Information for the FHS Course in

CZECH (with Slovak)

2017/2018
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.

Year-abroad students may participate in our Erasmus exchange with Masaryk University, Brno. [See http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/international/erasmus for more information on the Erasmus programme.] Students may also find work placements, or teach English at school or college level. 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. Your year abroad coordinator can discuss your options with you in more detail.

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

Honour Papers in Czech (with Slovak)

Czech (with Slovak) is not available for ‘sole’ Honour. Most undergraduates take 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 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):

Paper I Translation into Czech (or Slovak) and essay in Czech (or Slovak)
Paper IIA Translation from Modern Czech
Paper 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

And 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, as this is taken by all students.
This course covers a range of literature from the Revival (Obrození) through various periods and literary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, up to the present day. Familiarity with a certain corpus of classic and well-known texts will be expected, but there is also scope to pursue individual interests.

The works read during this course, both in class and for tutorials, will be selected from writers such as (in roughly chronological order):

Mácha, Erben, Němcová, Neruda, Zeyer, Hlaváček, Dyk, Hašek, Čapek, Durych, Nezval, Halas, Seifert, Vančura, Součková, Jedlička, Kundera, Škvorecký, Vaculík, Hrabal, Havel, Linhartová...

This is not an exhaustive list, but is simply intended to give a general idea of which Czech authors are frequently studied, and about whom specific examination questions have been set in the past. Selected works from some of these authors are available in English translation, however many works are not translated and all candidates will be strongly encouraged to read in Czech. Please see also the READING LIST in the 2017-18 Preliminary Course Handbook for some specific titles by these authors, and for other general surveys and anthologies. A selection of key works is given below (most of these volumes also contain further bibliographies):


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


Slovník české literatury [Available online at: http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/].

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

http://babel.mml.ox.ac.uk/naughton/
**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 terminology, spelling reforms etc.

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


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**

The prescribed texts for the medieval Czech literature course, focusing on works from the fourteenth and early fifteenth 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 chapters 1-32, 41, 66-70, 102-6, with chapters and text taken from Havránek & Daňhelka’s edition: *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, eds. Bohuslav Havránek a Jiří Daňhelka (Praha: 1958).

A modestly wider range of acquaintance with other Czech medieval writings and some knowledge of a few other medieval texts, e.g. in German, French or English, would also 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 seventeenth-century author, one of the most highly admired twentieth-century Czech poets, and four recent authors of prose fiction – one internationally famous, one major female writer (yet to become internationally famous), and the other two 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 *Terezka 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 well known to all reasonably knowledgeable readers of twentieth-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 women novelists of today, and also a literary academic.

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


Passages for commentary will be set from the texts listed above for special study. Questions will be set in addition on a wider range of the authors’ works. Students should also acquire a knowledge of the literary-historical background and the most useful critical literature on their selected authors’ texts.