

Leadership Through the Ages: Czech Dissidents, Sages, & Resisters

Course code: SOC 225

Term and year: Summer I 2026

Day and time: 1st June – 18th June, 2026; 9-12 and 12:30-14

Classroom: 2.03 & 2.05

Instructor: Joshua M. Hayden, EdD.

Instructor contact: Joshua.hayden@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: MW 14:00-16:00

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Undergraduate
Length	3 weeks	Pre-requisite	None
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	Elective

1. Course Description

This course is focused on dissidents, sages, and resisters who wrought change within Bohemia, Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. Through academic study, dialogue, personal observation, cultural experiences, and contextual analysis students will learn the dynamic role context plays in shaping leadership processes, stories of resistance, and effective social change. Students will complexify their understanding of good and bad leadership through studying specific leaders and their collaborators and attempt to analyze what they said and did in light of the places, people, history, and the cultural environment that shaped them and their relationships. Some leaders will be inspiring, some will serve as a warning, and almost all will be a mix between the two. We will draw on classic leadership texts, biographies, writings, and art to draw implications for our own lives, our communities and aspirations.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. *Describe leadership situations and tactics of specific historical figures;*
2. *Identify relevant contextual elements and their implications for leadership processes;*
3. *Compare and contrast Czech leaders related to their contexts, aims, and outcomes*
4. *Analyze leadership challenges with an appreciation for different cultural perspectives and their implications for leadership processes;*
5. *Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view regarding leaders' ideas, contexts, behaviors, and principles in application of leadership knowledge.*

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Albright, M. (2012). *Prague Winter: A personal story of remembrance and war, 1937-1948*. Harper Perennial.
- You will receive a printed packet including the following readings:
 - Wren, J. T. & Swatez, M. J. (1995). The historical and contemporary contexts of leadership: A conceptual model. In J. T. Wren (Ed.), *The leader's companion: Insights on leadership through the ages*. (pp. 245-252).
 - Fudge, T. (2017). Why was Jan Hus burned at the stake during the Council of Constance? *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (55), 29-44.
 - McNamara, K.J. (2019). Tomas G. Masaryk: A life at the bloody crossroads. *Academic Questions* (32), 123-131.
 - Goethals, G.R. & Allison, S.T. (2019). The romance of heroism and heroic leadership. Emerald Publishing, Ltd.
 - Reinfeld, B. (1997). Františka Plamínková (1875–1942), Czech feminist and patriot. *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (25), 13-33.
 - Hayden, J.M. (2024) *Leadership and the Ethics of Hope: Václav Havel and the Charter 77 Human Rights Movement in Czechoslovakia*, *Leadership*, special issue "Leadership and the Future of Humanity".
 - Iggers, W. (1995). *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Berghahn Books.
 - Johnson, C.E. (2020). *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow*. (7th ed.). SAGE.
 - Allison, S. T. & Goethals, G. R. (2008). Deifying the dead and downtrodden: Sympathetic figures as inspirational leaders. In J. B. Ciulla et al. (Eds) *Leadership at the Crossroads: Leadership and Psychology*. (pp. 181-195). Praeger.
 - Chaleff, I. (2003). *The courageous follower: Standing up to and for our leaders* (2nd ed.) Berrett-Koehler.
 - Havel, V. (1991). *Disturbing the peace: A conversation with Karel Huizdala*. Vintage.
 - Skitka, L. J., Bauman, C. W., & Lytle, B. L. (2008). Morality as a foundation of leadership and a constraint on deference to authority. *Social psychology and leadership*, 300-315.

Recommended Materials

- Heifetz, R. A. & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leadership*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Holy, V. (1996) *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation*. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Series Number 103. UK: Cambridge University Press.

4. Teaching methodology

- This is a small, intentional learning community. You are not invisible here. I expect every student to contribute to class discussions, activities, and group work.

