

DEPTS: SLAVIC - COMPARATIVE LITERATURE - JEWISH STUDIES  
PROFESSOR BRONISLAVA VOLKOVA

C 365/565: **Czech and Jewish Culture in Bohemia:**

**Poetry, Thought, Film and Novel**

Syllabus, Fall 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> Eight Weeks Class

1. **Introduction: History and Culture in Bohemia:** Czech, Jewish, German.

Reading: Čornej, Petr & Pokorný, Jiří: *A Brief History of the Czech Lands to 2004*, Prague: Práh, 2003. Reserve.

2. **Christians and Jews in 17<sup>th</sup> century Bohemia:** Rabbi Loew and Comenius.

Paul Wegener: *The Golem*, video 1920.

Reading: Hillel J. Kieval: "Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition" in *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1997, p. 1-23, Oxford UP; O. Odložilík: "Jan Amos Komenský"; H. Stránský: "Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and Jan Amos Comenius: Two Reformers in Education", both in *Comenius*, edited by Vratislav Bušek, New York: Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, 1972 (pp. 11-18, 104-116); (reader).

**ORAL REPORTS**

**Complementary Film:** *The Cremator* by Ladislav Fuks/Juraj Herz, 1968 (October 17, Thu, Lindley Hall 102, 7 PM)

3. **Subjectivization of the World View at the Turn of the Century.** The New Poetry:

Březina, Hlaváček, Karásek, Gellner, Šrámek, Hora.

Reading: Volková & Cloutier: *Up the Devil's Back* (reader).

**ORAL REPORTS, QUIZ**

4. **The Czech and Jewish Absurd:** Hašek & Kafka.

\*Reading: J. Hašek: *The Good Soldier Švejk* (selections), F. Kafka: *Metamorphosis* (reader).

**ORAL REPORTS**

5. **The Playful 20s and the Serious 30s:** Poetism, Surrealism and the Turning of the Tide: Seifert, Nezval, Vančura, Orten; The Linguistic Circle of Prague.

\*Reading: Volková & Cloutier: *Up the Devil's Back* (reader); V. Nezval: *Valerie and her Week of Wonders*, Twisted Spoon Press, Prague, 2005.

#### ORAL REPORTS

6. **The Jewish Humor:** Poláček, Haas, *A Dog's Life*, film by M. Frič, 1933.

#### DISCUSSION

7. **The Czech Language Writers on the Topic of the Marginalized:** Čapek, Olbracht.

\*Reading: I. Olbracht: "The Sorrowful Eyes of Hannah Karajich" in *The Bitter and the Sweet* (reader)

#### ORAL REPORTS, QUIZ

8. **The German Language Writers and the Whirlwind of History:** Werfel.

\*Reading: F. Werfel: *Jacobowski and the Colonel*.

#### ORAL REPORTS

**Complementary film:** *The Belly Button Game* by Jan Hřebejk (November 17, Thu, Lindley Hall 102, 7 PM)

9. **The Darkest Time:** Otčenášek, Fuks, Lustig, Pavel. *Sweet Light in a Dark Room*, film by Jiří Weiss, 1960.

#### DISCUSSION

10. **Arnošt Lustig**, a Portrayer of Jewish Women during the Holocaust.

\*Reading: A. Lustig: *Unloved*.

#### ORAL REPORTS

11. **The Horror and Humor of Godlessness:** Kundera, Hrabal, Havel.

\*Reading: M. Kundera: *The Farewell Party*; Hrabal: *Too Loud a Solitude*; V. Havel: *The Garden Party* (reader).

### ORAL REPORTS, QUIZ

12. **The Suppressed Voices:** Poetry of Holan, Štroblová, Volková, Vokolek, Bondy, Juliš.

Reading: Volková & Cloutier: *Up the Devil's Back* (reader).

### ORAL REPORTS, PAPERS DUE

**Requirements:** Active participation, oral reports, some of which can be developed into a paper, quizzes.

**Paper Topics:** Work of Kafka, Nezval, Olbracht, Poláček, Werfel,  
Lustig, Fuks, Havel, Kundera, Hrabal

### Complementary Obligatory Films:

*The Cremator* by Ladislav Fuks/Juraj Herz, 1968 (October 17)

*Citizen Havel Goes on Vacation* by Jan Novák, (November 17)

### Bibliography:

Čornej: *A Brief History of the Czech Lands to 2004*, Prague: Práh, 2003.

Volkova & Cloutier: *Up the Devil's Back*, Slavia Publishers, Bloomington, 2008 (reader).

Nezval: *Valerie and her Week of Wonders*, Twisted Spoon Press, Prague, 2005.

Olbracht: "The Sorrowful Eyes of Hannah Karajich", *The Bitter and the Sweet*, New York: Crown Publishers, 1967 (reader).

Kafka: *Metamorphosis in Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, London; New York : Penguin, 2007 (reader).

Lustig: *Unloved*, New York: Arbor House, 1985.

Kundera: *Farewell Party*, London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Werfel: *Jakobowski and the Colonel*, New York, The Viking Press, 1944 (reader).

Hrabal: *Too Loud a Solitude*, London: Abacus, 1993.

Havel: *The Garden Party*, New York: Grove Press, 1993.