

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
FACULTY OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN
LANGUAGES



Information for the FHS Course in

CZECH (with Slovak)

2010/2011

CZECH (WITH SLOVAK) – FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL

The Year Abroad in the Czech Republic

The third year is normally spent abroad. Most students taking two languages divide their time between the Czech Republic and a country appropriate for their other language.

We have recently established a successful Erasmus exchange with Masaryk University, Brno.

Students may also find work placements, or teach English at school or college level. Some have taught in schools as Comenius Assistants (a scheme offered through the British Council).

Past work opportunities have also included short internships with the English service of Radio Prague.

Students will sometimes combine more than one of these possibilities.

It is essential that students throughout this year continue to read daily in Czech as well as speaking to build up their fluency – and that they consistently maximise their exposure to the Czech language generally, through radio, TV, films, DVDs etc. as well as through their personal contacts.

Honours Papers in Czech (with Slovak)

Czech (with Slovak) is not available for 'sole' Honours. Most undergraduates are taking this part of their degree in combination with another language, and it is this pattern which is assumed below.

(It is also possible to take the subject in Joint Schools with English, Modern History etc., for which the regulations are slightly different.)

In the FHS course, undergraduates continue their language work in a whole variety of ways. This includes more advanced translation from and into Czech, oral and aural work, and acquisition of a reading knowledge of Slovak.

The following language work is examined in Finals (Papers I and II):

- I Translation into Czech or Slovak and essay in Czech or Slovak
- IIA Translation from Modern Czech
- IIB Translation from Modern Slovak
- Oral Comprehension, Discourse and Conversation

In addition to the language papers, all students of Czech take the one Period Paper available:

Paper VIII – Czech and Slovak Literature since 1774

plus either ONE or TWO further courses, chosen from:

- Paper IV – The History of Czech and Slovak
- Paper IX – Early Texts
- Paper X – Modern Prescribed Authors

The following are brief descriptions of each of these papers, starting with Paper VIII, since this is taken by everybody.

Paper VIII: Period of Literature - Czech and Slovak Literature, 1774 to the Present

This course looks at a whole range of literature from the late 18th- and early 19th-century Revival (obrození) through periods or movements conventionally labelled Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Decadence, Proletarian Poetry, Czech Poetism, Surrealism, and onwards via Socialist Realism, and its post-Stalinist aftermath, up to the present day.

Acquaintance with a certain corpus of well-known landmark classic texts will be expected, but there is also scope to pursue individual interests.

It is also possible to read some Slovak authors, for those who wish to pursue this area, but it is not compulsory to study Slovak texts for this paper.

Amongst the Czech works read during this course, both in class and for tutorials, there will be texts selected from writers such as:

Kollár, Čelakovský, Mácha, Erben, Němcová, Neruda, Světlá, Vrchlický, Zeyer, Arbes, Hlaváček, Dyk, Hašek, Karel Čapek, Durych, Nezval, Halas, Seifert, Vančura, Kundera, Škvorecký, Vaculík, Hrabal, Páral, Holub, Viewegh.

The above are listed in roughly chronological order. This is not an exhaustive list, but simply intended to give a general idea of some of the Czech authors more frequently studied and upon whom specific examination questions have been set where appropriate.

Most of the volumes listed below also contain further bibliographies:

Jiří Holý, *Writers under siege : Czech literature since 1945*, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008.

Traveller's Literary Companion to Eastern and Central Europe, ed. James Naughton, Brighton: In Print Publishing, 1995.

The Everyman Companion to East European Literature, ed. R. B. Pynsent and S. I. Kanikova, London: Dent, 1993.

Anthology of Czech Literature, ed. W. E. Harkins, New York: King's Crown Press, 1953, 1966.

Slovník básnických knih. Díla české poezie od obrození do roku 1945, ed. Miroslav Červenka et al., Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1990.

Slovník české prózy 1945-1994, ed. Blahoslav Dokoupil et al., Ostrava: Sfinga, 1994.

Panorama české literatury, ed. L. Machala and E. Petrů, Olomouc, 1994.

Jan Lehár et al., *Česká literatura od počátků do dneška*, Prague: Lidové noviny, 1998.

Lexikon české literatury, ed. V. Forst, Prague: Academia, 1985-

Slovník českých spisovatelů od roku 1945, ed. P. Janoušek, 2 vols, Prague: Brána, 1995-1998.

Arne Novák, *Czech Literature* [1946], translated by Peter Kussi, with a supplement by William E. Harkins, Michigan Slavic Publications, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1976 [originally published as: *Dějiny českého písemnictví*, 1946].

Many further resources may also be found via these web pages:

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/czech.html>

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/transl.html>

Paper IV: Linguistic Studies I – The History of Czech and Slovak

This introductory course aims to survey the historical development of Czech from the time when it became a distinct entity within the Slavonic group up to the present day.