- You are expected to arrive at all classes and events *on time*.
- Come prepared with ideas. I expect to see reading notes out in front of you at the start of each class session so you are prepared to discuss readings and topics.
- Be open to sharing your ideas, reactions, and perspectives.
- Actively listen to your classmates.

5. Daily schedule

- Class will be 9:00 a.m. to 12:00p.m. and 12:30p.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day, Monday to Thursday
- Prague is our classroom, so we will be out and about during class a majority of those days.

6. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 Monday June 1	Topic: Introduction to Leadership Studies and Czech Cultural/Historical Context Description: In this first session we will explore the interdisciplinary field of leadership studies focusing on how we will go about analyzing historical leaders in their cultural and historical context. Reading: • Finish reading <i>Prague Winter</i> • Read Wren & Swatez "The Historical and Contemporary Contexts of Leadership: A Conceptual Model"
Session 2 Tuesday June 2	Topic: The Leadership of Jan Hus in Medieval Europe Description: Using our historical context framework, we will look at Jan Hus as a leader in Medieval Europe in the 14 th Century. We will discuss morality as a way to resist authority and the epistemology of truth and why that matters to leadership. Reading: • Read Fudge, T. (2017) Why was Jan Hus burned at the stake during the Council of Constance?" • Read: Skitka, Bauman, & Lytle (2008) Morality as a foundation of leadership and a constraint on deference to authority
Session 3 Wednesday June 3	Topic: Excursion to Lany: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk Description: We will take an academically focused excursion to Lany, the summer residence of the Czech president since Masaryk. We will visit the T.G.M. Museum and the grounds of Lany palace and residence. We will look at the life and times of T.G. Masaryk in terms of the Czech revival, his unpopularity for stances on controversial issues, and why and how he founded Czechoslovakia right after the "Great War". Reading: 1. Read McNamera (2019) Tomas G. Masaryk: A life at the "bloody crossroads"
Session 4 Thursday June 4	Topic: T.G. Masaryk: The Democratic and the Heroic

	Description: We will reflect on what we learned about Masaryk as a democratic leader from the museum and at his beloved Lany Chateau. We will also explore the leadership ethics of heroism, mythology, and the romance of leadership. We will also venture up to Prague Castle to see some Masaryk-related sites. Reading: - Goethals & Allison (2019) Heroic Transforming Leadership: Touching the better Angels of our Nature - Wolf & Zuckerman (2012) Deviant Heroes: Nonconformists as Agents of Justice and Social Change. <i>Deviant Behavior</i>. Assignments/deadlines: - Complete the Reading Guide to <i>Prague Winter</i>
Sunday, June 7th : Special trip to the Theatre	Trip: Divadlo v Celetné: Vaclav Havel's Play "The Increased Difficulty of Concentration" Optional reading: "The Increased Difficulty of Concentration" (script on MyLearning)
Session 5 Monday, June 8	Topic: Františka Plamínková: Feminist Leadership Description: We will examine Plamínková's challenges as a school teacher turned women's rights advocate turned Senator during the First Republic. We will discuss her stance against Hitler and look at the context of Operation Anthropoid to which her death is associated. We will discuss the dangers of picking up the mantle of leadership and the elements of mentoring since the elder Plamínková and Horakova had a close relationship. We will visit the excellent exhibit in the National Museum, Františka Plamínková and Us. Reading: - Read Reinfeld (2007) Františka Plamínková (1875–1942), Czech feminist and patriot Evening: 6:00pm: Watch the movie "Anthropoid" together at AAU
Session 6 Tuesday, June 9	Topic: Trip to the Cyril & Methodius Church and Lidice Memorial Description: Many of the leaders we are studying resisted and suffered under acts that could be characterized as "evil." Yes evil comes in many forms and the more we are acquainted with these forms the more we can recognize it before it takes hold. There were many ethical dilemmas in resisting or combatting evil for leaders and followers, including Operation Anthropoid where the use of assassination could arguable make the situation worse for many thousands of people. And, what happens after atrocities are committed? How and why should we remember the calamities of the past? We travel to two sites: the site where the Czech paratroopers were hunted down by the Gestapo, and the site where a town was annihilated. Reading: - Johnson, C. "Combating Evil" in <i>Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership</i> - Read about Lidice in the Holocaust Encyclopedia: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lidice
Session 7 Wednesday, June 10	Topic: Milada Horáková and Spiritual Leadership

