

SLOVAK 0890 – Slovak, Czech, and Central European Film

Class number 22665

Meets A & S general education requirements:

- 2nd Course in Literature, the Arts, or Creative Expression (A&S); Literature (CGS)
- International/Foreign Culture — regional (A&S); 7 - International perspective (CGS)
- Writing intensive course (A&S); DS:H - Humanities requirement (CGS)
- Historical change (A&S); 6 - History (CGS)

Spring 2012, Tuesdays 2:30 – 5:25; 219 CL

Martin Votruba

<http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba>

Slovak Studies Program

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

votruba@pitt.edu

1417 CL

Office hours:

M 3:50-4:50, W 4:50-5:50

Part I: SOCIETY AROUND THE FILMMAKERS UNDER COMMUNISM		
1/10 D-6277	<i>Engineers of human souls</i> Germany - The Lives of Others (2006) A (West) German take on the place in society assigned to artists by the Communist authorities and the artists' reactions to power and perceptions of their own mission.	2h 17'
00 1/17	<i>Film vocabulary</i> SK - Photo Brought to Life (student shorts) Practice using words and phrases to provide tangible details which will support your arguments that segments of a film do indeed convey the perception, emotion, meaning that you say they do.	
Part II: CENTRAL EUROPE THROUGH FILM — THE PAST 50 YEARS		
01 1/24 D-2857	<i>World War II</i> SK (CZ) - The Shop on Main Street (1965) The first Slovak and Central European film to receive an Oscar; a burning topic of guilt, complicity, and helplessness. (V-0682)	2h 8'
02 1/31 D-713	<i>Relaxation of communist rule</i> H - Love Film (1970) An early film by a director who went on to reach international recognition; politically sensitive topics buried under highly personal filmmaking – “beyond the flashback”: associative rather than temporal sequencing; “East and West shall never meet” – a plausible, or mandated conclusion?	2h 10'
2/7	Writing	
03 2/14 D-3978	<i>Communism</i> PL - Camouflage (1976) A contemporary version of medieval discourses on ethics, and the transition from college to career, accompanied by a characteristic East-Central European theme of “the idealized West meets the ‘mysterious East.’”	1h 46'
04 2/21 D-2116	<i>Collapse of communism</i> CZ (SK) - Kolya (1996) A quirky Czech thespian goes Hollywood: comedy and emotional commitment; a plot designed to please; contemporary filmmaking; Central European handling of love. (D-0545)	1h 45'

Part III: HOW THE FILMMAKERS COPEd		
0 5 2/28 D-6582	<i>The non-political revolution</i> SK - The Sun in a Net (1962) Ranked as one of the 10 best films in the history of Czechoslovak filmmaking; the truth and lies through the experiences of urban teenagers; a forerunner of the 'Czech New Wave'; Communist officials threatened by an overload of symbolism.	1h 40'
0 6 3/13 D-0986	<i>Relax and experiment</i> CZ - Daisies (1966); (Dudes and the Hops , 1964; D-5368; V-6097) Considered one of the most innovative experiments in world cinema; is there really a morality play under all the razzle-dazzle, as the director claims? (V-6130)	1h 14'
0 7 3/20 D-0843 D-2895	<i>Ordinary lives or allegories?</i> CZ - Loves of a Blond (1965); Firemen's Ball (1968) Early films by a director who was showered with Oscars after he defected to Hollywood; mating rituals of the adolescent working class; use of non-actors; quasi-documentary techniques; incompetence in charge spells fun and cruelty; a film with no starring roles. (V-0671) (V-0698)	1h 28' 1h 13'
3/27 Hillman D-2886 D-5487	Your midterm paper: CZ - Closely Watched Trains (1966) SK - Birds, Orphans and Fools (1969)	1h 29' 1h 20'
0 8 4/3 D-6196	<i>Comedy and realism</i> SK - She Grazed Horses on Concrete (1982) The leading actress also wrote the screenplay based on her own book; one of the most popular films in Slovakia; a single mother fend for herself and her teenage daughter; all starring roles are female; first use of dialect; first discussion of abortion; handling of violence in film under Communism. (V-3928)	1h 18'
0 9 4/10 D-6585	<i>An esoteric romance?</i> SK - Rosy Dreams (1976) The first Central and West European feature film aiming at a realistic – rather than romanticized – portrayal of the Roma (Gypsies). A Romani girl and a Slovak boy fall in love with their fantasies of the stereotypical "other." (V-3926)	1h 28'
1 0 4/17 D-11451	<i>Sci-fi and politics</i> PL - Sexmission (1984) The film has remained unsurpassed in Polish domestic ticket sales since its release and was enormously popular in other Central European Communist countries; two male astronauts land in a world of women; expectations of Central European audiences; comparison with Hollywood science fiction; anti-feminist, or anti-authoritarian? (V-4117)	1h 53'
4/24	Finals.	

Grading

Weekly assignments (3 pages minimum, on a pass/fail basis; you may choose to skip one of the 10 papers and submit only 9 – 3% each): 30%. **You must submit your weekly assignments electronically by Friday, 5 p.m., after each class. If asked to do so, you must revise your assignment and bring the revision to class, or e-mail it again *before* you begin work on the next assignment.**

Class participation: 10% (exceptional class participation may compensate for an occasional failed weekly assignment, especially if it was caused by extenuating circumstances).

Midterm paper (10 pages minimum): 25%.

Final paper (12 pages minimum): 35%.