

# To Be (or Not To Be) Central European: 20th Century Central and Eastern European Literature

**Course Code:** MK\_12

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Course tutor: Aleksander Fiut**

Prof. dr hab. Aleksander Fiut is a historian of literature based at the Institute of Polish Philology of the Jagiellonian University. His publications include *Być (albo nie być) Środkowoeuropejczykiem* (To be (or not to be) Central European), Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1999, *Spotkania z Innym* (Meetings with the Other), Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2006.

<http://www.ces.uj.edu.pl/about-ces/faculty-and-staff/faculty/aleksander-fiut>

## **Description**

The course is addressed to graduate students interested in contemporary Eastern European literature and culture. It is based exclusively on English translations and does not require knowledge of the Polish language. The course analyzes reciprocal relations between literature, sociology, politics and anthropology in order to present various self-portraits of the nations whose cultural identity has been endangered in course of their historical experience. Since Nazism and communism shook the traditional system of values, many people have been forced once again to ask themselves the question "Who am I?" After 1989, the question became even more urgent as the nations of Eastern Europe came face to face with new social, political and cultural challenges. The demand for revised self-definition has provoked some East European writers to seek different artistic and philosophical approaches which elucidate the whole European cultural tradition from a new angle.

## **Type of course**

Focus course for Central Eastern European Studies specialization. Additional/elective for Europeanization and Governance in Central and Eastern Europe and EU Studies specialization. MA level.

**Year of Studies:** 1 or 2

**Number of ECTS points**

4.5

**Prerequisites (if applicable)**

N/A

## **Intended Learning Outcomes**

EK1: Student has extended knowledge about European cultural heritage and contemporary cultural life in Europe, as well as the functioning of the most important institutions in this field (K\_W17+++)

EK2: Student has ordered knowledge about the principles and norms of ethics (K\_W20++)

EK3: Student has an ability to search, gather and interpret data and information based on relevant sources; has the ability to evaluate the importance of sources (K\_U01+++)

EK4: Student has competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and opinions on social and ideological issues (K\_U08+++)

EK5: Student has the ability to write independent and creative essays in Polish or in any foreign language (different from the language of study programme) based on a suitable selection of sources and methodological workshops; ability to write an MA thesis based on own research questions/hypotheses (K\_U09+++)

EK6: Student has the ability to prepare presentations and communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions (in Polish or in language of study programme) individually or in a group (K\_U10+++)

EK7: Student has the ability to prepare written or oral presentations which comply with all academic rules and regulations (especially Intellectual Property Law) (K\_U12+++)

EK8: Student is aware of his or her responsibility for preserving the cultural heritage of the region, country and Europe (K\_K04+++)

#### **Course communication**

Students can reach the instructor via e-mail: asfiut@o2.pl or after class.

#### **Notices and announcements**

Any changes in class times etc. will be communicated by email from the office and on the CES notice board.

### **COURSE ORGANISATION**

#### **Spring Semester**

**Time and place:** will be posted by CES in the online calendar

#### **Course type (seminar/lecture/workshop, etc.)**

Each class will be a combination of lecture by the instructor and seminars which will be led by the instructor but include student presentations to be prepared in advance on the subject of the class.

#### **Contact hours:**

- 30 hours - combination of lectures and seminars

#### **Breakdown of ECTS credits**

4,5 ECTS – 112,5 hours that contain:

- 30 hours of lecture and seminar
- 22 hours for preparation of presentations
- 23,5 hours for writing an essay
- 35 hours for reading literature

#### **Didactic methods used**

- Lecture
- Seminar
- Presentation
- Discussion

#### **Mode and criteria of assessment of learning outcomes**

Presentation

EK1, EK2, EK3, EK4, EK6, EK7

Essay

EK1, EK2, EK3, EK5, EK7

Class discussion

EK1, EK4

Evaluation of the student's progress made by the lecturer on the basis of active class participation, his/her presentation and essay