	Description: We will look at Horakova's life in terms of the relationship between suffering and spiritual leadership. We will discuss what she faced under The First Republic as she began her political activity and work for women's rights. We will also go to several of the places where Horáková studied, worked for women's rights, and served refugees and families. Reading: • Read Iggers, W. (1995) Milada Horáková in <i>Women of Prague</i> • Hayden, J.M. & Hench, J.W. (2026) "One also has to know how to lose": The Role of Suffering in Milada Horáková's Spiritual Leadership, in <i>Inspirational Women Leaders</i> Afternoon activity: • Work on research projects / consult with professor
Session 8 Thursday, June 11	Topic: Milada Horáková and Visit to Museum of Communism Description: Through the museum and our discussion we will explore the events that led to the communist coup in 1948 as well as the evolution of totalitarian communism in Czechoslovakia. Reading: 1. Horáková, "Women in Politics" Assignment: • Work on your independent Project
Session 9 Monday, June 15	Topic: Jan Palach: Sacrifice and Leadership Description: We will watch parts of a recent (subtitled) movie on Jan Palach and discuss this act of self-immolation on Wenceslas Square in 1969. Why was this act important? Can one act be a form of leadership? Reading: 1. Read Allison & Goethals ch. 11 "Deifying the Dead and Downtrodden" in <i>The Romance of Heroism and Heroic Leadership</i> 2. Read "Reflections on Jan Palach from Czech Oral Histories" 3. Read about the life of Jan Palach: https://www.janpalach.cz/cs/default/mista-pameti/index
Session 10 Tuesday, June 16	Topic: Václav Havel, the Theatre of the Absurd and the Theatre of Leadership Description: We will discuss Havel's life and times leading up to and through his presidency, watching several documentaries on his life. We will explore Havel and Charter 77 leadership in the 1980s and Havel's time as the last president of Czechoslovakia and first president of the Czech Republic. We will look at the relationship between hope and leadership and the ways in which power complicates hope in the process of leadership. Reading: 1. Hayden (2024) Leadership and the Ethics of Hope: Václav Havel and the Charter 77 Human Rights Movement in Czechoslovakia. <i>Leadership</i>. 2. Havel, excerpts from <i>Disturbing the Peace</i> (interview in 1986)
Session 11 Wednesday, June 17	Topic: Presentations/ Václav Havel: Leadership and Truth Description: We will tour the places in Prague where Havel lived, lead, and shaped him into the person he was. Then we'll look at the students of the Velvet Revolution and how the Civic Forum that Havel helped start became a conduit for a regime change and the journey from totalitarianism to democracy. Reading:

	1. Žantovský "The Fog of Revolution" from <i>Havel: A Life</i>. 2. Havel (1978) "The Power of the Powerless"
Session 12 Thursday, June 18	Topic: Presentations/ The Legacy of the Velvet Revolution Today with Special Guests Description: As a capstone experience, we will discuss the Czech leadership tradition and its legacy today with a 1989 student-leader and democratic advocate as well as the producer of the highly acclaimed documentary, <i>Power of the Powerless</i>. We will be joined by other guests, including participants of Arete Youth Academy, whose mission is to foster global citizenship. We will screen the documentary and then have a lively discussion with our guests which will continue over lunch. Assignments/deadlines: 1. Research Project (paper and presentation) 2. Comparative Leadership Synthesis Paper (due Friday, July 3rd)

7. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	20%	1,2	1,3
Prague Winter Reading Guide	30	15%	1,2,3	2
Research Project	20	20%	1,5	1
Journal	20	20%	1,5	1,3
Comparative Leadership Synthesis paper	38	25%	3,4	1,2
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

8. Detailed description of the assignments

Class participation:

This is a small, intentional learning community. You are not invisible here. We expect every student to contribute to class discussions, activities, and group work. You are expected to arrive at all classes and events on time.

