Central European Cities: Budapest, Prague, Vienna, 1450-1914.

William O’Reilly  
wto21@cam.ac.uk

A century ago, Budapest, Prague and Vienna were the capital cities of the western and eastern halves of the increasingly unstable Austro-Hungarian empire and scenes of intense cultural activity. Budapest produced such luminaries as Béla Bartók, Georg Lukács, and Michael and Karl Polanyi; Prague, Antonín Dvořák, Leos Janácek, Bertha von Suttner, Bedrich Smetana, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Franz Kafka; and Vienna was home to such figures as Sigmund Freud, Gustav Klimt, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. This paper explores the long history of these cities leading up to the fin-de-siècle, examining how political, cultural, intellectual and artistic vibrancy common to all three cities emerged from deeply different civic cultures.

In this paper we will survey the urban development of the three cities and review the effects of urban growth, of emigration and immigration, or invasion and expansion, and finally of modernisation and nationalism, impacted on various aspects of the three cities’ cultures. We will examine the process of physical change, as population growth, royal and imperial residence, religious persecution and toleration, of cultural experimentation and vibrancy, and of industrialisation and the rising middle class, came to usher in a new age of tenements, suburbs, and town planning. We will explore the mentality of nobles and elites, or Christians, Jews and Muslims, or residents and newcomers, through a study of primary and secondary sources. Through snapshots of such subjects as the mentality of the nobility, the views of Turkish soldiers outside the walls of Vienna, of operettas and musical life, of attitudes toward Germans and Jews, we will reveal the striking relationship between historical memory and creation, social marginality and cultural creativity.

In comparing the three cities, we will explore how Vienna, famed for its spacious parks and gardens, was often characterized as a ‘garden’ of esoteric culture, while Prague was a city of alchemy and magic, and Budapest as a new, dense, city surrounded by factories, whose cultural leaders referred to the offices and cafés where they met as ‘workshops’. These differences were reflected in the contrast between Prague’s long history as a seat of religious and royal heritage, of Vienna’s aesthetic and individualistic culture and Budapest’s more moralistic and socially engaged approach.

This course aims, then, to acquaint students with the history and urban development of three principal Central European cities – Vienna, Prague and Budapest – in the context of the European urban tradition, focusing especially on unique moments in their history. We will examine the social, economic, political and cultural conditions of the time and the changing spatial and temporal dimensions of political power and culture.

Study of the selected cities will be set within the context of the main stages of urban history and planning in Europe, moving quickly from the end of the Roman Empire, drawing comparisons with Western European and certain non-European cities.

Further themes include the process and causes of urbanization, the changing populations of the cities (including religious and ethnic minorities, migrant and worker communities); analysis of the physical
city (its urban form and spatial topography, landmarks and architectural monuments); the distinctive identities of capital cities; and debates on urban planning and historical preservation.

Class meetings will consist of lectures, class discussions, student presentations, analysis of readings, occasional films and perhaps a fieldtrip.

**Start date** October 2018

**Teachers** Dr William O’Reilly (wto21) *and others*

**Teaching regime for this paper**

Teaching:

There will be three two-hour introductory classes, each one setting out the major debates in the history of the city (*What is a city? How do we study cities?*); on the history of urban life (*Defining the Urban – Classic Texts and Approaches*); and on area studies and Central Europe (*What is Central Europe? Do Historical Regions Matter?).

There will then be 13 two-hour classes on the thematic topics set out below (headings 4-16; five in Michaelmas, eight in Lent). Classes will be structured around student presentations and group discussion. Some classes will begin with a twenty-minute lecture introducing the topic and providing necessary context. In Easter term there will two classes: one on the different kinds of sources used in the course and one on gobbet preparation, on consolidation and revision.

- Michaelmas: 8 x 120-min classes
- Lent: 8 x 120-min classes
- Easter: 2 x 120-min classes

Fieldtrip: It may be possible to organize a fieldtrip to Central Europe; this is contingent on securing financial support and will not be an essential element in this paper.

**LONG ESSAY SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

1) Assess the emergence of either (a) Buda or (b) Prague as an early modern *Residenzstadt*.
2) Analyse and assess the multi-ethnic nature of Buda, to 1700.
3) ‘Architecture and religious experience alone supported the legacy of Charles IV in Prague.’ Discuss.
4) How and to what extent did alchemy serve as a language of mediation at the Habsburg court in Prague?
5) What were the parameters of urban Jewish life in either Buda or Prague or Vienna, before 1781?
6) Why did Vienna emerge as a centre of baroque political culture?
7) Assess the importance of music in the creation of ‘Vienna Gloriosa’.
8) How was Magyar nationalism and symbolic politics imprinted on fin-de-siècle Hungary?
9) How recognizable is Kafka’s reading of Prague as a city?
10) Assess the contributions of Austrian Feminists to the sexual debate in fin-de-siècle Vienna.
11) “Pluralist Myth and Nationalist Realities: the dynastic myth of the Habsburg Monarchy was a futile exercise in the creation of identity.” Discuss.
12) “Architecture is a gesture.” Discuss, with reference to the central European city.

