights; the Czech environmental movement; reviving rural communities through the arts; individual and collective civic creativity in Czech society today; the role of women in Czech civic evolution; Czech humanitarian initiatives abroad.

Educational Excursions

The program includes excursions to neighboring countries for a comparative study of postcommunist society and Central European arts and civic initiatives. Sites may include Slovakia and Poland. Excursions to regions within the Czech Republic may include the South Moravian wine region, North Bohemia, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site town of Český Krumlov.

Regional Stay

Five-day stays in villages and towns in Moravia and Bohemia provide students an opportunity to spend time with a local NGO or arts initiative to observe firsthand the work of community leaders and artists.

Intensive Language Study: Czech

CZEC 1000 / 4 credits / 60 class hours

Emphasis on speaking and comprehension skills through classroom and field instruction. Students are placed in beginning classes.

Field Study Seminar

ANTH 3500 / 2 credits / 30 class hours

A course in the concepts of learning across cultures and from field experience. Introduction to the Independent Study Project. Material includes cross-cultural adaptation and skills building; project selection and refinement; appropriate methodologies; field study ethics and the World Learning/SIT Human Subjects Review Policy; developing contacts and finding resources; developing skills in observation and interviewing;

gathering, organizing, and communicating data; maintaining a work journal.

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 / 4 credits / 120 class hours

Conducted in Prague or in another approved location appropriate to the project in the Czech Republic, Poland, or Slovakia. Projects may include a creative or artistic component in the visual and performing arts or creative writing. Sample topic areas: Czech cubist architecture and design; legacy of Czech underground music; Roma ethnic and cultural identity; sustainable development in North Bohemia; the former Sudetenland today.

Homestay

Eight weeks in Prague and one week in the regional towns of Bohemia or Moravia. Other accommodations during the program include hostels or small hotels, private homes, and arts and NGO centers.

Behind the Prague Facade

SIT takes students to another Prague, beyond the fairytale facade presented to tourists, to explore the legacy and impact of communism on society and the arts today. Students investigate the rich and diverse artistic history of the city, while analyzing the impacts of globalization and tourism on the Czech arts scene. Through discussions with artists, musicians, and activists, students gain personal insights into the communist period, the post-socialist transition, and the new challenges that face artists and communities today. Excursions to the Czech countryside and to Slovakia and Poland expand the picture, as students visit theaters, film festivals, and contemporary arts centers.