

Course Title

Between History and Dreams

What to expect

Historical insight into Prague's mysticism and foundation legends, exploration of magical places, and a search for alchemy symbols often hidden in plain sight.

Overview

Track	LovePrague
Instructor	Pavla Jonssonova
Date	March 4 - 25, 2021
Format	Four-week course
Delivery	On campus / in city
Price	6,000 CZK
Academic credits	N/A
Pre-requisites	N/A
Language	English

Course Description

Prague is one of the last great European cities where - as Rainier Maria Rilke once said - "things are aware of us". Its cobble-stoned streets, narrow alleys and alchemical symbols often act as a time-machine transporting us to another era. This course intends to take participants on a journey to uncover Prague's magic and mysteries, spirits and sprites, history and dreams.

The course is fully experiential, with classes held in Prague, visiting actual places. Relevant literature and readings will be provided to all participants in advance.

The first session begins at the ancient site of Vyšehrad, where professor Jonssonova will explain the concept of foundation myths and their significance, followed by a visit to the cemetery of the Czech greats.

The second class will show the ritual of the initiation journey started by Charles IV (1316-1378) before his coronation in 1347. It begins in the East at the Royal Gate (Powder Tower), goes towards the St. Vitus Cathedral (Liber lucis -book of light), and pays respects to the Golden Angel, Black Madonna, White Peacock, Black Sun, etc. Later the alchemists of

Rudolph II (1576 –1612) worked with its legacy. The surrealists of the 20th century used these signs, as do psychotherapists when they guide us on our transformation from coal to gold, from sunrise to sunset.

A great part of Prague history is connected with the Jewish community, its scholars and writers, which will be discussed in the third session. We will visit the wish machine, the tomb of rabbi Loew, the legendary creator of the first artificial human being. Franz Kafka will be mentioned and his museum will be visited.

The last session is about discussing the current spirituality of the Czechs, the Virgin Mary column at Old Town Square, and some popular religions of the East.

Learning Outcomes

- * Find out about the prehistory of Prague, its foundation myths and legends
- * Understand the secret alchemical symbols used on the Royal Route and see the connection between the ancient and the new
- * Learn how the Jewish community enriched Czech culture and how they are intertwined
- * Learn about Czech spirituality past and present

Methodology

Academic course led by a professor of AAU who will provide insights from her hands-on experience and research. All four walks will visit places connected with myths, legends, and genius loci. Participants are encouraged to prepare for the topics with provided readings.

Schedule and Course Content

Session 1				
Topic	Date	Time	Place	Duration
Foundation myths and the cemetery of the greats	March 4	2pm - 5pm	Vyšehrad	3 hours
Description	During Romanticism, all European countries tried to answer the philosophical question “where do we come from” by writing down their foundation myths. The Italians have Romulus and Remus, British king Arthur, Germans the Nibelung Rings etc. We will take a look at the Czech foundation myths. Walking around Vyšehrad, we will visit the Pantheon with art nouveau statues of Myslбек and ponder on the visions of Libuše, the archetype of wisdom and love. We will pay homage to the many Czech greats at the cemetery.			
Materials	Alois Jirásek. <i>Old Czech Legends</i> . Petr Demetz. <i>Libussa, or Versions of Origin</i>			
Session 2				
Topic	Date	Time	Place	Duration
Alchemical Symbols on the Royal Route Connecting the ancient and contemporary interpretation of the door signs	March 11	2pm - 5pm	Walk across Prague following the Royal Route	3 hours
Description	We will meet at the Powder Tower and walk the Royal Route, discussing the deeper meanings of the Golden Angel, Black Madonna, White Peacock, Unicorn, and many others on the way .			
Materials	Václav Cílek. <i>Spirit of the City</i> Angelo Maria Ripellino. <i>Magic Prague</i> Ivan Klíma. <i>Spirit of the City</i>			
Session 3				
Topic	Date	Time	Place	Duration
Old Jewish cemetery and Rabbi Loew Franz Kafka	March 18	2pm - 5pm	Jewish Quarter	3 hours

Description	We will visit the Old Jewish cemetery and speak about the historical figure of Rabbi Loew, who later became a source of many legends, first of all as the creator of the first man-made creature, the Golem. At his tomb, people from all around the world make their wishes. The holocaust museum there is very impressive. Then we will walk around remembering Franz Kafka at his statue and birth house.			
Materials	Franz Kafka. "The Description of a Struggle." Please pick up any collection of Franz Kafka at the AAU library.			
Session 4	Date	Time	Place	Duration
Contemporary spirituality: Hare Krishna ritual harinam, yoga, the argument concerning the Virgin Mary column on Old Town square	March 25	2pm - 5pm	Old Town	3 hours
Description	Czechs are known as the nation of atheists. However, they have taken to various religions, like Hare Krishna, they practice yoga as a part of new age beliefs. Yet, the Virgin Mary column on Old Town Square has opened the door to new interpretations of Catholicism.			
Materials	Zuzana Jurková. <i>Prague Soundscapes</i> . chapter on Harinam			