This handbook gives subject-specific information for your FHS course in Czech (with Slovak). For general information about your studies and the faculty, please consult the Faculty's Undergraduate Course Handbook (https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv:modlang).
FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL (FHS)

FHS Czech language and literature are taught by:

Dr Rajendra Chitnis (Associate Professor of Czech, Ivana and Pavel Tykač Fellow, University College)
Office: F3, 47 Wellington Square (Staircase 1, First Floor)
E-Mail: rajendra.chitnis@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk Phone (term-time only): 01865 286881

Dr Vanda Pickett (Czech Language Tutor)
E-Mail: vanda.pickett@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

FHS Combinations of Papers in Czech (with Slovak)
Czech (with Slovak) is not available for ‘sole’ Honours. It is most commonly taken in combination with another language, in the scheme given below. The schemes for combinations with History, English and other Joint Schools are slightly different, and can be found here: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/

A candidate who offers Czech (with Slovak) with another language must take the Czech (with Slovak) written papers listed below and an oral examination:
- Two language papers I, II(A+B)
- Paper VIII
- At least one and up to two of Papers IV, IX and X
- Optionally, Paper XIV: Extended Essay

HONOUR PAPERS IN CZECH (WITH SLOVAK)

LANGUAGE

During the FHS course, you continue your study of Czech in a variety of ways. This includes translation from and into Czech, oral and aural work and essay-writing. Some part of the third year is spent studying or working in the Czech Republic (see below). Reading in and translating from Slovak will be gradually introduced alongside Czech. The best resource for English-speaking learners of Slovak remains James Naughton, Colloquial Slovak (Routledge, 2011). Please see http://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk/czech-and-slovak-language-resources#textbooks for other Slovak language material.

The following language examinations are taken by all students for their Finals:

Oral Comprehension, Discourse and Conversation

The exam is in two parts.
– **Comprehension:** Students will listen to a reading of a passage of Czech; this passage will be of five minutes’ duration at normal reading speed. They will then have 25 minutes to answer (written) questions on this passage.

– **Discourse and Conversation:** Before the exam students will be given three topics, one of which they must choose and prepare a short (approx. 5 minute) discourse on. This will be followed by a discussion (in Czech) lasting no more than 10 minutes.

**PAPER I: Translation into Czech (or Slovak) and essay in Czech (or Slovak)**

One unseen passage of prose for translation in Czech (or, if a candidate prefers, into Slovak). The passage may be either fiction or non-fiction and is usually between 250-300 words in length. There is a choice of five language essay topics (the essay may be written in either Czech or Slovak). Suggested essay length is approximately 500 to 750 words. Equal weight will be given to both tasks.

**Paper IIA and IIB: Translation from Modern Czech and Modern Slovak**

– **IIA:** One unseen passage of modern Czech, fiction or non-fiction, to be translated into English. Length of passage: approx. 350 words.

– **IIB:** One unseen passage of modern Slovak, fiction or non-fiction, to be translated into English. Length of passage: approx. 350 words.

**LITERATURE**

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

– **Paper VIII: Period of Literature (iii): 1816 to the Present**

And either ONE or TWO further courses, chosen from:

– **Paper IV: The History of Czech and Slovak**

– **Paper IX: Medieval Prescribed 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.

**Paper VIII: Period of Literature (iii): 1816 to the Present**

This paper allows you to study fiction, drama and poetry by a wide range of Czech and Slovak writers from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Lectures and tutorials typically focus on a small number of texts connected by a particular theme, literary period, movement and/or genre, and combine close analysis of literary techniques and method with discussion of cultural, political and social contexts. The periods covered will normally include:

- Czech and Slovak literature of national awakening
- Realism and Naturalism
- Decadence, Symbolism and Expressionism
- Modernist experiment and the Avant-garde
- Czech and Slovak sanctioned and unsanctioned literature in the Communist period
• Czech and Slovak fiction since 1989

Within this broad framework, you may choose texts, writers and topics for study based on your own interests.

For the examination, you must answer three essay questions in three hours. You may not answer more than once on the same text, or on an author you are offering for Paper X. You are not required to answer on both Czech and Slovak texts.

