

**LT 331 COMPARATIVE CENTRAL EUROPEAN LITERATURE I: LITERATURE, CULTURE, HISTORY
AND IDEOLOGY IN HUNGARY AND IN EASTERN-EUROPE**
IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to promote *dis-course* between various modes human beings try to make sense of the world and themselves. We will adopt a basically “New Historicist” perspective to watch the interaction, from the middle of the 19th century to the 21st, between cultural phenomena, historical consciousness, prevailing ideologies and literature. In the East-European region, literature and fiction are especially interesting as they have often tried to refuse to be blind perpetrators of consciousness, fashioning themselves rather as disruptive and subversive forces, as major forms of resistance. We will read, in a rich historical, cultural, ideological and comparative context mainly Hungarian pieces but we will also take a look at other East-European countries (Russia, Poland, former Czechoslovakia, Romania and Serbia) as well, and we will ask if an aesthetic reading of literature is still possible. The range of literary genres is equally wide: short-stories, poems, dramas and two short novels (one by first Hungarian Noble-prize winner, Imre Kertész) will feature on the reading list. The course will consider **creative pieces** (poems, short-stories or mini-dramas) as highly adequate responses to the literature under discussion and, thus, instead of a midterm, a creative piece might be handed in, yet this will by *no* means be compulsory.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: Since the course is designed precisely for finding one’s voice in speaking about literature, it does not require any previous training either in literature (literary theory), or in history, or in any of the social sciences. Some interest in literature and related areas is, however, presupposed.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

There will be 20, ninety minute-long sessions. We will be discussing the pieces below, assigned for each meeting. The compulsory readings will be available on Moodle. The course is intended as a real dialogue: it will, besides the traditional lecture-format, heavily rely on student participation in the form of short class-presentations and contributions to the discussions.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation - 20%
- Midterm Exam - 30%
- Final Exam - 40%
- Reading journal – 10%

Course Participation

You are expected to be fully present and to take part in the discussions and to give occasional short oral presentations

Midterm Exam

Take-home assignment (with creative option): an essay of approx. 5-8 pages on a freely chosen topic of the course (the juxtaposition of two or more pieces in all possible combinations, the description of two or more characters, some recurring metaphors in various pieces, etc.) OR: a CREATIVE piece of writing (poems, a short-story or a short drama)

Final Exam

Take-home assignment: an essay of approx. 5-8 pages on a freely chosen topic of the course (the juxtaposition of two or more pieces in all possible combinations, the description of two or more characters, some recurring metaphors in various pieces, etc.)



Reading Journal

A short quotation, chosen for discussion from each assigned reading, with comments not exceeding one paragraph, to be collected at the end of each class.

Composition (not graded, due on the third week of the term): “Observation and Memory”, or “A Letter Home”, or “A Letter from Home”: composition or already a creative piece of writing (approx. 2 pages), to give students a sense of the pleasure and the difficulties of writing and of finding one’s voice. Observe something in your narrower or wider context (your reading-lamp in your room, a cabbage in the market, a dog in the street, etc.) and describe it, or remember something at home (the Christmas-tree when you were a child, your desk at school, the first movie you remember, etc.) and write about it; or write a letter home or write yourself a letter as if it were coming from home, using, if you wish, imaginary persons.

Mandatory Excursion to Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial on **October 21, Sunday**.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Be familiar with the outlines of the history and cultural background of Central- (East-) European literature between the middle of the 19th century and the late 20th century
- Identify and put into appropriate context the main literary figures and the cultural and literary trends discussed in class
- Be aware of the most significant movements in literary style and writing-technique
- Have growing expertise in the ability to interpret and critically evaluate literary texts and to develop some arguments of their own about them.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions, including field study excursions, internship meetings, scheduled rehearsals, and all tests and exams. Attendance will be taken for every class. If a student misses more than two* classes without an excuse, the final grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (for example, A- to B+) for every additional unexcused absence.