EK2, EK4, EK8

#### **Assessment**

Two presentations of chosen books from the reading list (including an outline of the author's biography, the content of the book and questions for an open discussion) and an essay (10 pages length) covering the scope of the course. Active class participation and the presentations will account 60 % of final grade, the papers for the remaining 40%.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title of the session</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Format (lecture, seminar, combination?)</b>
1	Introduction	Online	Lecture

		calendar	
<b>Part 1. Facing Totalitarianism.</b>			
Does Central Europe exist?			
2	T. Judt, <i>The Rediscovery of Central Europe</i> ; Cz. Milosz, <i>Central European Attitudes</i>	Online calendar	Combination
3	F. Kafka, <i>The Trial</i> as a symbolic model of totalitarian system	Online calendar	Combination
Analysis of mentality affected by Nazi and Marxist ideology			
4	G. Grass, <i>Tin Drum</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
5	Cz. Milosz, <i>The Captive Mind</i> (Chapter V), <i>Child of Europe</i>	Online calendar	Combination
6	M. Kundera, <i>The Joke</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
<b>Morality and politics</b>			
7	J. Brodsky, <i>Less than One</i> (from the collection of essays under the same title)	Online calendar	Combination
8	Cz. Milosz, <i>The Captive Mind</i> (Chapter IX), Z. Herbert, <i>The Power of Taste</i>	Online calendar	
9	T. Konwicki, <i>A Minor Apocalypse</i>	Online calendar	Combination
<b>Part 2. Facing Decay of Form</b>			
Literature as a model of cultural and social transformations			
10	W. Gombrowicz, <i>Ferdydurke</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
From literary game to catastrophic vision of history			
11	S. Mrozek, <i>Elephant, Tango</i>	Online calendar	Combination
From modernism to postmodernism			
12	D. Kiš, <i>The Mechanic Lions</i> from: <i>A Tomb for Boris Davidovich</i>	Online calendar	Combination

Part 3. Facing the Others			
Individual freedom versus social rules			
13	W. Gombrowicz, <i>Diary</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
14	M. Kundera, <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
Eastern Europe – forgotten provinces			
15	B. Hrabal, <i>Total Fears</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
16	Peter Esterhazy, <i>The Book of Hrabal</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
17	George Konrad, <i>Being Hungarian in Europe, The Melancholy of Rebirth</i>	Online calendar	Combination
18	A. Stasiuk, <i>Tales of Galicia</i> (fragments: <i>Józek, Władek, Blacksmith Kruk, Place, Kościejny, The Second Night, The End</i> )	Online calendar	Combination

### DETAILED STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

<b>Session no. 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<i>Format</i>	Lecture
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed</i>	Introduction to the themes, subjects, requirements and expectations of the course. Organisation of seminars, presentations etc.
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	None

<b>Session no. 2</b>	<b>Does Central Europe exist?</b>
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<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Introduction to the Theme of Central Europe; awareness of history in Central European literature
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	T. Judt, <i>The Rediscovery of Central Europe</i> , "Dedalus" Winter 1990, 119; Cz. Milosz, <i>Central European Attitudes</i> , "Cross Currents" 5 (1986)

<b>Session no. 3</b>	<b>Part 1. Facing Totalitarianism</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	The social structure of an oppressive system; position of an individual; legality vs. illegality; corruption of law; bureaucracy; question of guilt and innocence; human nature vs. authority
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	F. Kafka, <i>The Trial</i> as a symbolic model of totalitarian system

<b>Session no. 4</b>	<b>Analysis of mentality affected by Nazi and Marxist ideology 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Cultural melting-pot; concept of main character; corruption of society by Nazism; sense of guilt; symbolic meaning of the novel's title
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	G. Grass, <i>Tin Drum</i> (The Rostrum; Faith, Hope, Love; The Polish Post Office)

