

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

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Course tutor(s):** 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) Środkowo europejszym* (To be (or not to be) Central European), Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1999.

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

### Description

The course is addressed to undergraduate 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

Undergraduate study abroad

### Number of ECTS points

6

### Prerequisites (if applicable)

N/A

### Course communication

Students can reach the instructor via e-mail: [asfiut@o2.pl](mailto:asfiut@o2.pl) or after the classes.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

EK1: A foundation knowledge of the European cultural heritage and contemporary cultural affairs, as well as of the activities of the principal institutions engaged in cultural affairs (K\_W17+++)

EK2: A well-ordered knowledge of the ethical standards and principles (K\_W20++)

EK3: Ability to identify, select, and correctly apply information, making use of an appropriate choice of sources (K\_U01+++)

EK4: Ability to express and defend his/her own opinions on social matters and worldview (K\_U08+++)

EK5: Ability to write simple essays on an academic subject using a suitable selection of source materials and workshop resources; ability to write a final diploma paper entailing appropriately formulated and verified research hypotheses (K\_U09+++)

EK6: Ability to prepare and deliver an oral presentation compiled on the basis of his/her own individual work or the collective effort of a team (K\_U10+++)

EK7: Ability to follow the principles of honest and thorough academic work in his/her written and oral presentations (K\_U12+++)

EK8: Awareness of his/her responsibility for the preservation of the cultural heritage of his/her region, country, and Europe (K\_K04+++)

### Notices and announcements

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

### Course communication

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### **COURSE ORGANIZATION**

#### **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**

40 hours

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

Participation in classes: 40h

Preparation of presentation: 32h

Writing and essay: 33h

Reading literature: 45h

Total: 150 h

#### **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 – 30 min.) and an essay (10 pages length, 19 000 characters) covering the scope of the course. Active class participation and the presentations will account for 60 % of the 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 calendar	Lecture
<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	Online	Combination

	model of totalitarian system	calendar	
Analysis of mentality affected by Nazi and Marxist ideology			
4	G. Grass, <i>Tin Drum</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
5	Cz. Miłosz, <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. Miłosz, <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>Ferdynand</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
From literary game to catastrophic vision of history			
11	S. Mrożek, <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
<b>Part 3. Facing the Others</b>			
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
	<b>Part 4. Women in Central Europe</b>		
19	Wisława Szymborska, <i>Poems</i>	Online calendar	Combination

20	Anna Swir, <i>Poems</i>	Online calendar	Combination
21	Dubravka Ugrešić, <i>Balkan Blues</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
22	Oksana Zabuzhko <i>Field Work In Ukrainian Sex</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
23	Dorota Masłowska, UK edition: <i>White and Red</i> , US edition: <i>Snow White and Russian</i> (fragments)	Online calendar	Combination
24	Herta Müller, <i>The Passport, Serpent's Tail</i> , 1989 (fragments)	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>
<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. Miłosz, <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>	Social structure of an oppressive system; position of the 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 systems

<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 the past vs. the 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 of Central Europe.

<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Cz. Miłosz, <i>The Captive Mind</i> (Chapter IX), Z. Herbert, <i>The Power of Taste</i>
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<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; the role of the 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 Hungarian history; modern versus postmodern; position of women
<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 the Polish countryside; transformations of people's mentality under the capitalistic system; natural and metaphysical

<i>Key readings for the session</i>	A. Stasiuk, <i>Tales of Galicia</i> (fragments)
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<b>Session no. 19</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 1</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Woman's poetry in a Communist state; game with censorship; politics versus philosophical problems; ironic existence
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	W. Szymborska, <i>Poems</i>

<b>Session no. 20</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 2</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	philosophy of body; breaking sexual taboo
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	A. Swir, <i>Poems</i>

<b>Session no. 21</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 3</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Consequences of War in Yugoslavia; totalitarianism versus nationalism; empty identity
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	D. Ugrešić, <i>Balkan Blues</i> (fragments)

<b>Session 22</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 4</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Position of woman in Ukraine; confrontation with Western civilisation; violence as a mode of existence
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	O. Zabuzhko <i>Field Work in Ukrainian Sex</i> (fragments)

<b>Session 23</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 5</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	Portrait of the blockers; forms of the young generation's rebellion; parody of styles; facing the myth of consumerism; ethnicity versus globalisation
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Dorota Masłowska, UK edition: <i>White and Red</i> or US edition: <i>Snow White and Russian</i> (fragments)

<b>Session 24</b>	<b>Women in Eastern Europe 6</b>
<i>Format</i>	Combination
<i>Aim of the session, main issues discussed / Questions for class discussion</i>	The German minority in Romania during Ceaușescu's regime ; clashes of cultures and civilisations; reification of woman
<i>Key readings for the session</i>	Herta Müller, <i>The Passport, Serpent's Tail</i> , 1989 (fragments)