* one class for courses meeting once a week, three classes for German
Please see IES Vienna Attendance Policy for more detail.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1, Session 1	Getting acquainted and course introduction 1. János Pilinszky (Hungarian): “Quatrain” (1956) 2. István Örkény (Hungarian): “In Memoriam Dr. K. H. G.” (1964). (Texts will be provided in photocopies in class)	The participants read and analyze the assigned literary texts together.
Week 1, Session 2	The nation-state and revolution in the mid-19th century: 1848-49 and poems by Sándor Petőfi (Hungarian)	The participants read the assignment before class.

Week 2, Session 1	The croaking of damnation and the trauma of loss: Edgar Allan Poe (American): “The Raven” (1844) (longer poem)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 2, Session 2	A lost revolution and the sense of guilt 1. Mihály Vörösmarty: “The Ancient Gypsy” (ode, 1854) 2. János Arany: “Mistress Agnes” (1851, ballad-poem)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 3, Session 1	Urban and rural voices in the journal Nyugat 1. Poems (1906-12) by Endre Ady (Hungarian); 2. Zsigmond Móricz (Hungarian): “Barbarians” (1933, short-story)	Composition due! The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 3, Session 2	Franz Kafka: The Metamorphosis Kafka (Austrian-Czech-Jewish): “The Metamorphosis” (longer short-story, 1915)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 4, Session 1	“Gentle folks and the parlour maid” Dezső Kosztolányi (Hungarian): <i>Anna Édes</i> (1925, novel, I.)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 4, Session 2	The mysterious case of murder Dezső Kosztolányi (Hungarian): <i>Anna Édes</i> (1925, novel, II)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 5, Session 1	World War II and the trauma of the Holocaust I. Imre Kertész (winner of the Nobel-Prize in Literature in 2002, Hungarian): <i>Fateless</i> (1975, short novel, I)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.

Week 5, Session 2	World War II and the trauma of the Holocaust II. Imre Kertész (winner of the Nobel-Prize in Literature in 2002, Hungarian): <i>Fateless</i> (1975, short novel, li)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 6, Session 1	Before and after 1956 I. Ádám Bodor (Hungarian-Romanian): “The Outpost” (1968, short-story)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 6, Session 2	Before and after 1956 II. Tibor Déry (Hungarian): “Philemon and Baucis” (1965, short-story)	Take-home midterms due, in print, in class! Deadline: 23/10/2018. The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 7, Session 1	Suffering and the post-modern experience I. Midrag Bulatovic (Serbian): “The Lovers” (1976) (short-story) ,	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 7, Session 2	Suffering and the post-modern experience II. Bohumil Hrabal (Czech): “The World Cafeteria” (1968) (short-story)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 8, Session 1	The Voice of Women in Contemporary Polish Literature I. Olga Tokarczuk (Polish): <i>Primeval and Other Times</i> (1996) (novel)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 8, Session 2	The Voice of Women in Contemporary Polish Literature II. Wisława Szymborska (Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996, Polish) <i>Nothing Twice – Selected Poems</i> (1997) (poems), poems: “Brueghel’s Two Monkeys” (pp. 6-7); “Museum” (pp. 18-19); “A Moment in Troy” (pp. 20-23); “Vocabulary” (pp. 26-	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.

	27); "In Heraclitus' River" (pp. 52-53); "The Joy of Writing" (pp. 60-63); "Tarsier" (pp. 102-105); "A Large Number" (pp. 176-177); "On Death, Without Exaggeration" (pp. 252-255); "Possibilities" (298-301); "Some People Like Poetry" (pp. 324-324); "Slapstick" (pp. 370-373); "We're Extremely Fortunate" (pp. 384-385).	
Week 9, Session 1	"The whole of Russia is a madhouse", voices and politics I. Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (Russian): "Ward No. 6" (longer short-story)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 9, Session 2	Voices and politics II. Milan Kundera (Czech): "Nobody Will Laugh" (short-story, 1974), In: <i>Laughable Loves</i>, pp. 3-38	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 10, Session 1	History, ideology and the "new Hamlet" Slavomir Mrozek (Polish): <i>Tango</i> (drama, 1965)	The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.
Week 10, Session 2	Everyday life "under Communism" and the persecution complex Vaclav Havel (Czech): <i>Largo Desolato</i> (drama, 1984)	Finals are due in print, in class! Deadline: 27/11/2018. The participants read the assignment before class. After introductory remarks, a student gives a ten minute presentation which is followed by discussion.

