

**Code: BMI-FLMD-322E:03 for Film MA students,  
Erasmus: BBN-KOM-291#1.3 for BA, BMA-MEDD-601.E for MA students**

**Course title: Everyday Life in Socialist Hungary**

**Course convenors:** Ferenc Hammer

**Class time and place:** Tuesday, 09:30-11:00, room 251

**Course type:** Seminar

**Course content: Course description:**

The basic premise of the course is that the cultural embeddedness of the East Central European region's political changes has turned out to be crucial, in terms of the nature and direction of those changes, let them be Stalinist takeovers, socialist reforms, democratic transitions, democratic consolidations or nationalist upheavals. Culture is a key concept in this course - that is, collectively created meanings people associate with their life. Artefacts, rituals and images of everyday life, and their qualitative-anthropological interpretations have occupied a central position in this approach to understand the region's present and recent past. Students will be exposed to comparative (regional) empirical research results focusing on various cultural studies topics, as well as to key concepts regarding the roots of the region's paradoxical cultural-historical-political development. Classes will cover issues, such as everyday strategies of power exercise in communism, changes in cultural politics, media history of the period, popular culture, consumption, a critical history of jeans, nonconformist subcultures, etc. Each student is expected to prepare a one- or two-page long position paper (based on the literature or on special assignments) for each class during the semester. There will not be separate student presentations in the class. The final paper is expected to be 3500 words in length on a topic agreed with me beforehand. I expect the hard copy of the paper to be sent to me by January 16th 1 PM, and also I expect students to make a presentation on January 19th, 3 PM (its details will be discussed). At the last class there will be a test on the course readings and the lectures. The composition of the students' grades will be made up of the following items: 35 % position papers, 35% final test, 20% final paper, 10% class participation.

*As a novelty in class requirements at my department, I expect those students using laptops, tablets, smart phones, or at the time of the preparation of this syllabus, unknown form of electronic device for taking notes, to turn off the internet access of their gadget during class.*

**Requirements: Class 0:** Course description and requirements (September 9th)

**Class 1:** Everyday life – The career of a concept (September 16th)

Simmel, Schütz, Goffman, Berger & Luckmann, Bakhtin. The taken-for-granted reality as a subject of sociological inquiry. Ethnomethodology. Social constructivism. Micro-histories. The usefulness and limitations of the concept in the understanding of life under Communism. A short presentation about Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog* (this novel will serve as a general reference volume for the course).

**Readings:** (1) Karal Ann Marling. *Nixon in Moscow. The Kitchen Debate*. In: Ben Highmore (ed.) *The Everyday Life Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. pp. 101-107.

<http://lcst3789.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/highmore-the-everyday-life-reader.pdf> (2) Sándor Tar. "Happy Christmas."

<https://mega.co.nz/#!o9MAUDrb!LUQOEZKHj128e9PGMqsGyODf6cCiSeLUVagplRZVxrl>

*Please read both pieces and write me a 500-word composition on the usefulness and limitations of the concept of everyday life in the understanding Communism.*

**Class 2:** Continuities and disruptions: Cultural and political traditions in Eastern and Central Europe. (September 23rd)

Historical regions in the past and present day. Different relations between state and society. Cultural slopes and borders. Culture and history. Historical backwardness and modernization strategies. Roles of everyday life in making history.

**Reading:** Mihály Vajda. "East Central European Perspectives." In: John Keane, ed. *Civil Society and the State*. London: Verso, 1988. pp. 333-360.

<https://mega.co.nz/#!No1BqDSS!FBS3fQ7RdJPM7a0U7IjCTIW7FbepjCjEvGy7gWKneY>

**Suggested readings:** Gerard Delanty *The Historical Regions of Europe: Civilizational Backgrounds and Multiple Routes to Modernity*, *Historická Sociologie*, 1–2/2012

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<http://historicalsociology.cz/cele-texty/1-2-2012/delanty.pdf>

Jenő Szűcs, The three historical regions of Europe, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 29 /1983/ pp. 131-184.)

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/42555425?uid=3738216&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21104703431473>

*Read the pp. 340-352 page section of the Vajda text (of course, I cannot stop you if you want to read the whole chapter). When you read it, don't forget: It was published in 1988, a bit before the regime change. Based on the literature above please compose a 500-word paper about the following question: What are the defining principles of the categories of East Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Western Europe?*

**Class 3:** Technologies of control and everyday submission and/or resistance in the Eastern Bloc (September 30th)

Hegemony and resistance before 1989. Planned economy and its unplanned consequences. Camouflage, theft, "umbulda", and corruption. Instability and uncertainty as power technologies. State propaganda, television, communication and isolation.

**Reading:** Ádám Bodor. "The Outpost." A short story. In: *The Kiss. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hungarian Short Stories*. Budapest: Corvina, 1993. pp. 311-330.