The course will include introductory study of the historical phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, and changes in written norms, with some reference to dialects as well as to the evolution of the most widespread non-standard spoken forms.

The history of Czech as a medium of literature is examined, from the written records of the late 13th and 14th centuries up to the period of the *obrození*. We also look at the creation of modern terminology, spelling reforms etc.

The development of standard Slovak from the later 18th century onward is also studied in outline.

Passages for commentary and translation will be taken from: Porák, *Chrestomatie k vývoji českého jazyka*, pp. 31-40, 54-64, 72-88, 115-18, 126-31, 383-7.

The prescribed extracts focus on texts of the medieval period, as these contrast most distinctly with the modern language. They are studied in their original orthography.

Paper IX: Early Texts Prescribed for Study as Examples of Literature

The prescribed texts for the medieval Czech literature course, focussing on works from the 14th and early 15th centuries, are:

Dalimilova kronika
Život svaté Kateřiny
Tkadleček

The set texts are studied from the literary and literary-historical point of view, with appropriate reference to social contexts.

The first text is an early fourteenth-century historical chronicle in irregular rhyming verse (habitually called 'Dalimil's Chronicle' – though this was not the author's name). It has lively narrative qualities, and robust patriotic verve, and is one of the main sources for various traditional legends and tales of the earlier rulers of Bohemia.

The second text, *Život svaté Kateřiny*, is a fourteenth-century verse legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria, known for its elaborate style and incorporation of elements of courtly love.

The third text, *Tkadleček* ('The Weaver'), is an exuberant and elaborate prose text of circa 1407, a longer variation on the medieval German text *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*. It takes the form of a dispute between a Lover (who is a 'weaver' of words) and Misfortune. Again, it includes notable courtly elements.

Passages for commentary from the so-called *Dalimilova kronika* will be taken from chs. 1-32, 41, 66-70, 102-6 (chapter divisions according to the edition by Havránek & Daňhelka, 1958).

Those taking this paper should also aim at a wider range of acquaintance with Czech medieval writing. A certain knowledge of a few other medieval texts, e.g. in German, French or English, would likewise be beneficial.

Paper X: Modern Prescribed Authors

For this course, THREE author-topics are chosen for special study from the list given below. The examination will consist of one commentary and two essay-type questions.

The choice includes a 17th-century author, one of the most admired 20th-century Czech poets, and four recent authors of prose fiction – one internationally famous, one a woman yet to become internationally famous, and the other two of them outstanding contemporary Slovak writers:

Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius), with a special study of the prose allegory *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce* (1623, 1631). Komenský is regarded as the outstanding Czech prose writer of the 17th-century Baroque.

Vladimír Holan, with a special study of the poem *Terežka Planetová* (1943). This is one of a series of narrative poems by Holan, mostly collected in the volume *Příběhy* of his collected works.

Bohumil Hrabal, with a special study of the novel *Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále* (1980, MS 1971). Hrabal's name is of course well known to all readers of 20th-century Czech fiction.

Daniela Hodrová, with a special study of the novel *Podobojí* (1991), part of her trilogy *Trýznivé město* (the other volumes are *Kukly* and *Théta*). She is one of the more admired relatively younger novelists of today, as well as being a literary academic.

Ján Johanides, with a special study of *Marek koniar a uhorský pápež* (1983), a historical novel by one of the most prominent and complex twentieth-century Slovak writers of fiction.

Dušan Mitana, with a special study of the stories collected in the volume *Prie Ivan* (1996). This anthology gathers together a bundle of short stories – previously published in 1970, 1976 and 1993 – by this satirical, playfully entertaining and ingeniously mystifying contemporary Slovak writer.

Passages for commentary will be set from the texts listed for special study above.

Those taking this course are also required to explore a wider range of their selected authors' works and acquire a knowledge of their literary-historical background and the most useful critical literature.

► WHEN DRAWING UP THIS HANDBOOK WE HAVE TRIED TO BE AS ACCURATE AND CLEAR AS POSSIBLE, BUT REMEMBER THAT IT IS ONLY AN INFORMAL GUIDE. THE REVISED EDITION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S *EXAMINATION DECREES AND REGULATIONS* WILL BE THE OFFICIAL AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND YOU SHOULD CHECK ALL DETAILS IN YOUR COPY OF THAT PUBLICATION. COURSES AND REGULATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW, SO ALWAYS CHECK ALSO WITH YOUR COLLEGE TUTOR TO CONFIRM WHAT IS WRITTEN HERE. IN ADDITION, DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE COURSE FROM ANY MEMBER OF THE SUB-FACULTY WHO IS LECTURING TO YOU OR TUTORING YOU; WE WILL ALWAYS DO OUR BEST TO HELP.