

CZECH CINEMA: NEW WAVE AND BEYOND

Coordinators: Robert Gerace and Eva Vogel

We survey films from the Czech cinema after WW II, beginning with the German and Soviet Occupations, continuing with the Czech New Wave and the Prague Spring of the 1960's, and ending with more contemporary films of the modern era. Our materials on Czech and Slovak history and culture provide a framework and context for critical evaluation. We ask which policies and attitudes of the prevailing Soviet and German authorities are satirized in these films? How do the directors attempt to bypass strict censorship of this veiled government criticism? We come to understand the importance of the Czech film industry and how it reflected the historic struggles and aspirations of the citizens of Bohemia and Slovakia.

Readings and other Required Materials:

Subscription to Netflix is required.

Class handouts and Web references will be provided. They include film reviews, director biographies and articles on Czech and Slovak history and culture.

Robert has coordinated study groups on Greenwich Village Writers, Italian Neo Realism, and French New Wave Cinema. **Eva** is an enthusiast of Czech and Slovak films that reflect her family's experience of the WWII German occupation and her own life during the Soviet occupations after 1968.

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After viewing the films at home we consider assigned questions about theme, character development, cinematography and director's style. We evaluate our answers as we view and discuss film clips of the highlights shown in class. Students are encouraged to submit their own questions for class discussion.

Assigned background readings include:

"Prague Spring: Russian tanks in the streets and a New Wave in the cinema," Peter Hames, *The Manchester Guardian*, 1999.

Czechoslovakian History and Humor: A Fight Against Forgetting," Amy Ebersole, *Syllabus for a course: The History of International Cinema*, 2012.

Films to be viewed include:

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

The Shop On Main Street

The Fireman's Ball

Kolya

Zelary

Rusalka, (opera)

Loves of A Blonde

Closely Watched Trains

Divided We Fall

Autumn Spring

I Served the King of England

Burning Bush.