<https://mega.co.nz/#!Zh8VzTAK!5VtWbDOiZDxPlvTepDhSLzNG3dKDN6O05nW84ImVVsl>

*Please submit a class paper with the topic: Means and modes of exercising power over people in a dictatorship based on the short story "The Outpost".*

**Class 4** The 1956 revolution from below (October 7th)

Those glorious two weeks or so. The everyday experience of terror and surveillance.

Film to watch: *Kolorádó Kid*, dir. by András B. Vágvölgyi. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0856796/>

Guest speaker: Director András B. Vágvölgyi.

*The film will be screened on October 9th Thursday 6PM at the Central European University's Auditorium, entrance at the corner of Zrínyi and Nádor streets. The screening will be followed by a talk by Vágvölgyi and Chief Archivist András Mink of the Open Society Archives, renowned expert on the period. Please attend the screening, it will be counted as a regular class. Please watch the movie and make a usual written composition for the following class and send it to me about the topic: The everyday experience of the 1956 revolution and the subsequent retaliations. This is the FB page for Kolorádó Kid, mostly in Hungarian.*

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kolor%C3%A1d%C3%B3-Kid/286193317623?ref=bookmark>

**Class 5** Party under the floorboard: Private and public feasts (October 14th)

Official holidays and mass entertainment. The role of sports. Christmas and Easter revisited. Private feasts: Changing patterns of family celebrations. Nightlife in socialism. The *házibuli* experience, as a model of self-government and homemade public life.

**Reading:** Brown, Karl 2008: *Dance Hall Days: Jazz and Hooliganism in Communist Hungary, 1948-1956*. *Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies*, 26

<http://www.fulbright.hu/book1/karlbrown.pdf>

Suggested reading: [https://www.academia.edu/233675/Necro-Utopia\\_The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Indistinction\\_and\\_the\\_Aesthetics\\_of\\_the\\_Non-Soviet](https://www.academia.edu/233675/Necro-Utopia_The_Politics_of_Indistinction_and_the_Aesthetics_of_the_Non-Soviet)

**Class 6** Underground artists' circles in Communist Hungary (October 21st)

Guest speaker: Dr. Brigitta Iványi Bitter, curator. (No required reading for this class).

*(October 23-November 2: Fall Break)*

**Class 7** A critical history of Blue Jeans in socialism (November 4th)

"I'm not concerned about Wild-Western-type trousers, beards, or haircuts" - János Kádár, Communist Party Chief Secretary, 1967. Changing meanings of jeans in the life world of socialism: Production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity.

**Reading:** Ferenc Hammer: 'Sartorial Manoeuvres In the Dusk: Blue Jeans in Socialist Hungary.' (Eds.: F. Trentmann and K. Soper). *Citizenship and Consumption*. London: Palgrave. 2008.

[https://www.academia.edu/5012331/Sartorial\\_Manoeuvres\\_in\\_the\\_Dusk\\_Blue\\_Jeans\\_in\\_Socialist\\_Hungary](https://www.academia.edu/5012331/Sartorial_Manoeuvres_in_the_Dusk_Blue_Jeans_in_Socialist_Hungary) **Suggested reading:** Reading: Malcolm Barnard. *Fashion As Communication*. Ch. 6. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. pp. 121-144.

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**Class: 8:** Class excursion and participant observation in Atlantis (I) (November 11th)  
Playing *Gazdálkodj okosan!* (Do smart business! - the socialist version of Monopoly) in the class. Comparing the experience with Monopoly. Political messages in the game.  
**Reading:** Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970. pp. 1-27. <http://bookzz.org/md5/4D149675532B04F5CCC1F789A3F68B50>  
*Please write me a usual homework highlighting major points of the chapter.* Plus: Game rules.

**Class 9:** Class excursion and participant observation in Atlantis (II) (November 18th) Walking tour in Budapest to examine physical remains of the previous political regimes. Students will receive individual or small group assignments regarding particular buildings, sculptures etc.

**Class 10:** Comprehending the magic, (November 25th)  
The chronicles of feelings of "no future" in the 1980s. Explaining the unforeseeable regime change: Liberating performative speech acts, conspiracies, bandwagons, snowballs, tightropes? The role of surprise in the regime change.

**Reading:** Timur Kuran. *Private Truths, Public Lies. The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. pp. 118-127, 205-221, 261-288.  
<http://libgen.org/search.php?req=Private+Truths%2C+Public+Lies&open=0&view=simple&phrase=1&column=def>

**Class 11** This class will be developed upon the request/interest of the class (December 2nd)  
**Reading:** TBA

**Class 12.** Final test (December 9th)

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**Indicative Reading:**

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