No questions in the paper name authors or works. Instead, about twenty questions invite you to explore a particular theme, feature or context in one or more works that you have studied. The questions will be arranged with a sense of chronology, but may be answered with reference to works from throughout the period of the paper. Questions will typically include opportunities to analyse, for example: choices of plots and settings, approaches to narration and characterisation, use of language and imagery, irony, parody and satire, the treatment of themes like nationhood, identity, gender, psychology, childhood, adolescence and old-age, memory, rural and urban, love, faith, violence and conflict, heroism, the role of literature and the writer, literature and society, literature and politics, literature and history, literature and philosophy, the adaptation of literature for cinema.

See below for guidance on obtaining Czech-language texts,

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.

Passages for commentary and translation will be taken from: Jaroslav Porák, Chrestomatie k vývoji českého jazyka (Praha, SNP, 1979), pp. 31-40, 54-64, 72-88, 115-18, 126-31, 383-7. [See also: http://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk/chrestomatie-k-vyvoji-ceskeho-jazyka]

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.

For the examination, candidates are asked to translate a passage from one of the set texts (compulsory), write a commentary on another (also compulsory), and write
two essay-type questions chosen from a range of six or seven, including questions on the general historical evolution of the languages, orthography, historical phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and growth of standard norms. A minority of the essay-type questions may be on Slovak, or require some reference to Slovak as well as Czech.

**Paper IX: Medieval Prescribed Texts**

This paper allows you to study examples of a range of high- and low-style Old Czech medieval texts, dating from the late thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries and drawn from various genres: chronicle, Easter play, hagiography and medieval dispute. Analysis will focus on literary features and changing cultural and historical contexts. Where relevant, we will also compare the core texts with extracts from others, notably *Alexandrida*, *Spor duše s tělem*, *Legenda o svatém Prokopu* and *Věvoda Arnošt*.

Texts for Study:

- **Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika tak řečeného Dalimila** (c.1314)


  The first chronicle of the history of the Czechs to be written in Czech (once mistakenly attributed to Dalimil Meziřický), this passionate, trenchant and controversial work in fact dramatically illuminates the social and national tensions in Bohemia during the transition from the Premyslid to the Luxembourg dynasties, and offers its own vision of Bohemian identity and statehood. It is also a key source for many of the legends told about the early Czechs and their rulers.

- **Mastičkář** (c.1320s)


  The earliest known Czech-language play, preserved in two fragments, is a comic interlude from an Easter play, depicting the slapstick, often vulgar efforts of an ointment-seller and his assistant to market their wares.

- **Legenda o svaté Kateřině** (also known as *Život svaté Kateřiny*, c.1360s)


  The outstanding Czech example of a life of a saint, combining two Latin legends to depict both the conversion and martyrdom of Catherine of Alexandria. Its ambition is reflected in its language, style and structure, and its mixing of genres including hagiography, sermon, courtly lyric and drama.

- **Tkadleček** (c.1410)
The last major work of medieval Czech literature before the Hussite period is a parodic theological dispute between the eponymous Weaver and Misfortune, who has caused the Weaver’s beloved to leave him. Amid the games of language and genre emerges a genuine philosophical debate between Emotion and Reason about the nature of misfortune and how to respond to it.

All texts are written in Old Czech, which presents much fewer challenges to readers of modern Czech than other European counterparts from the same period.

For the examination, you must answer three questions in three hours. The examination is divided into two sections. The first section consists of an extract from each of the four prescribed texts for commentary. The second section consists of essay questions on each prescribed text. You must answer one question from each section and a further question chosen from either section. You may not answer twice on the same text.

