

# European Memory and Identity

ECH Core Course

With visits to the Dano-German border region and the Czech Republic  
Fall 2011



*Without a story that we can tell about ourselves, there is no identity.*  
Aleida Assmann

This ECH core course explores European histories and cultures by focusing on memory and identity: How have selective ways of remembering Europe's past, its rich heritage and centuries of bloodshed, shaped collective and individual identities? What are some of the competing and sometimes contradictory stories told about what it means to be European, Danish, Bohemian, Czech, German, or Jewish? The issue of identity will be addressed on several levels: individual, regional, national, and European.

This course will use Denmark and the Czech Republic as case studies in which to unravel the complex web of historical memory, identity formation, and the construction of—and perhaps more importantly, the deconstruction of—"nationality." The course combines contemporary humanities with a study of historical developments read as constructed narratives. We will investigate the claim that memory is constituted by communication—that remembering is as much a social as an individual process. The course will also examine how identity is drawn from and shaped by certain repositories of memory and meaning: landscapes and cityscapes, art and architecture, literature and film. These expressions of culture will be explored in relation to Denmark and the Czech Republic: How does contemporary film offer perspectives on Czech history? What does the literature of Czech authors such as Kafka or Kundera suggest concerning Bohemian identities? How can Czech artworks and movements said to express identities?

## The Dano-German Destinations

*Åbenrå* (DK) / *Flensburg* (DE) We begin in the boundary region between Denmark and Germany. This region has been traded back and forth between Germany and Denmark on several occasions in the last centuries, though it has always contained a mix of ethnic Germans and ethnic Danes—as it does today.

*Hamburg/Altona* The second largest city in Germany was once right on the Dano-German border. This port city, much-damaged in World War II, exhibits both bohemian charm—in the broadest sense of the term—and the seriousness of remembering its own history.

## The Czech Destinations

*Prague* still looks like a mediaeval city, it's still Bohemia and it's still at the heart of Europe. And it's still trying to forget its half century as a part of “Eastern” Europe. If you know where to look, you will see manifestations of tension: signs of Czech national identity (defined against a Germanic national identity and perhaps Jewish identity, that was until very recently a part of Bohemian life). And you might see an attempt *not to see* the last 50 years (Eastern bloc political identity).

*Cesky Krumlov* is a feudal mountain city in the former Sudetenland, complete with gothic church and mediaeval castle. It seems as if one has entered another country – and that's not far from truth. It's easy to see that this former German-speaking city has a different history than the rest of central Bohemia. A haunting history, perhaps.

## Course Objectives

- To explore the various competing stories and perspectives that are the bases for constructing histories of Denmark, the Czech Republic, and Europe as a whole.
- To understand how competing historical narratives—embodied in literature, monuments, museums, art, movies, music, etc.—constitute competing national identities.
- To see how processes of “remembering and forgetting” have informed and continue to shape current histories and identities.

## Course Format

This section will meet 17 times in Copenhagen and continues on the study tours as students travel with faculty through Denmark and the Czech Republic. The 17 Copenhagen sessions will be a mix of classroom teaching and joint sessions for all three sections. On the study tours, lectures will be given by both the core instructors as well as expert guest lecturers on site. At the end of the semester, all three sections of European Memory and Identity will meet for a closing seminar.

## Meeting Times and Location

Monday and Thursday 8:30-9:50 in Room 7.41

## Course Instructors

K. Brian Söderquist, Ph.D. in philosophical theology, University of Copenhagen, 2005. M.A.R. in philosophy of religion, Yale University, 1994. B.A. in philosophy and natural sciences, Utah State University, 1990. With DIS since 2000.

Email: briansoda@gmail.com

Jakob Due Lorentzen, Cand. Mag. Philosophy, U of Copenhagen, 2004. MA Philosophy, Stony Brook U, 2002. Editorial staff, P1 Debat, Danmarks Radio, 2005. Program Director, European Culture & History. With DIS since 2006.

Email: jlo@dis.dk

## Course Requirements

- Two in-class exams on the primary readings for the course.
- A map assignment based on Prague that will be handed out at the end of session 10 and is to be turned in before the long study tour.
- An oral presentation to the class on the long study tour tied to a given site (for example, a presentation of Prague's Jewish history, David Cerny's artwork in Prague, or an account of the massacre at Lidice in 1942). In class, we will talk about presentation topics and schedules, and give you guidelines for how to prepare your presentation.
- A photography assignment in which you present a short oral interpretation of one of your photographs from the long study tour. We will devote one class session to the photo presentations.
- An 8-10 page research paper on "memory and identity" that deals with history, art history, philosophy, literature, or cultural studies, due at the end of the course. Guidelines for the research papers will be distributed in class.