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- 10.21: Excursion to Mauthausen Memorial Center

REQUIRED READINGS:

- János Pilinszky (Hungarian): "Quatrain" (1956)
- István Örkény (Hungarian): "In Memoriam Dr. K. H. G." (1964).
- Poems by Sándor Petőfi (Hungarian)
- Edgar Allan Poe (American): "The Raven" (1844) (longer poem)
- Mihály Vörösmarty: "The Ancient Gypsy" (ode, 1854)
- János Arany: "Mistress Agnes" (1851, ballad-poem)

- Poems (1906-12) by Endre Ady (Hungarian)
- Zsigmond Móricz (Hungarian): "Barbarians" (1933, short-story)
- Kafka (Austrian-Czech-Jewish): "The Metamorphosis" (longer short-story, 1915)
- Dezső Kosztolányi (Hungarian): *Anna Édes* (1925, novel)
- Imre Kertész (winner of the Nobel-Prize in Literature in 2002, Hungarian): *Fateless* (1975, short novel)
- Ádám Bodor (Hungarian-Romanian): "The Outpost" (1968, short-story)
- Tibor Déry (Hungarian): "Philemon and Baucis" (1965, short-story)
- Midrag Bulatovic (Serbian): "The Lovers" (1976) (short-story)
- Bohumil Hrabal (Czech): "The World Cafeteria" (1968) (short-story)
- Olga Tokarczuk (Polish): *Primeval and Other Times* (1996) (novel)
- Wisława Szymborska (Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996, Polish) *Nothing Twice – Selected Poems* (1997) (poems), poems: "Brueghel's Two Monkeys" (pp. 6-7); "Museum" (pp. 18-19); "A Moment in Troy" (pp. 20-23); "Vocabulary" (pp. 26-27); "In Heraclitus' River" (pp. 52-53); "The Joy of Writing" (pp. 60-63); "Tarsier" (pp. 102-105); "A Large Number" (pp. 176-177); "On Death, Without Exaggeration" (pp. 252-255); "Possibilities" (298-301); "Some People Like Poetry" (pp. 324-324); "Slapstick" (pp. 370-373); "We're Extremely Fortunate" (pp. 384-385).
- Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (Russian): "Ward No. 6" (longer short-story)
- Milan Kundera (Czech): "Nobody Will Laugh" (short-story, 1974), In: *Laughable Loves*, pp. 3-38
- Slavomir Mrozek (Polish): *Tango* (drama, 1965)
- Vaclav Havel (Czech): *Largo Desolato* (drama, 1984)

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Alexandra Büchler (ed.), *Allskin and Other Tales by Contemporary Czech Women*, Seattle: Women in Translation, 1998
- Győző Ferencz (et. al. ed.), *The Lost Rider, An Anthology of Hungarian Poetry*, Budapest: Corvina, 1993
- Miroslav Krleža, *On the Edge of Reason*, trans. from the Croatian by Zoran Depolo, London and New York: Quartet Encounters, 1987
- Milan Kundera: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, London: Faber and Faber, 1999
- Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. from the French by Aaron Asher, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1996
- László Kúnos (et. al. ed.) *Nothing is Lost, An Anthology of Hungarian Short-Stories*, Budapest: Corvina, 1989
- Ádám Makkai (et. al. ed.) *In Quest of the Miracle Stag... A Comprehensive Anthology of Hungarian Poems*, Budapest: Corvina, 2002
- Sándor Márai: *Embers*, London: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001
- Michael March (ed.), *Description of a Struggle, The Vintage Book of Contemporary Eastern European Writing*, New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1994.
- Edmund Ordon (ed.), *10 Contemporary Polish Stories*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974