Primary Texts:

- Bohuslav Havránek a Jiří Daňhelka (eds), Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika tak řečeného Dalimila (Prague: Nakladatelství ČAV, 1958)
- Eduard Petří, Veronika Rejžlová Zajíčková (eds), Život svaté Kateřiny (with modern Czech translation by Jiří Pelán), Prague, Brno, NFČK/Host, 2016 or
- Jan Vilíkovský (ed.), Legenda o svaté Kateřině (Prague: Vyšehrad, 1946) or
- Josef Hrabák, Václav Vážný (eds), Dvě legendy z doby Karlovy (also includes ‘Legenda o svatém Prokopu’), Prague: Nakladatelství ČAV, 1959
- František Šimek (ed.), Tkadleček: Hádka milence s neštěstím (Prague: Odeon, 1974) or
- František Šimek (ed.), Tkadleček: Hádka milence s neštěstím (Prague: Česká grafická Unie, 1940)
- Also recommended as a core source of examples of and extracts from Czech medieval literature: Bohuslav Havránek, Josef Hrabák et al. (eds), Výbor z české literatury od počátků po dobu Husovu (Prague: Nakladatelství ČSAV, 1957). Available at: http://www.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/antologie/vybor-z-ceske-literatury/72-vybor-z-ceske-literatury-od-pocatku-po-dobu-husovu

Paper X: Modern Prescribed Authors

For this course, THREE author-topics are chosen for special study from the list of Czech and Slovak writers given below.

Czech authors:

- Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) (1592-1670), with a special study of the prose allegory Labyrinth světa a ráj srdce (MS 1623, 1631; 1663 (with this title)).

As a Protestant pastor, Comenius was forced to leave Bohemia in 1627, and became the most internationally famous Czech of his day, not least for his
writings on pedagogy. His *Labyrinth* is the greatest achievement of Czech Baroque prose, an all-embracing, funny, grotesque and unexpectedly timeless satire of contemporary society that becomes a powerful assertion of his Christian faith.

- **Bedřich Bridel** (1619-80), with a special study of his religious poem *Co Bůh? Člověk?* (1659)

  Bridel’s *Co Bůh? Člověk?*, a sustained lyrical contrasting of the human being and God, is the most outstanding example of Czech Baroque poetry and arguably of Czech spiritual poetry in general.

- **Karolína Světlá** (1830-99), with a special study of her novel *Vesnický román* (1867).

  Světlá, sometimes characterized as the Czech George Eliot, was a leading Czech feminist intellectual of her day, best known for her Realist fiction about village life in a German-dominated area of north Bohemia.

- **Julius Zeyer** (1841-1901), with a special study of his novel *Dům „U tonoucí hvězdy”* (1894).

  Zeyer’s fiction, verse and drama combine elements of psychological realism, myth, legend, religious and occult mysticism, and reflect his love of travel. *Dům „U tonoucí hvězdy”* has echoes of Dostoevsky, and may be considered one of the major Czech Decadent novels.

- **Božena Benešová** (1873-1936), with a special study of her short-story cycle *Myšky* (1916).

  Benešová’s cycle *Myšky* typifies her writing, with its ambiguous psychological focus on the lives and thwarted dreams of young people, especially young women, in small-town Bohemia.

- **Vítězslav Nezval** (1900-58), with a special study of his 1920s Poetist verse collected in *Básně noci* (1930).

  Nezval was one of of the leaders of the 1920s Czech left-wing Avantgarde group, Devětsil, and a pioneer of Surrealist verse, who also wrote plays and prose.

- **Vladislav Vančura** (1891-1943), with a special study of his novel *Marketa Lazarová* (1930).

  The left-wing Avant-garde novelist and dramatist Vančura is arguably the greatest ever exponent of the Czech language in prose. It reflects his desire to inject ambition and vigour into what he saw as the bloodless, mediocre First Republic, epitomized by his most successful novel, *Marketa Lazarová*, a stylized epic about robbers in the Middle Ages, which was later made into an acclaimed film.

- **Egon Hostovský** (1908-73), with a special study of his novel *Sedmkrát v hlavní úloze* (1942).
One of the leading Czech-language Jewish writers, Hostovský’s fiction typically focuses on outsiders and the psychological impact of marginalization and isolation. *Sedmkrát v hlavní úloze* captures the hallucinatory atmosphere of Central Europe in the 1930s as it descends into war.

- **Ladislav Fuks** (1923-94), with a special study of his novel *Spalovač mrtvol* (1967).