Come prepared with ideas. We expect to see reading notes out in front of you at the start of each class session so you are prepared to discuss readings and topics. Come to class having read and noted the assigned reading material so you are prepared to engage in meaningful discussion and activities.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, offer ideas, or build on the ideas of others. This is how we will construct our learning together, and every voice matters!

This is not a lecture course that is about just memorizing facts for a test. You must take ownership of the material and be prepared to demonstrate your own learning and meaning-making. I am providing the resources and guiding discussions, but what you get out of this course depends on what you put into it.

Beyond the Classroom: As a study abroad course, our learning takes place well beyond our classroom lessons. You will participate in guided tours, site visits, and sessions with guest speakers. You are expected to be actively engaged in ALL of these activities. Listen attentively, take notes, ask questions, and show respect and enthusiasm for all speakers.

Assignment 1: Prague Winter Reading Guide

You will be required to read Madeline Albright's *Prague Winter* before the course begins and complete a reading guide which you will submit via Google Docs. These are your notes and reflections on this reading. They will be an important for understanding the Czech context and history to interpret the leaders we will be studying.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Completion of all chapter questions	30%
Substantive reflection on questions	40%
Evidence of reading comprehension	30%
total	100%

Assignment 2: Journal

- You will need to purchase a journal before travel and bring it everywhere we go.
- Take notes on lectures and readings, reflect on experiences as they happen.
- These notes will help you process your experience and solidify lessons.
- Grading: You will have a **one-on-one process meeting** with Dr. Hayden, where you will share your journal (overview) and discuss your process of reflection throughout the course. Your journal will be taken up shortly not for reading content but for measuring effort and consistency.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Evidence of note taking and critical reflection	40%
Connections to readings	30%
Personal reflection on leadership lessons	30%
total	100%

Assignment 3: Research Project

You will choose a place in Prague that symbolizes, demonstrates, or suggests something about the process of leadership. This can be a place focused on a leader or event, or it can be a public art display or structure. There are a lot of options here. Your task is to find a place that is interesting and research not only what it is about or who it is depicting, but to investigate the importance of its context (use the Wren and Swatez model) and what insights into leadership it offers us. Deliverable will be a picture plus a 2-3 page write-up of your findings with APA citations. You will present this on the last day of class.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Follows guidelines and meets requirements	25%
Integrates 2 or more readings into analysis of the place or person	35%
Relies on quality external sources to communicate about place and context	40%
	100%

Assignment 4: Research Paper

- Write an 9-10 page (minimum) double spaced essay with APA formatting.
- You will use your course readings and other academic resources, with proper citations and references.
- *Synthesize your learning of all the leaders in our course into principles, lessons, themes and support your argument with good examples.*
- *Identify common threads:*
 - *Universal themes/lessons/principles across all of these leaders*
 - *A conclusion you can draw about leadership by looking at all of these different people at different times.*
- *Explain the importance of context when studying leadership.*

Assessed area	Percentage
Appropriate use of APA format, well structured paper	20%
Synthesis of themes and justification/ evidence	30%
Effective and specific use of course readings on leadership and biographical details. Plus evidence of additional research.	30%
Explanation of the importance of context when studying leadership	20%
total	100%

9. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Prohibition of AI use

This course is not conducive to the use of artificial intelligence for educational purposes. You should gather legitimate sources, do research, organize and perform analysis, think and synthesize, ponder and reflect all without the use of AI. Although the AI detection indicators in Turnitin.com are not very accurate, they usually are an indication that at least a conversation needs to take place. I want to have an honest relationship with students, so if AI emerges in its potential use, we will have a direct conversation.

Prepared by: Joshua M. Hayden, Ed.D.

Date: 17 May 2026