

Český jazyk

Czech Language and Culture

Russ 291

Spring, 2004

Geo. Cummins

Russian 291: WF 3:30-4:45

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office MTWF 11-12 and by appointment

Website: www.tulane.edu/~gcummins; select Russian 291. Czech

Course Description and Goals

This course provides an introduction to the language and culture of the Czechs. No knowledge of Czech, Russian, or any Slavic language is presupposed. Students should have some experience with studying and reading a language other than English, as well as an enthusiastic curiosity about this remarkable small nation and its people. The course is an LAS humanity but fulfills no proficiency requirement.

(1) Language study begins with the fundamentals as presented in a contemporary “communicative approach” text, *Čeština hrou*. Progress will be steady and rapid toward a basic control of reading, understanding, writing, and speaking Czech, with much of the responsibility on the student for mature self-motivation, as we meet only twice weekly. As much as possible the class will be held in Czech, with some — or many, or most

— grammar presentations in English. By May the student will be able to understand simple discourse, street and shop signs, basic historical material, dialogues, and will be able to construct simple utterances, make inquiries, provide information in Czech. She will be able to read aloud, slowly, but with confidence, any printed Czech text and she will be familiar with the most basic grammatical categories of the language.

(2) Examination of Czech culture comprises some classic texts of Czech literature, including Čapek's *Conversations with Masaryk*, Hrabal's *I Served the English King*, Hašek's *Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk*, Škvorecký's *Engineer of Human Souls*, and others. These works will be discussed in student-driven seminar-style panel sessions, with coaching and lecturing from the instructor. Video materials from the ČR as well as music will be introduced as discussed.

Course Methodology and Requirements

All assignments, handouts, discussions, and supplementary materials will be posted on my web site as they are ready. Students are expected to have internet access.

Attendance is essential for success in learning language skills. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation grade (see below); after four such absences, the final grade will be reduced by one point (A>A-, A->B plus) for each absence. Students are encouraged to attend class as regularly as possible, and in return have the instructor's word that they will not be badgered, grilled or punished for incomplete homework assignments. All students who attend this class are sure to learn some Czech and will be treated with respect. May I quote to you from our departmental policy on introductory and intermediate language classes: "Actively participating in class, that is, interacting with others in the target language, is the single most important aspect of language learning." Participation includes not only attending class and participating in discussion and debate, but also completing homework on

time, reading and preparing the assigned text materials, and asking questions when you do not understand.”

This course is open to all members of the academic community, auditors and regularly enrolled students. Anyone may attend at any time; though they will not be allowed to interfere with the work of the regulars, auditors and visitors may ask questions, participate in Czech recitation and panel discussions. All are welcome.

I ask you to do homework assignments on time as much as possible, to participate in class recitation and discussion, to ask questions when I am unclear, to take quizzes and tests with good humor and equanimity. The key to learning a language is good, steady work, work that is sustained and pleasurable, that is goal-directed toward real results. Be prepared to enjoy what you are doing and to do it regularly.

Texts

Kresin, Kořánová, Subak-Kaspar, Kašpar. *Čeština hrou*. Revised 2nd edition, 2000. McGraw-Hill.
Textbook, workbook and audio tapes.

Čapek, Karel. *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*. Translated by Dora Round, ed. Michael Heim. 1995. Catbird Press.

Hrabal, Bohumil. *I Served the King of England*. Translated by Paul Wilson. 1990. Vintage.

Hrabal, Bohumil. *Too Loud a Solitude*. Translated by Michael Heim. 1990. Harvest-Harcourt.

Škvorecký, Josef. *The Engineer of Human Souls*. Translated by Paul Wilson. 1984. Dalkey Archive Press.

Hašek, Jaroslav. *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk*. Part I. [Any translation; one is on order in the tent store].

Other materials will be announced as they arrive or be placed on library reserve.

Disabilities

If you have special needs related to a disability that may affect your performance in the course, please speak to the instructor after class or arrange an appointment to discuss your needs privately. This should be done as early as possible in the semester.

Grades

The course grade will be computed on

quizzes	50%
recitation/homework	50%

Scale:

93-100	A	72-76	C
89-92	A-	69-71	C-
86-88	B+	67-68	D+
82-85	B	62-66	D
79-81	B-	58-61	D-
77-78	C+	x-57	F

There will be no final examination in this course.

