

Understanding the Innovative Potential of Central Europe: The Region's Economic, Political, and Cultural Environment

Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic

Syllabus of the Summer School program, 12 July – 2 August 2020

Central Europe was the focus point of global dynamics for couple of times during the 20th century and before due to its strategic position in between Germany and Russia. This is where both World Wars started and were fought to a large extent. It was also the region of primer importance after the fall of communism in 1989 with its ambitious plans for rapid transformation from the state-controlled system towards liberal democratic political system and market-led economy, resulting in expansion of the European Union and NATO. Currently, the region is again in the forefront of the international political environment and it is also the most dynamically developing part of the EU.

The offered Summer School aims at providing students with broad understanding of Central Europe's defining characteristics from six most relevant perspectives: history and international affairs, culture and society, politics, economy, natural environment management, and business opportunities. The course is designed as an interdisciplinary forum to give a student from any background sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to critically evaluate the regional development.

The intensive and dynamic program will involve academic classes, interactive discussions, group work, and out of classroom excursions and discussions with relevant people, visits of international organizations and NGOs – including headquarters of United Nations, OPEC, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungarian Parliament and others. In addition to the academic program, rich cultural program will be integral to the course along with field trips with the purpose of looking at the discussed issues on the ground level.

The participants of this course will:

- Understand and be able to analyse development in contemporary Central Europe, including Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, and their relations with both Western and Eastern Europe
- Grasp the theory of relevant academic fields, in particular political science, economy, international relations, sociology and environmental studies
- Take part in unique cultural program and visit four countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia



Course Dates:

- 12 July – 2 August 2020
- 3 weeks altogether - each week will include 4 days in Brno and 3 days on an excursion

Main organizers:

Richard Q. Turcsanyi, Ph.D. (richard.turcsanyi@mendelu.cz)

- Richard is an Assistant Professor at Mendel University in Brno, Deputy Director of Institute of Asian Studies in Bratislava, and Senior Researcher at Palacky University Olomouc. He received Ph.D. in international relations from Masaryk University, where he also studied economy and political science. In the past, he conducted long-term study and research stays at University of Toronto, Peking University, National Chengchi University in Taipei and European Institute for Asian Studies in Brussels. Richard has broad experience with lecturing on international relations, security and economic issues of Central Europe and East Asia. In his academic research, he focuses mostly on Central Europe's relations with East Asia and Chinese foreign policy.

Runya Qiaoan, Ph.D. (runya.qiaoan@mendelu.cz)

- Runya teaches and researches at Mendel University and Masaryk University (both in Brno) and she is an analyst at Institute of Asia Studies, Bratislava. She studied philosophy and sociology at Masaryk University, University of Toronto, National Chengchi University and Utrecht University. In the past years, she has been working and living in the Czech Republic, Canada, Taiwan and the Netherlands. Runya's research interests include civil society and NGOs, cultural sociology and China-Central Eastern Europe relations. Runya's publications appeared in international scientific journals, such as The China Quarterly, Journal of Cognition and Culture and Europe-Asia Studies.

Price of the program:

standard price 2 500 EUR (application deadline by 31 March 2019, payment deadline for deposit by 30 April 2019 via bank transfer, full price by 30 June 2019).

discounted price 2 300 EUR (price valid for partner institutions, for groups, and in case of application and payment by 31 January 2019).

- The price includes:
 - o Tuition fee
 - o Accommodation during the whole program (both in the Czech Republic and on the trips organized as part of the program)



- Food plan for the time in Brno (including breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the university canteen)
 - Transportation (for the trips and in Brno)
 - Rich extracurricular and cultural program
 - 24/7 assistance and support during the program
- The price does NOT include the transportation from your country to the Czech Republic, visa expenses, full food plan on the weekend trip, personal expenses, or any other items not listed above

Cancellation policy: in case of denied visa, full participation fee/deposit will be refunded. If the participation is cancelled for other reason until 15 June 2020, 50 % of deposit will be refunded. After this day, the participation fee/deposit will not be refunded.

Program outline

Week One

Monday-Thursday: Bloc 1 (History and International Affairs) and bloc 2 (Politics and European Union)

Friday-Sunday: Budapest and Bratislava trip (Visit of the Hungarian Parliament)

Week Two

Monday-Thursday: Bloc 3 (Society and Culture) and bloc 4 (Economy)

Friday-Sunday: Prague trip (Visit of a Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Week Three

Monday-Thursday: Bloc 5 (Environment) and Bloc 6 (Business Opportunities)

Friday-Sunday: Vienna trip (Visit of the United Nations Headquarters)

Grading and evaluation

Students' assessment of the course will consist altogether of the following separate parts:

- Active participation in classes (10 points)
- Mid-term exam (20 points)
- Final exam (40 points)
- Final presentation (30 points)

The threshold to pass is 60 points of maximum 100. The grading scale is as follows:

- A 100-90,
- B 89-80
- C 79-70,
- D 69-65,
- E 64-60,
- F 59 – 0.

Students will receive a transcript from Mendel University in Brno confirming the award of 8 ECTS (credits) upon receiving more than 60 points in the final assessment.