  Fuks’s highly stylized, often disorientating novels about the German occupation of Prague and its impact on vulnerable individuals, including the Jewish population, are widely considered the best portrayal in Czech of that period. *Spalovač mrtvol* is the boldest, with its black-comic description of a good Czech family man’s descent into collaboration with the Nazis, and was made into one of the most internationally acclaimed Czech films. Scholars have increasingly looked beyond the explicit historical context of these novels and seen them as allegories of the experience of a writer under Communism.

- **Alena Vostrá**, with a special study of her play *Na ostří nože* (1968).

  Vostrá’s plays were written for the radical 1960s Avant-garde theatre, Činoherní klub, and, like her fiction for adults and children, reveal a highly distinctive authorial persona, often identified in her work with demonic characters, whose characters inhabit a chaotic, cruel world, depicted with playful humour, irony and elusive compassion.

- **Daniela Hodrová** (b.1946), with a special study of her novel *Podobojí* (1991).

  Hodrová’s novels centre on Prague, portrayed as a labyrinth of tangled historical periods and personal narratives, through which hero and reader roam in search of answers. Though her writing reflects her professional interests as a literary theorist in literary experiment and pre-modern esoteric writing, it is nevertheless playful and moving, offering a highly distinctive vision of Czech and Prague history and the nature of our being.

- **Petra Hůlová** (b.1979), with a special study of her novel *Umělohmotný třípokoj* (2006).

  Hůlová is one of the leading contemporary Czech novelists, who established her reputation with her first novel, *Paměti mojí babičce*, about the lives of three generations of women in rural and urban Mongolia. Her novels, alternately set in the Czech Republic and abroad, are all very different, but are marked by a dispassionate, ironic authorial perspective that frequently leaves judgement to the reader. *Umělohmotný třípokoj* is the linguistically highly experimental, absorbing monologue of an ageing prostitute, reflecting on her work and the society in which she does it.

**Slovak authors:**

- **Janko Kráľ** (1822-76), with a special study of his epic poem *'Zakliata panna vo Váhu a divný Janko'* (1844)
Kráľ was the first major Slovak poet, like Mácha a belated Romantic, who revealed the possibilities of Slovak as a language of modern poetry. His work typically on historical or folk themes and stories.

- **Jonáš Záborský** (1812-76), with a special study of his satirical novel *Faustiáda* (1866, 1910)

  Záborský, a Roman Catholic priest, was a prolific writer of poetry, drama and prose, and is best known for uncompromising satirical texts about contemporary Slovak society and nationalism. In *Faustiáda*, Faust visits a Slovak village. The foreword declares: ‘Everyone should buy this book, because anyone who reads this book will not need any other, since it contains all wisdom, like the Koran. Once this book appears, all others can be burned.’

- **Timrava (Božena Slančíková)** (1867-1951), with a special study of her satirical novel *Ťapákovci* (1914)

  Timrava’s short stories and novels typically feature unsentimental, satirical portrayals of contemporary Slovak village and small-town life, with penetrating psychological analyses and critiques of the prevailing social and political situation.

- **Ján Johanides** (1934-2008), with a special study of his short-story cycle, *Podstata kameňolomu* (1964)

  Johanides was a leading member of the remarkable, inspirational generation of Slovak writers that emerged in the 1960s. His philosophically complex fiction shows the influence of Existentialism and experimental writing like the French *nouveau roman*, and examines questions of identity and authenticity amid the alienation and fragmentation of modern life.


  Vilikovský’s typically playful, ironic writing examines human life as an often painful, sometimes tragic comedy. His primary focus is arguably language, how stories and histories are told, and what is sometimes described as ‘postmodern’ scepticism about the relationship between language and reality.

- **Mila Haugová** (b.1942), with a special study of selected lyric poetry published since 1989.

  Haugová is the most widely translated Slovak poet. Her complex, highly influential verse, which provides an outstanding introduction to contemporary Slovak poetry and contemporary poetry in general, focuses typically on female experiences of erotic love, combining personal, intimate elements with examination of archetypal, primal understandings of existence.

For the examination, candidates will be asked to write a commentary on one passage from the set texts prescribed for their three chosen authors and answer an essay question on each of the other two authors. The paper will provide one extract for commentary from each of the authors being offered by candidates. The essay
questions will enable candidates to write on a wider range of texts than the prescription for each author.

