

SLOVAK 0890 – Slovak, Czech, and Central European Film

Final Paper

Deadline: 11:59 AM (noon), Wednesday, December 16, 2009.

You may submit your final paper as early as you wish. Consider giving yourself an earlier deadline in order to accommodate the possibility of sudden adverse events (e.g., e-mail problems, rescheduled exams, pet emergencies, transportation issues, and more) that tend to be reported during the finals week. Final papers that do not reach me by the deadline to the minute for any reason will be graded as not submitted (F).

You may ask me for an extension till 6:59 PM Wednesday, December 16, for a grade lowered by one step (e.g., a C- for a paper whose content and style would merit a C if submitted on time). I must receive such a request before the deadline but no earlier than Wednesday 9:00 AM, Dec. 16 (I will not consider earlier requests). Include a reason that is not an unexpected adverse event you could have accommodated by giving yourself an earlier deadline.

If you send me a draft of your paper or just passages from it before or on Saturday, Dec. 12, I will send you my comments on or before Monday, Dec. 14.

If your draft or passages submitted for comments by Saturday, Dec. 12, contain at least 5 full double-spaced pages of text that you have not submitted as part of a weekly assignment (new content shorter by merely a single line will not suffice for this purpose), your deadline will be automatically extended till 11:59 AM (noon), Friday, December 18, 2009, without the option of any further extension.

Your paper will have 12 or more pages (double-spaced, 12-point font). Your name, the title of your paper and their layout do not count towards this (if you want to be sure, you may enter a page break after the title). You must include references to the secondary sources you use or quote, but you need not do that if you relate anything that we discussed or I said in class, or use anything contained in any of in the handouts (including the historical reviews) unless the handouts attribute the passage explicitly to a source other than myself – you may treat all of that as what you have learned in this class, as your own knowledge now.

You must choose a topic and give your paper a title. You may use material from your assignments and midterm paper, but at least half of your final paper must be new text. You need to choose a topic that will enable you to include all of the following in your paper, in any order:

- a comparison between American and Central European filmmaking
- a comparison between perceptions and expectations by American and Central European moviegoers (In the late 1990s, 35 Slovak and Czech film critics and academics were asked to rank their 10 best Slovak and Czech films ever. An average of their

ranking placed the following films among the top 20: *The Shop on Main Street*; *Firemen's Ball*; *Closely Watched Trains*; *Birds, Orphans and Fools*; *A Thousand-Year Old Bee*; *The Sun in a Net*; *Daisies*; *Loves of a Blond*; but *Kolya* barely made the top 50.)

- references, however brief, to all of the films you have seen in this course: in several instances, a simple statement like *similar to film X*, or *another example was film X* will do; but your paper must include a more detailed focus on at least 8 of the films you have seen in this course
- the social and political context in which the Central European films were made
- comments on the way the films were made, not just on their storylines
- correct references to the historical background of the periods when the films were made and of the stories they relate
- given that this course is focused on Slovak and Czech film, all of your references to anything “Slovak,” “Czech,” and “Czechoslovak” must be flawless

The following topics are merely suggestions for those who have not found a topic of their own: tailor the broad suggestions to suit your approach. Disregard them, and do not even read them if you do not want to be influenced. Whether you do or do not use these topics will not affect your grade. Unless it is needed for clarity, the possible, broad topics below omit variations of *in/of/on... Central European film*.

Central European film under communism vs. modern U.S. film. – Inspiration, models and sources. – The role/history of women. – Who are the male heroes? – Visual representations (camera, makeup, sets, locations). – Symbolism and propaganda. – Representations of authoritarianism. – Idealism vs. realism. – Here and there, now and then. – The naked and dressed-up truth. – An American at the Central European movies. – Love, eroticism, sex. – Political cinema. – Fifty years of turmoil. – Behind the scenes. – Art or craft?. – The role of the director. – Is it the great American, or great European hype?. – The impact of history. – The film industry under communism. – History on the screen. – Was it all for the birds?. – The working class in the classless film. – The moving pictures – trains, cars and tanks. – Film and context.