Background Reading:

**Habsburg Lands/Austria**

Steven Beller, ed. *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (New York, 2001)
Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March* (New York, 1991) [Novel]
Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London, 2001)

**Bohemia/Czech Lands**

Peter Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold* (New York, 1997)
Carol Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics* (Boulder, 1997)

**Hungary**


1 **Introduction I: What is a city? How do we study cities?**


2 Introduction II. Defining the Urban – Classic Texts and Approaches


3 Introduction III: What is Central Europe? Do Historical Regions Matter?


4 The Birth of Medieval Cities – The Roman origins


Harald Kleinschmidt, Understanding the Middle Ages: The Transformation of Ideas and Attitudes in the Medieval World (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2008) 15-61. (Experiences of Time; Conceptions of Space)


Primary Sources:
Visiting the Map Room at the UL

5 The Multi-Ethnic Buda: A Late Medieval City

Primary Sources:
Antonio Bonfini, Rerum Hungaricarum Decades, (Excerpts: Description of the Renaissance Buda Castle) – Unpublished translation (5 pages)

György Szerémi, Epistola de perditione Regni Hungarorum, (Excerpts: Description of how the Germans and Hungarians escaped from Buda before the arrival of the Ottomans in 1526; Sultan Soliman’s secret visit to Buda) – Unpublished translation (9 pages)

A. B., A letter to a friend, being an historical account of the affairs of Hungary, more particularly relating to Buda and how treacherously it was surprised by Soylman the Magnificent from the Christians, 1541–1684, (14. 11. 1684) London: Davies, 1684. (4 pages)

Secondary Sources:


Jacob Richards, A journal of the siege and taking of Buda by the imperial army (under the conduct of the Duke of Lorrain, and His Electoral Highness, the Duke of Bavaria) Anno Dom. 1686. (London: M. Gilliflower and J. Patridge, 1687.) (excerpts)

6 Prague as capital of the Holy Roman Empire – Political and Cultural Centre

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


7


### 7 Knowledge and Magic in Renaissance Prague

**Primary Sources:**


**Secondary Sources:**


8 Jewish communities in medieval and early modern Buda, Prague and Vienna

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


9 The Turkish Wars and Baroque Vienna – Baroque Political Centre

Primary Sources:

* A relation or diary of the siege of Vienna written by John Peter a Valcaren, judge-advocate of the Imperial army; drawn from the original by His Majesties command* (London: William Nott, 1684) Excerpts 81-107.

  Further excerpts on his stay in Vienna - Unpublished Translations (7 pages)

Secondary Sources:


10 Baroque Prague – Time and Space in Baroque Prague

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


**II Vienna in the 18th century: Architecture, Art & Music**

*Primary Sources:*


*Secondary Sources:*


Considering the visual evidence for the work of a number of architects and artists:

**Building Types**
- the baroque church
- the urban palace [*Stadtpalais*]
- the suburban palace [*maison de plaisance / Gartenpalais / Lust-Gebäude*]
- commercial architecture: the boutique; the mall

**Artists**
- Andrea Pozzo (1642-1709)
- Domenico Martinelli (1650-1718)
- Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656-1723)
- Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach (1693-1742)
- Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt (1668-1745)
- Jean Nicolas Jadot de Ville-Issey (1710-1761)

### 12 Budapest in the 19th century

**Primary Sources:**
"Cassandra Letter": 1867 Letter of Lajos Kossuth to Ferenc Deák, - Unpublished Translation

National Self-Fashioning: Photographs on the 1896 Hungarian Millennium Exhibitions
[https://www.fortepan.hu/?view=owner&lang=hu&name=budapest+fovaros+leveletara](https://www.fortepan.hu/?view=owner&lang=hu&name=budapest+fovaros+leveletara)

**Secondary Sources:**


13 *Fin-de-siècle culture in Vienna*

**Primary Sources:**


**Secondary Sources:**


Julie M. Johnson, “‘The Streets of Vienna are Paved with Culture, the Streets of Other Cities with Asphalt”: Museums and Material Culture in Vienna – A Comment’, *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (2015), 89-96.


Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3, no. 4 (December 1980), 448-469.


Considering the following:

*Themes*
- Art in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna; the Secession; *Jugendstil*, Art Nouveau
- Academic art education

*Building Types*
- the museum
- the library
- the residential block [Gemeindebauten]

*Artists*
- Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656-1723)
- Gottfried Semper (1803-1879)
- Gustav Klimt (1862-1918)
- Otto Wagner (1841-1918)
- Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867-1908)
- Peter Behrens (1868-1940)
- Jozef Frank (1885-1967)
- Hubert Gessner (1871-1943)

14 Prague – The world of Kafka

*Primary Source:*


15 Gender, Desire and the City in late nineteenth-century: Vienna and Budapest

Primary Sources:


Hungarian Police Records from the Late-Nineteenth Century. – Unpublished Translation.

Gustav Klimt: “The Kiss”

Secondary Sources:


Michaela Raggam-Blesch “If a woman Should Be True to Her Natural Destiny, She Ought Not to Compete with Men’ Jewish Intellectual Women between Anti-Semitism and Misogyny in Fin-de-Siècle


16 Public spaces and monuments – Nationalisms and the Empire

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


Paul Wijdeveld, “‘Architecture is a gesture,’” in *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect* (Cambridge, Mass, 1994), chapter 6, pp. 159-182. [see chapter 5 for plans and photographs]

Considering the following:

*Themes*
- Civic and residential architecture, late 19th – early 20th centuries
- Biedermeier (1815-1848)
- the Vorstädte (inner suburbs)
- the Ringstrasse

*Building Types*
- the neo-gothic church
- the bourgeois apartment block
- the garden suburb [*Gartensiedlung*]

*Artists*
- Gottfried Semper (1803-1879)
- Eduard van der Nüll (1812-1868) + August Sicard von Sicardsburg (1813-1868)
- Theophilus Hansen / Baron Theophil Edvard von Hansen (1813-1891)
- Friedrich von Schmidt (1825-1891)
- Heinrich von Ferstel (1828-1883)