

HNRS 2351.001—Fall 2025
World, Text, and Image III: Human Expression
Dr. Randy LeBlanc

Room: HPR 135
TTh 12:30pm-1:50pm

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Course Description (from the Catalog): Introductory course in human expression—the process by which we come to understand ourselves, each other, and our social worlds through the use of symbols. This course explores our ability to draw creatively on the resources of language and nonverbal behavior to influence one another in public presentations, new media, and interpersonal relationships. This course satisfies the human expression core requirement.

Our course: Imagine you find yourself in a place where you do not speak the language, your phone is dead or missing, and you don't know anyone. Think about how attentive you must be to everything around you. Every detail is a site of dread or at least confusion. You don't know what is important, how it all fits, or why. You surely don't "understand" it all. To make your way, you will have to adjust your perspective and embrace "not knowing."

How do you orient yourself? How do you find a place or make your way? One way is to attend to the gestures (broadly understood) of those around you. These "human expressions" can guide you to some understanding. How do people interact? What does it sound like when they are talking to one another? How do they engage you—if they do? You may have other questions to add. In a way, closely watching others won't be new. Reading these kinds of "human expressions" is a significant part of what we do in our everyday life. In the circumstance of being lost, however, they are even more valuable as potential resources. To use one example, some of you, as immigrants or the children of immigrants, know from first- or secondhand experience precisely what being "lost" this way is like. You will have some sense of how it works—either directly or indirectly. The lost have no choice but to find their way even as they are limited to what they can figure out by the clues around them. These limitations mean that they are also limited in the ways they can express themselves—e.g., their humanity--by what they brought with them and what they can figure out from the environment, including, if they are lucky, a helpful local guide or someone whose movements, reactions, and responses they can observe.

In this course, to situate ourselves somewhere that is far enough away to be challenging and close enough that we may find some footing, we will get lost in a place and time that will be unfamiliar to most if not all of you. The choice of place and time (Czechoslovakia, circa 1960s-1980s) isn't exactly random—we'll talk about this more in class—but it is likely alien and, therefore, potentially, valuable. Here we will find an analog, manual cultural world functioning within and alongside a repressive political environment. There are no cell phones, there is no internet, no social media, and, because we will be behind what was called the "Iron Curtain" during the Cold War, there is very little unsupervised freedom (e.g., of expression—personal, political, cultural, or otherwise).

Putting ourselves in a different space and time (and you are charged with using your imagination [and not Google!]) throughout the course) allows us to engage questions of human expression in two related ways. First, we will be engaging the expressions of “others” in three forms: autobiography, theater, and film. These are three ways that human beings offer us information about who they are and what they have experienced, individually and as part of a group with a history of personal and collective struggle. Second, we will be reading these expressions for what they seem to be saying about themselves and, finally, for what our responses to them say about us.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- To develop and improve critical viewing, thinking, and writing skills by engaging different forms of human expression, namely autobiography, theater, and film (films, discussion, worksheets, and papers).
- To learn how to read critically, engage, analyze, and interpret an unfamiliar culture and setting through various forms of human expression (films, discussion, worksheets, and papers).
- To make connections between critically engaging others’ human expressions and students’ self-knowledge through reflection, discussion, and creative activity (discussion, written assignments, student film project).

Required Texts:

--Vaclav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, translated by Paul Wilson (Vintage, 1991) ISBN: 9780679734024

--Vaclav Havel, *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, translated by various (Grove Press, 1993) ISBN: 9780802133076

N.B. To avoid confusion in class, all students must use these editions/translations. Students are required to bring appropriate books to class to supplement discussion.

--*The films will be viewed in and during class.* If you wish to gain access to them outside of class, the best way is to subscribe to the Criterion Collection (<https://www.criterionchannel.com/>). The cost is about \$10/month. Subscribing is NOT REQUIRED for the course. If you choose to do so, once you are in, go to the Czechoslovak New Wave collection: <https://www.criterionchannel.com/czechoslovak-new-wave>.

A Note on Films: The films we will watch this semester, owing to the cultural context in which they were made and the issues they confront, may feature anachronistic attitudes and terminology, vulgar language, and/or scenes of violence, nudity, or sexuality. These films were selected because of their artistic merit, their cultural significance, and how they fit with the nature and goals of this course. They were not selected for controversial reasons or with the intent of causing discomfort. It is understood that, by agreeing to attend this class, you, as adults, are aware of the films and their subject matter, and view them accordingly, with the understanding that the films were picked for the insights they offer into the time, place, and culture that inform the subject matter of the course.