## Grade Components

Pre-tour exam:	30%
Map assignment:	5%
Oral presentation:	10%
Photo assignment:	5%
Post-tour exam:	10%
Research paper:	30%
Class and tour participation:	10%

## Course Schedule

Session 1

**Thursday, August 25**

*Introduction to the Course*

*Optional Reading:*

Aleida Assmann, "Remembrance and Memory."

Jan Jansen, "Memory as a Social Phenomenon – Core Concepts in Memory Studies."

Richard Ned Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe."

Session 2

**Monday, August 29**

**JOINT SESSION** Class meets in Vestergade 23-401

Instructor: Thorsten Wagner

*Memory and Identity – Core Issues in European history*

*Reading:*

Alon Confino, "Remembering the Second World War, 1945-1965: Narratives of Victimhood and Genocide."

Session 3

**Thursday, September 1**

*Danish National(istic) Identities Today*

*Reading:*

Étienne Balibar, excerpts from *The Nation Form: History and Ideology*, in *Theories of Memory Reader* (handout).

Session 4

**Monday, September 5**

*Danish-German Tensions: "Opa war kein Nazi"*

*Reading:*

Excerpts from *Denmark*, published by Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (handout).

Field Study

**Wednesday September 7, 13:00-17:00**

*Film: The Flame and the Citron*

Class meets in V7-41. The film begins at 13:00.

### September 8-10: Short Study Tour

Session 5

**Monday, September 12**

*Study Tour Discussion and an Introduction to Bohemia: The Heart of Europe*

*No readings assigned for this class*

Session 6

**Thursday, September 15**

***Official and Unofficial Histories of the Czechoslovak Nation-state***

*Readings:*

“All about Czech History,” (an overview from the current Czech government website).

“Historical Development” in *Facts about Czechoslovakia*, (a very small overview from the Czech government in 1958).

Milan Kundera, excerpts from *Ignorance* (handout).

Session 7

**Monday, September 19**

***Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing in Czechoslovakia***

*Reading:*

Elena Green, “An Identity Formed, An Identity Subsumed, An Identity Forgotten.”

Session 8

**Thursday, September 22**

***Transformations of Communism in Czechoslovakia***

*Readings:*

M. Kundera, Part One (“Lost Letters”) in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

Session 9

**Monday, September 26**

**JOINT SESSION Class meets in Vestergade 23-401**

Instructor: Carsten Pape

***Mapping the City: The History and Development of European Cities***

Map assignment handed out in class

Session 10

**Thursday, September 29**

***Pre-tour exam and Nationalism in Bohemian Art***

*No readings assigned for this class*

## **October 3-8: Long Study Tour**

*(Oral presentations during tour will be on specific memorials, architecture, museums, etc.)*

Session 11

**Monday, Oct. 10**

***Study Tour Discussion and Photo Assignment Presentations***

Session 12

**Thursday, Oct. 13**

*Photo Assignment Presentations*

Session 13

**Monday, Oct. 17**

*The Current Generation in Art and Film*

*Knizak and Cerny*

*Readings:*

M. Knizak, excerpts from *Actions* (handout).

T. Pospiszyl, excerpts from *David Cerny* (handout).

S. Lyall, "A Hoax Unites Europe in Displeasure" from *New York Times*.

D. Jun, "David Cerny."

*Filip Remunda*

Session 14

**Thursday, Oct. 20**

*Ideal and Real Socialism*

Jon Kyst

Session 15

**Monday, Oct. 24**

*Literature*

*Reading:*

Kafka and Kundera

Session 16

**Monday, Oct. 27**

*Post-tour exam and Nationalism in Music and Art*

*Listening:*

Smetana's *Vltava / Die Moldau*

Dvorak's *Symphony no. 9*, first movement

Session 17

**Monday, Nov. 14**

**JOINT SESSION Class meets in Vestergade 23-401**

TBA

**Thursday, November 17 (18.00-22.00)**

**JOINT SESSION Class meets in Vestergade 23-401**

*ECH Memory and Identity Closing Seminar & Program Social*

**Thursday, December 1**  
*Final paper due*

## **Tentative Schedule Based on Previous Tours**

### **Saturday**

Evening departure from Copenhagen

### **Sunday**

Prague walk with student presentations

### **Monday**

Discussion with David Cerny  
Prague Castle

### **Tuesday**

Kafka, Mucha, Jewish Museums  
Architecture and literature walking tours

### **Wednesday**

Prague Radio  
Discussion with Milan Knizak

### **Thursday**

Depart from Prague  
Lidice  
Arrive in Cesky Krumlov

### **Friday**

Cesky Krumlov guest lecturer  
Egon Schiele Museum  
Leave for Copenhagen

### **Saturday**

Morning arrival in Copenhagen