

Humanities 2588: Nazism and German Society, 1914–1945

Fall 2020

Mon. 3:00–4:20pm, Fri. 10:30–11:50am

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Course Description

This course surveys German history from 1914 to 1945, with a focus on the rise, rule, and destruction of National Socialism. Topics to be covered include the First World War, the Weimar Republic, the emergence of the National Socialist movement, the racial state, Hitler's leadership, the Second World War, and the Holocaust. The course readings pay special attention to debates about consent, dissent, coercion, and consensus under Nazi rule. In addition to mastering historical concepts and narratives, students will sharpen their abilities to read sources and write an analytical essay. Typically, one class meeting a week will consist of a lecture, while the second class meeting will be devoted to in-class discussion of assigned readings. The class discussions prepare students for completing a writing assignment that engages synthetically with the course readings. The course does not presuppose any prior background in German or European history.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Master the concepts and narratives necessary for understanding the history of Nazi Germany.
2. Be able to read and discuss challenging historical texts with an eye towards argument and evidence.
3. Write analytically about textual sources, frame a thesis statement, and marshal evidence to make a point.

Assessments

1. Participation (attendance and participation in group activities): 15%
 - Attendance is mandatory and will be checked at 20 intervals during the course of the semester. Unexcused absences will be marked.
 - Students must leave their Zoom camera on for the duration of the class meeting.
 - Typically one class a week will be devoted to discussion. Students will engage in breakout-group discussions with their classmates and then report their findings to the entire class. Each student is expected to act as the group's rapporteur on at least one occasion.
2. In-class midterm examination (Oct. 19): 20%
 - Multiple-choice and short answer questions covering the lectures and assigned readings. The exam will be "open book" (but no internet browsing).

3. Group presentation (Nov. 2 – 13): 15%
 - Students will be divided into groups of 5. During weeks 9 and 10, groups will give short Zoom presentations to the instructor outside of class hours on the following topic: *Why did Germans join the Nazi Party or vote for it before 1933? What did the Nazis do or say that won their support?* Each student is expected to present for 5 minutes.
4. Term paper (due Dec. 4): 30%
 - 8 pp. analytical paper based on assigned readings on the following topic: *What aspects of the regime generated consensus or widespread support? Which were cause for grumbling and discontent? Do you think Hitler's regime succeed in creating a "people's community" in Germany between 1933 and 1945?*
5. Final examination (date TBA): 20%
 - Multiple-choice and short answer questions covering the lectures and assigned readings. The exam will be "open book" (but no internet browsing).
 - The final exam covers only the second half of the course—since the midterm.

Assigned Texts

All readings are available as PDFs from the course Canvas website. I highly encourage you to print out the readings so that you can annotate them and study them carefully. Swiping through long texts on a computer screen, tablet, or phone is not conducive to careful reading or remembering.

At least one class meeting per week, designated on the syllabus an asterisk (*), will be devoted to discussing the assigned reading. Please complete this reading before that date and be prepared to discuss it in class. The midterm and final examinations will test your comprehension of this reading. The term paper will ask you to analyze and synthesize the readings to write an argumentative essay.

Expectations

If you are forced to miss an exam or paper deadline due to illness or other emergency, you must provide a doctor's note or equivalent; otherwise a make-up test or extension cannot be arranged. Without a legitimate excuse, late papers will be docked 5 points (out of a total 100) per day they are late.

The internet is a wonderful resource; it contains an endless amount of information. Some of it is accurate. Much of it is dubious. A lot is plain wrong. Most of it will be *irrelevant* for the purposes of this class. Looking things up on the web can be at most a supplement to—but not a substitute for—attending the lectures and doing the readings.

Once the paper topic is announced, we will discuss proper practices for academic citation, quotation, and paraphrasing. You are not expected to do any outside reading for either the exams or the papers, which test your understanding of the assigned readings and your ability to interpret and synthesize them.

This course enforces a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. If a student is found to have cheated on an exam or committed plagiarism on a paper, the case will be immediately referred to the head of the Humanities Division for further investigation.

Course Outline and Schedule

Week 1:

Sept. 7: Introduction and orientation

Sept. 11: Germany and the First World War

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), pp. x-xii, 1–20.

Week 2:

Sept. 14: Hitler in Vienna and Munich

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 21–29.

Sept. 18: Hitler's World View*

- Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Mariner, 1998), pp. 131–44, 288–329, 659–64, 679–81.

Week 3:

Sept. 21: The Weimar Republic

Sept. 25: Profiles of early Nazi activists*

- Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [1938] 1986), pp. 1–9, 115–86.

Week 4:

Sept. 28: The growth of Nazism at the grassroots*

- William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1922–1945*, rev. ed. (New York: Watts, 1984), pp. xii–xix, 4–68.

Oct. 2: **No class**

Week 5:

Oct. 5: The successes and limits of Nazi electioneering*

- Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, pp. 70–147.

Oct. 9: Hitler's arrival in power

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 39–43.

Week 6:

Oct. 12: The establishment of the Nazi dictatorship

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 45–67.

Oct. 16: Coordination and terror*

- Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, pp. 202–48.

Week 7:

Oct. 19: **Midterm**

Oct. 23: The racial state

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 69–93.

Week 8:

Oct. 26: **No class**

Oct. 30: Social atomization*

- Allen, *The Seizure of Power*, pp. 250–303.

Week 9:

Nov. 2: Economy and society

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 97–113.

Nov. 6: Coercion: Top-down or bottom-up?*

- Robert Gellately, “Surveillance and Disobedience: Aspects of the Political Policing of Nazi Germany,” in *The Third Reich: The Essential Readings*, ed. Christian Leitz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 181–203.
- Richard J. Evans, “Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 151 (2007): 51–81.

Week 10:

Nov. 9: Hitler’s foreign policy

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 113–21.

Nov. 13: Dissent and consent*

- Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 49–80.

Week 11:

Nov. 16: The “people’s community”*

- Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 19–65, 76–96.

Nov. 20: The outbreak of the Second World War

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 123–35.

Week 12:

Nov. 23: Operation Barbarossa*

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 136–48.
- Ian Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 169–99.

Nov. 27: The unfolding of the Holocaust

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 149–77.

Week 13:

Nov. 30: “Ordinary Men”*

- Christopher Browning, “One Day in Józefów: Initiation to Mass Murder,” in *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 169–83.

Dec. 4: Downfall*

- Epstein, *Nazi Germany*, pp. 179–209.
- Saul Padover, *Experiment in Germany: The Story of an American Intelligence Officer* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), pp. 110–18.