The Year Abroad in the Czech Republic

The third year is normally spent abroad. You are encouraged to spend at least half the year in the Czech Republic and/or Slovakia.

We currently have a limited number of placements via the Erasmus+ programme to study Czech language and optional cultural modules for half the academic year at Masaryk University, Brno or the University of Ostrava. You can also arrange to attend classes for Czech-speaking undergraduates in the local Czech department. See the Faculty year abroad site for more information and application details: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site:humdiv:modlang:year_abroad

In combination or instead, students have taken up opportunities to work, for example, teaching English at school or college, in charities or NGOs, or internships in companies. You should consult Dr Chitnis and Dr Pickett about your ideas and for advice and support, and seek tips from Third and Fourth Year students, but you will need to identify and arrange such opportunities yourself.

Throughout the year abroad, you should maximise your exposure to the Czech language. While in the Czech Republic, make every effort to meet Czech speakers by attending open lectures and seminars and other events for students, actively keeping up hobbies like sport, outdoor pursuits or music, and socialising outside any English-speaking group. Get into the habit of accessing Czech news, information and entertainment sites, apps and channels, which include digital stations from Czech Radio, all the major newspapers and magazines, dedicated websites and streaming libraries. You should also aim to complete most of your primary reading for your FHS papers.

SUMMER SCHOOL

In January each year, the Czech Embassy in London invites applications for grants to study at four-week-long Czech-language summer schools held at universities throughout the Czech Republic at different points in July and August. There is a limited number of grants, shared among all UK universities where Czech is taught, but we strongly encourage you to apply and will support all applications as best we can. We will let you know when the application process opens.

SUSANNA ROTH AWARD

The Susanna Roth Award is an annual competition for beginner translators up to 40 years of age, whose task is to translate a piece of contemporary Czech prose. The prize is a stay in the Czech Republic, which includes attending the annual Czech Studies Seminar and a translation workshop. Oxford students have won on at least
two occasions, most recently in 2019, and we strongly encourage you to enter. We will let you know when the competition text is released.

**ADVICE ON OBTAINING TEXTS**

- Extensive local and external web resources for students of Czech and Slovak language and literature, compiled by James Naughton and James Partridge, are available at: [http://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk](http://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk)

- The Taylor and Bodleian Libraries have one of the best, constantly updated collections of Czech and Slovak Studies books in the UK, including hundreds of works of Czech and Slovak literature and secondary sources. Many items are also available electronically via SOLO ([http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/search?vid=SOLO&lang=en_US&sortby=rank](http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/search?vid=SOLO&lang=en_US&sortby=rank))

- Prague City Library has a large open digital library, particularly of older literature, which can be obtained in a variety of electronic formats. Search at: [https://www.mlp.cz/cz/](https://www.mlp.cz/cz/)

- The Czech National Library has a huge archive of digital resources called Kramerius, which is especially useful for finding reviews and article-length secondary literature: [http://kramerius-vs.nkp.cz/](http://kramerius-vs.nkp.cz/)

- The Institute for Czech Literature at the Czech Academy of Sciences has a growing archive of electronic primary and secondary sources, Edice E, including the collected works of several canonical writers, anthologies, conference proceedings and textbooks: [https://www.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/](https://www.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/)

- You can often buy book copies of recommended texts cheaply second-hand, via websites like [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk) or the Used tab at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) This applies especially to English-language textbooks, academic books and translations, but sometimes also to Czech-language books.

- It is often only possible and frequently cheaper to buy Czech-language books, including e-books, direct from the Czech Republic. For new books, the most widely used on-line bookshops are:
  - [https://www.kosmas.cz/](https://www.kosmas.cz/)
  - [https://www.academia.cz/eshop](https://www.academia.cz/eshop)
  It is often also worth checking the publisher’s own e-shop.

- For second-hand books, which are often extremely cheap, [https://muj-antikvariát.cz/](https://muj-antikvariát.cz/) will search second-hand bookshops throughout the country. Unfortunately, many of these do not currently accept on-line payments or post to international destinations, so this option may prove most useful when you are based in the Czech Republic.