This course offers a survey of one of the world’s greatest living authors. Milan Kundera’s philosophical novels enjoy an enormous international reputation and are devoured by undergraduates and intellectuals alike. Almost single-handedly, Milan Kundera put the Czechs on the map of world literature. His reception in his homeland, however, is not so auspicious.

We will trace Kundera’s literary path from his procommunist poetic youth to his present postmodern Francophilia, and compare his works with those authors he himself considers his predecessors and his influences in European literature, such as Franz Kafka, Lawrence Sterne, Robert Musil, and Miguel Cervantes.

Readings and class discussions in English. Some readings in Czech for qualified students.

Approach: Literary Arts
Connection: Beyond the North Atlantic

Texts
Farewell Waltz
The Book of Laughter and Forgetting
The Unbearable Lightness of Being
Slowness
The Art of the Novel
Testaments Betrayed
Selections from Rabelais, Laclos, Fuentes, Cervantes, Musil, and Kafka