



LT 332 COMPARATIVE CENTRAL EUROPEAN LITERATURE II: LITERATURE, CULTURE, HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY: SELECT MASTERPIECES OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to promote discourse 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 Modernist period to Postmodernism, between cultural phenomena, historical consciousness, prevailing ideologies and literature. In the Central- and East-European region, poetry, drama 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 and ideological context provided by the instructor, mainly Hungarian pieces but we will also take a look at other East-European countries (Russia, Poland, Serbia, former Czechoslovakia, etc.) as well, and we will ask if an aesthetic reading of literature is still possible. The speciality of the course is that the “strange” or even “alien” (and often tragic) Central European pieces will usually be compared with more familiar American ones to demonstrate parallels in subject-matter, motif, style, attitude and technique. 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 exam, 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 in the Library in photocopies in a course-packet or will be on reserve; please buy the course-packet. 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:

Required reading: the pieces below (no secondary literature required).

- Midterm - 40%
- Final - 50%
- Class-participation - 10%

Midterm

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

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)



Class participation

You are expected to be fully present and to take part in the discussions.

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.

Occasionally a "Quiz" at the beginning of each class

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Be familiar with the outlines of the history and cultural background of Central- (East-) European literature between the period of Modernism and the present day
- 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 Abroad Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions, including field study excursions, internship meetings, scheduled rehearsals, and exams. Attendance will be monitored and unexcused absences will affect the student’s grade via the “Participation” component of each course’s final grade.

Excused Absences

- Excused absences are permitted only when a student is ill, when class is held on a recognized religious holiday traditionally observed by the particular student, or in the case of a grave incident affecting family members.
- To be granted an excused absence, the student must write an email to his/her professor in a timely manner stating the reason for the absence (and, if appropriate, how long they expect to be away) with a cc to Center administrative staff. In an emergency, the student may call Student Services or the Front Desk. If the student is unable to send an email (too sick, no computer), he/she may call the Student Assistant at the front desk (01/512 2601-11) who will then write the email described above and send it to said parties as stated above, with a cc to the student.
- If a student is absent 3 consecutive days or more, he/she will need to obtain a doctor’s note and then submit this to the Registrar’s office.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Readings
Session 1	Getting acquainted and course introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Miklós Radnóti (Hungarian): “Forced march” (1944) -- in various translations
Session 2	On holiday in America and in Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ernest Hemingway (American): Indian Camp (short-story) (1921)• Dezső Kosztolányi (Hungarian): The Swim (short-story) (1924)

Session 3	A dramatic start? Drama I: between realism and the absurd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (Russian): The Cherry Orchard (1903-4)
Session 4	Drama II: The theatre of the absurd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Samuel Beckett (Irish): Waiting for Godot (1947-53)
Session 5	Drama III: Is tragedy still possible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edward Albee (American): Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1963)
Session 6	Drama IV: Alienation and history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bertolt Brecht ([East]German): Mother Courage and Her Children (1936)
Session 7	Drama V: To be home abroad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slawomir Mrozek (Polish): The Emigrants (1972)
Session 8	An East-European in Western Europe West-European Hungarian in Eastern Europe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tadeus Rozevitz (Polish): In the Most Beautiful City in the World (novella) (1957) Géza Ottlik (Hungarian): Nothing's Lost (novella) (1968)
Session 9	Lost references and the working of history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sherwood Anderson (American): I Want To Know Why (short-story) (1924) Géza Csáth (Hungarian): Matricide (short-story) (1915)
Session 10	Sexuality and murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernest Hemingway (American): The Killers (short-story) (1922) Iván Mándy (Hungarian): Ball-Game (short-story) (1951)
Session 11	The reality of mass-murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flannery O'Connor (American): A Good Man Is Hard to Find (short-story) (1955) Tadeus Borowski (Polish): This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen (short-story) (1947)
Session 12	Helplessness, madness and survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicolai Gogol (Russian): Diary of a Madman (short novel) (1835)
Session 13	Self-identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Scott Fitzgerald (American): Babylon Revisited (short-story) (1931)
Session 14	Guilt, punishment and survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gyula Krúdy (Hungarian): The Last Cigar at the Grey Arab (short-story) (1927)
Session 15	In quest of love; crime and punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carson McCullers (American): A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud (short-story) (1942)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milan Kundera (Czech): Edward and God (short-story) (1969)
Session 16	The seeming innocence of cafés and the problem of exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shirley Jackson (American): The Lottery (short-story) (1948) István Örkény (Hungarian): Café Niagara (short-story) (1965)
Session 17		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poems by William Carlos Williams (American), Sándor Weöres (Hungarian) and Vasco Popa (Serbian)
Session 18		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poems by John Berryman (American), János Pilinszky (Hungarian) and Dezső Tandori (Hungarian)
Session 19		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sylvia Plath (American), Zbigniew Herbert (Polish) and Ágnes Nemes Nagy (Hungarian) Take Home Final Due
Session 10	Summary and poetry-reading	

REQUIRED READINGS:

- The pieces above

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