CANVAS: All written and graded assignments will appear on Canvas. Assignments can be found under the “Syllabus,” “Assignments,” and “Modules” tabs on the Course page. All written and graded work will be submitted via Canvas. Students will also find supplementary handouts and readings on Canvas. All modules, essays, and attendance/participation grades are weighted as part of your final grade.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Grading is done on a 10-point scale: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79, etc. The formal requirements of the course and their relative impact on your final grade are as follows:

1) Class Attendance and Participation

10%

Our work in this course necessarily involves discussion, and, in that vein, discussion involves taking cues from gestures, tone of voice, etc. To serve this end, you are expected to attend our class meetings regularly and to participate in our class discussions. In addition, you will need to be in class to watch the assigned films. Films are made to be viewed in groups and this experience will be a vital part of our class’s work. Bring your understanding of the readings, your observations about the films and plays, your questions, your answers, and your insights to class meetings and be ready to articulate and discuss them.

2) Modules: Readings and Assignment Worksheets (3 x 15% each; 1 x 10%)

55%

The course is divided into 4 units or modules. You can find the modules under the “Modules” tab on the course’s Canvas page. Each module consists of several reading and film assignments (listed below in the syllabus). Each module is also divided into (1) **Assignment Worksheets** and (2) **In-class group reflection exercises**. Each component refers to specific class material and must be completed by its due date. *These assignments cannot be made up.*

(1) **The Assignment Worksheets consist of three (3) Analytical Questions** about the readings. You will be asked to read the assigned texts and answer the accompanying questions. USING ONLY THE TEXTS YOU READ and *in your own words*, respond to each question in a coherent, comprehensive paragraph (no lists!) of neither more nor less 100 words each. Be clear, comprehensive, and don’t waste words). **Missed worksheets cannot be made up.**

(2) **In-class Group Reflection Exercises.** After we watch each film, students will participate in small group discussions (reflections) on what they have seen and learned. They will discuss their impressions and/or respond to more directed questions. One member of each group will submit—for the group—the results of these reflections (i.e., a series of ideas and observations on the film or answers to directed questions). These will be submitted directly to Dr. LeBlanc via email at jleblanc@uttyler.edu after class. These reflections will form the basis of our discussions of the films we watch. The results of your reflections will constitute part of each appropriate module grade.

3) Midterm Essay

10%

Students will be asked to write an analytical essay on some aspect of the class material using specific works we have read, seen, and discussed. These WILL NOT be research papers. Students are expected to limit themselves to the material we have read and discussed and to demonstrate their own substantial analytical abilities. The midterm essay will be 2 pages, uploaded to Canvas as a Word doc (double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, etc.) and the final essay will be

comprehensive and 3-4 pages in length (Word doc, double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman) uploaded to Canvas. See the assignments on Canvas for further instructions.

4) Final Student Film Project (20%) and Film Reflection Essay (5%) 25%

As a final project, at the end of the semester, students (in groups) will write, act in, produce, and present 12-15-minute films on some substantial aspect of the course. Films should be creative engagements with the material of the course, reflecting the students' experience in class, not only with the films we watched but also the texts we read and discussed. The idea is that you enjoy the creative process, and the result should be films that are creative "human expression." ***As part of the process, on the Friday before the films are to be shown, each student will submit a 1-page essay reflecting on their participation in the making of the film and how they think the film relates to specific films, plays, or texts we read this semester.***

All essay assignments will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

Essay Rubric

Criterion	Good (90-100%)	Fair (80-90%)	Poor (<80%)
Content and Development ____/50 points	Content is comprehensive, addresses itself to the issues raised by the assignment and the major points are clearly stated and well supported.	Content is not comprehensive or persuasive. Major points are identified but not well addressed. Content is inconsistent with regard to purpose and clarity of thought.	Content is incomplete. Paper demonstrates little or no understanding of the issues raised by the assignment. The content is confused or confusing and without apparent purpose.
Organization and Structure ____/25 points	The structure of the paper is clear. The Introduction/Thesis paragraph demonstrates sufficient understanding of the issues and previews major points. Paragraph transitions are present, logical, and maintain the flow of thought throughout the paper. The conclusion is logical and flows from the body of the paper.	Structure of the paper is not easy to follow. The Introduction/Thesis is missing or, if provided, does not demonstrate an understanding of the issues or preview major points. Paragraph transitions need improvement. The conclusion is missing or, if provided, does not flow from the body of the paper. You should not use crutch phrases like "In conclusion..."	Poor or missing organization and structure detract from the writer's discussion. The Introduction/Thesis is missing. Paragraphs are disjointed and lack transition of thought—or they are merely missing.
Format ____/5 points	Paper follows these guidelines and is of the appropriate length.	Paper follows most guidelines or is too long or too short.	Paper lacks many elements of proper formatting. Writer does not follow directions.
Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation ____/20 points	Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed. Spelling is correct. Language is clear and precise. Sentences display consistently strong, varied structure.	Paper contains few grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Language lacks clarity or includes the use of some jargon or conversational tone.	Paper contains numerous grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Language uses jargon or is too conversational in tone.