Mandatory readings

- Magocsi, Paul Robert. "Eastern, East-Central, or Central Europe: Where is it and what is it?" *Calendar-Almanac National Slovak Society of the USA*, Vol. 113, pp. 128 – 140.
- Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*. V. 31, No. 7, April 26, 1984.
- Daniel Chirot, "What happened in Eastern Europe in 1989?", *Praxis*. V. 10/ No. ¾. October 1990.
- Holý, Ladislav. 1996. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation*. Cambridge, England, and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Balík, Stanislav, Jan Holzer and Lubomír Kopeček (2008): *Czechoslovakia in 1989 - a case of successful transition*. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, Vol 5, No 1, pp 19 - 42.
- Central and Eastern European Development Institute. 2011. *CEED: Achievements, Opportunities, Challenges*. Warsaw.
- Ludek Kolman, Niels G. Noorderhaven, Geert Hofstede, Elisabeth Dienes, (2003) "Cross-cultural differences in Central Europe", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 18 Issue: 1, pp.76-88.

Blocs of the teaching

Bloc 1: History and international affairs of the region (Monday-Tuesday)

The first bloc will introduce Central Europe as a specific region and it will briefly discuss the most important historical milestones both from internal and external perspective. International relations have been extremely important factor influencing the development of Central Europe and they remain so in the 21st century.

- Students will understand the sources of communist success in the aftermath of the Second World War and the nature of the communist systems in Central Europe
- Participants will understand the internal and external factors that contributed to the collapse of the communist order in Central Europe.
- Participants will discuss Central Europe's integration with EU and NATO and their position today with worsening relations between the EU/NATO and Russia

Teachers:

Richard Q. Turcsanyi, Ph.D. (profile see above)

Martin Hrabalek, Ph.D.

- Martin is a lecturer at the Department of Territorial Studies at Mendel University. He studied and received Ph.D. in European Studies at Masaryk University. He teaches courses on European politics and foreign affairs. In his research, he also specializes in Latin American politics and EU external policies

Bloc 2: Political context and the European Union (Wednesday-Thursday)

The political cluster will provide information about the processes of political transformation during the transformation period in 1990s and follow up on the discussion about the politics in present days Central Europe. Based on the last two decades, participants would be able to critically assess opportunities and struggles of political development in Central Europe and describe the key challenges we face today.

- Students will discuss how to define democracy and what are the possible outcomes of political transformation
- Participants will get familiar with the Central European cases of political transformation in the aftermath of 1989
- Students will critically assess and discuss today's political systems in Central Europe with their strengths and shortcomings



Teachers:

Eva Taterova, Ph.D.

- Eva is a vice-dean of Faculty of Regional Development and Territorial Studies of Mendel University in Brno. Her main research interests are Middle Eastern affairs.

Ondrej Mocek, Ph.D.

- Ondrej is a vice-dean of Faculty of Regional Development and Territorial Studies of Mendel University in Brno and an Associate Researcher of Association for International Affairs in Prague. His main research interest is the European Union.

Bloc 3: Culture and Society of Central Europe

The goal of the block "Culture and Society in Central Europe" is to prepare the attendees to better understand the people from the region of Central Europe and successfully communicate with them in various settings. In the first part of the block, they will discuss what actually culture is and how people from various parts of the world differ in their attitudes, values, habits and behavior. We will also learn about the major influences that shaped the culture in Central Europe in the recent past. In the second part of the block, we will focus on the similarities and differences in verbal and non-verbal communication between Asia and Central Europe.

- Participants will understand typical cultural features of Central Europe, such as architecture, literature, paintings, music, folk tradition, etc.
- Students will be able to analyse the sources of Central European understanding of their communist experience and their re-integration with the Western Europe after 1989
- Students will learn what the civil society is and what roles it can take in Central Europe

Teachers:

Runya Qiaoan (Profile see above)



Bloc 4: Regional economy before and after 1989

The economic cluster will provide students with knowledge about the state-planned economic system in Central Europe before 1989, its unique transformation experience afterwards, and current conditions making it the fastest developing region in the EU. Focus will be paid to internal economic processes as well as how the region became interlinked with the international economic environment, making the countries here some of the most open economies in the world.

- Students will exercise orientation in the development of the economies in Central Europe during the transformation period
- Students will acquire dispositions for better understanding of the contemporary economic development in the region

Teachers:

Prof. Libor Zidek – profile will be added

Sylvie Formankova, Ph.D. – profile will be added

Bloc 5: Central European natural environment

The bloc will discuss Central European region from the perspective of environmental studies and it will focus on what the region's natural environment offers in terms of eco-systemic services. Particular attention will be paid at how the management of natural environment changed since 1989 and how that contributed to the improved environmental situation in the present days. Best practices and technological know-how will be also highlighted. The second day will take place outside – students will observe the university forest and other relevant features of the regional natural eco-systems.

Teacher:

Jiri Schneider, Ph.D.

- Jiri is a Dean of the Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies at Mendel University. He teaches courses on regional development, environmental planning, and EU policies in related areas. In his research, he specializes in forest management and eco-system services, most recently with the particular focus of the functions of rivers in both urban and rural areas.

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● International Studies

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● and Economics

Bloc 6: Business opportunities in Central Europe

The final bloc in the course will discuss opportunities of making business in Central Europe from various perspective. The bloc will consist of an initial lecture summing up the course, discussion, group work and presentations of the final projects.

- Students will learn to analyze business potential of Central Europe
- Students will present a group project of a business idea for a Chinese/Asian/your country business in Central Europe

Teacher:

Richard Q. Turcsanyi, Ph.D. (see profile above)