

20th Century Europe Through Autobiography

Spring 2021: HIST 32501 ~ MWF 9:30-10:20am ~ Forney Hall G124

“Bila jednom jedna zemlja (Once upon a time, there was a country)”

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How does the great global turn of events affect individual people? Why and how do they choose to write about their personal lives? How do they represent their personal experiences in 20th century Europe? In what ways can their autobiographies deepen our understanding of tumult, exuberance, despair, and everyday life in that place and time? This course uses a set of vibrant, gripping autobiographies written by authors who lived through profound turning points in 20th century European history to investigate both the story of Europe and its place in the world, as well as to analyze the benefits and limitations of using personal narratives for understanding history. With a focus on central and eastern Europe, this course gives special attention to the history of intergroup relations (national, ethnic, religious, etc.), World War One, World War Two, nationalism, and communism, and dives deep into Post-Cold War stories of migration, refugeedom, globalization, and opening up the doors to the past with grim determination. Expect music & film to accompany our journey. Pack light.