Required Statement on Artificial Intelligence and this Course

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

The use of AI is not permitted in this course at all. We expect all the work students submit for this course to be their own. We have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, we expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. **Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values:** a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

Schedule/Assignment List

Week 1: (8/25-27)

T: Course introduction, syllabus, and an introduction to Czech Twentieth Century
Th: Introduction continued: Film, Autobiography, Theater
Read: Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, all of Chapter 1: "Growing Up Outside"

Module 1: "Growing Up Outside"

Week 2: (9/1-3)

T: Introduction (continued) and Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, Chapter 1: "Growing Up Outside"
Th: Czechoslovak New Wave and Film Exercise (**reflections**/discussion)
Worksheet 1 due Sep 6 @ 11:59pm

Week 3: (9/8-10)

T: Film (in-class): Menzel, *Larks on a String*
Th: Film (in-class): Menzel, *Larks on a String* (conclude film/**reflections**/discussion)
Read: Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, pp. 37-60 from Chapter 2: "Writing for the Stage"
Worksheet 2 due Sep 13 @ 11:59pm

Module 2: “Writing for the Stage”

Week 4: (9/15-17)

T: Read: Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, all of Chapter 2: “Writing for the Stage”

Th: Read: Havel, *The Memorandum* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 53-84)

Week 5: (9/22-24)

T: Read: Havel, *The Memorandum* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 85-104)

Th: Read: Havel, *The Memorandum* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 104-130)

Worksheet 3 due Sep 27 @ 11:59pm

Week 6: (9/29-10/1)

T: Film (in-class): Nemec, *The Party and the Guests*

Th: Film (in-class): Nemec, *The Party and the Guests* (conclude film/**reflections**/discussion)

Read: Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, pp. 93-115 from Chapter 3: “Facing the Establishment”

Worksheet 4 due Oct 4 @ 11:59pm

Module 3: “Facing the Establishment”

Week 7: (10/6-8)

T: Film (in-class): Chytilova, *Something Different*

Th: Film (in-class): Chytilova, *Something Different* (conclude film/**reflections**/discussion)

Sun (10/11) Midterm Essay Due @ 11:59pm

Week 8: (10/13-15)

T: Film (in-class): Forman, *Firemen’s Ball*

Read: Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, pp. 93-115 from Chapter 3: “Facing the Establishment”

Th: Film (in-class): Forman, *Firemen’s Ball* (conclude film/**reflections**/discussion)

Week 9: (10/20-22)

T: Film (in-class): Chytilova, *Daisies*

Th: Film (in-class): Chytilova, *Daisies* (conclude film/**reflections**/discussion)

Worksheet 5 due Oct 25 @ 11:59pm

Module 4: Making (Non-)Sense of It All: *Audience*, *Unveiling*, and *Protest*

Week 10: (10/27-29)

T: Read: Havel, *Audience* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 183-212)

Th: Read: Havel, *Unveiling* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 213-238)

Week 11: (11/3-11/5)

T: Read: Havel, *Unveiling* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 213-238)

Th: Read: Havel, *Protest* (from *The Garden Party and Other Plays*, pp. 239-266)

Worksheet 6 due Nov 8 @ 11:59pm

Week 12: (11/10-12)

T: Film Project Check-in

Th: Film Project Check-in (LeBlanc at NCHC)

Week 13: (11/17-19)

T: Film Project Check-in

Th: Film Project Check-in

Sun (11/22) Film Reflection Essay due at 11:59pm

Week 14: (11/24-26)

T: No Class—Thanksgiving Day Break

Th: No Class—Thanksgiving Day Break

Week 15: (12/1-3)

T: Fourth Annual Flying Uncle Film Festival, Day One

Th: Fourth Annual Flying Uncle Film Festival Day Two