

HUMANITIES 5695

Fascism

Fall 2021

Mon. 1:30–4:20pm

Rm. 5566

INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Joshua DERMAN

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to provide students with an introduction to the study of fascism. It situates fascism in its historical epoch (ca. 1919–1945) while raising questions about its aftershocks and significance for contemporary politics and society. This semester we will focus on a variety of themes and questions that are central to the study of National Socialism, yet relevant for the comparative study of twentieth-century political societies around the world. The weekly readings and discussions revolve around classic and contemporary texts in the historiography of National Socialism. Attention will be paid to political leadership, social mobilization, political violence, and mass killing, with a central focus on popular opinion and issues of consent, coercion, and collaboration. Students will attain a general understanding of the historiographical and theoretical perspectives that have been applied to interpret National Socialism. The course does not presuppose any prior background in European history.

Each week we will read a book that addresses elements of the experience of National Socialism. Our aim in class discussion is to elucidate the book's argument, evaluate how it uses evidence to make its case, and debate what we can learn from it—both in comparison with other readings and the broader concerns of the course. The presentations and papers aim to put the skills learned in the seminar room into practice, by giving students the opportunity to frame and assess arguments, draw comparisons, and critically interrogate their sources.

ASSESSMENTS

Participation (attendance is compulsory): 15%

- Asking questions and engaging with your classmates' comments are key elements of the seminar experience. Adequate preparation is essential.

Two short in-class presentations on the weekly readings: 20%

- Students are required to make two short presentations, possibly in a group setting. Each student's contribution should last around 10 minutes. You should assume that everyone has done the reading; detailed summary or recapitulation of facts is

unnecessary. Instead, you should focus on providing an overview of the argument of the text in question, ideally comparing and contrasting it with other readings from the course. You are encouraged to raise open-ended questions that can help guide discussion. PowerPoint presentations are welcome but not required.

Midterm paper: 30% due October 25

- Please address the following topic based on your analysis of the assigned readings: Explain the Nazi Party's political success prior to January 1933. What was the movement's appeal? What were its tactics? Which circumstances did it exploit to come to power?
- Page requirements: PG students 10 pp., UG students 8 pp.

Final paper: 35% due December 10

- Please address the following topic based on your analysis of the assigned readings: What was National Socialism's vision of a "people's community"? Did the Nazis succeed in creating one in Germany between 1933 and 1945?
- Page requirements: PG students 15 pp., UG students 10 pp.

ASSIGNED TEXTS

All readings are available as PDFs on the course's Canvas website. You are strongly encouraged to bring hard copies—that is, photocopies or print outs, rather than purely digital versions—to class for discussion.

The course does not presuppose any special background in European history. Since it is a postgraduate course, it focuses on the interpretation of historical events and movements, rather than the who/what/when of narrative history. Students who are unfamiliar with the history of this period are strongly advised to read chapters of Catherine Epstein's textbook, *Nazi Germany*, in addition to the assigned readings. For the first class meeting, it is expected that students will read the first 43 pp. of the textbook. The chapters of the textbook that correspond to the weeks of the course are as follows:

- Sept. 6 – Oct. 11: Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 1–43.
- Oct. 18 – Nov. 8 : Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 45–121.
- Nov. 15 – Nov. 29: Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 123–209.

EXPECTATIONS

Incompletes will not be granted in this course. Please note that this course enforces a zero-tolerance policy on cheating. If a student is found to have cheated or committed plagiarism, he or she will receive an automatic F in the course, and the case will be referred to the university administration for further action. If you have any questions or concerns about working with sources, please do not hesitate to ask me.

COURSE OUTLINE

Sept. 6 / Narrative

Catherine Epstein, *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2015), pp. 1–43.

Sept. 13 / Propaganda

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Mariner, 1998), pp. 131–44, 284–329, 641–67, 679–81.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, ed., *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, trans. Krista Smith (New York: Enigma, 2006), pp. 15–27, 81–118, 228–38.

Sept. 20 / Attraction

Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came Into Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1938] 1986), entire.

Sept. 27 / Neighbors

William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922–1934*, rev. ed. (New York: Watts, 1984), pp. xii–xix, 4–147.

Oct. 4 / Populism

Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), entire.

Oct. 11 / Coordination

Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, pp. 152–303.

Oct. 18 / Society

David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany 1933–1939* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 1–112, 234–88.

Oct. 25 / Collaboration

Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1–69, 90–150, 183–203, 256–64.

Nov. 1 / Racism

Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 1–16, 103–252.

Nov. 8 / Consent

Shelley Baranowski, *Strength through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–74, 118–98, 231–49.

Nov. 15 / Charisma

Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 1–104, 121–99.

Nov. 22 / Bystanders

David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), entire.

Nov. 29 / Killers

Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin, 1992), entire.