<b>Session no. 5</b>	
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Social and political results of II World's War experiences; Western civilization viewed from the Central-European perspective
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Cz. Milosz, <i>The Captive Mind</i> (Chapter V), <i>Child of Europe</i>

<b>Session no. 6</b>	<b>Analysis of mentality affected by Nazi and Marxist ideology 2</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion (based on readings)</i>	Seductiveness of Marxism; forms of political terror; Kundera's view on Soviet Union and communism; morality and politics
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	M. Kundera, <i>The Joke</i> (fragments)

<b>Session no. 7</b>	<b>Morality and politics 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Coping with Jewish identity; role of poetry and a poet; nostalgia of past vs. communist system
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	J. Brodsky, <i>Less than One</i> (from the collection of essays under the same title)

<b>Session no. 8</b>	<b>Morality and politics 2</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Forms of the Stalinist terror (deportations, forced migration, imprisonment); destruction of European heritage; the fate of the Baltics as a model for the whole Central Europe
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Cz. Milosz, <i>The Captive Mind</i> (Chapter IX), Z. Herbert, <i>The Power of Taste</i>

<b>Session no. 9</b>	<b>Literary vision of the fall of the communist system</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Dystopia as a version of eschatological vision; political criticism through a grotesque distortion; false identity; role of writer in political life
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	T. Konwicki, <i>A Minor Apocalypse</i>

<b>Session no. 10</b>	<b>Part 2. Facing Decay of Form</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion (based on readings)</i>	Concept of Form (form vs. chaos, superiority vs. inferiority, immaturity vs. maturity, innocence vs. corruption); limits of authenticity and freedom
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	W. Gombrowicz, <i>Ferdydurke</i> (fragments)

<b>Session no. 11</b>	<b>Literature as a model of cultural and social transformations</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Political satire vs. limits of the Stalinist censorship; Mrozek's dialogue with Gombrowicz; diagnosis of European civilization (the crisis of morality, art and culture); analysis of creation of totalitarian mechanisms
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	S. Mrozek, <i>Elephant, Tango</i>

<b>Session no. 12</b>	<b>From modernism to postmodernism</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Nationalism, Judaism, relativism; destruction of classic categories; fact and fiction; historical truth and its political prefabrication; struggle for identity; polemic with Borges
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	D. Kiš, <i>The Mechanical Lions</i> from: <i>A Tomb for Boris Davidovich</i> )
	D. Kiš, <i>Homo Poeticus</i> (selected essays)

<b>Session no. 13</b>	<b>Individual freedom versus social rules 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Authenticity and relativity; question of national identity (Polish, Argentinean, German); discussion on colonialism; structure of diary
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	W. Gombrowicz, <i>Diary</i> (fragments)

<b>Session no. 14</b>	<b>Individual freedom versus social rules 2</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Lightness vs. weight; body vs. soul; sex vs. love; concept of kitsch; cultural and social position of woman
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	M. Kundera, <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i> ( Part One, Two, Five)

<b>Session no. 15</b>	<b>Eastern Europe – forgotten provinces 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Idealization of past versus depreciation of present; modern versus postmodern; Czech burgher in New York; view on Andy Warhol
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	B. Hrabal, <i>Total Fears</i> (fragments)

<b>Session no. 16</b>	<b>Eastern Europe – forgotten provinces 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Dialogue with Hrabal; view on Hungary history; modern versus postmodern; position of woman
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Peter Esterhazy, <i>The Book of Hrabal</i> (fragments)

<b>Session no. 17</b>	<b>Eastern Europe – forgotten provinces 2</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Problems of political and social transformations after 1989; remains of post communist mentality versus democracy
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	George Konrad, <i>Being Hungarian in Europe, The Melancholy of Rebirth</i>

<b>Session no. 18</b>	<b>Eastern Europe – forgotten provinces 3</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination



<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Lasting effects of communism in Polish province; transformations of people's mentality under capitalistic system; natural and metaphysical
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	A. Stasiuk, <i>Tales of Galicia</i> (fragments)