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21H.447 Nazi Germany and the Holocaust  
Fall 2004

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## HISTORY OF NAZI GERMANY AND THE HOLOCAUST

### Description:

The rise and fall of National Socialism is one of the most intensively-studied topics in European history. Nevertheless, after more than half a century, popular views of Nazism in the media and among the public remain simplistic—essentialized by equal parts fascination and horror. Adolf Hitler, for instance, is often portrayed as an evil genius of supernatural ability; while the Nazi state is similarly imagined to have held absolute power over every aspect of its subjects' lives. Such characterizations allow ordinary Germans to be portrayed as helpless victims of Nazism, ensnared or coerced into submission by forces beyond their control. Another popular characterization is that German culture itself is fundamentally flawed—that all Germans were basically Nazis at heart. This schema conveniently erases the manifestations of fascism in other Western nations, and allows Americans and other Westerners to reassure themselves that the horrors of Nazism could never emerge in their own enlightened national cultures.

In fact, most of the myths about Nazism can be traced directly back to images that the National Socialists themselves carefully constructed in their rise to power. (And post-1945 political concerns—the need for a "new" Germany to distance itself from the crimes of the Nazi regime; Cold War efforts to equate Nazism with Communism and fascism with capitalism—reiterated these myths.) This class will peel away at the image of Nazism by investigating the rise of National Socialism as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon, and by placing its development firmly within the larger framework of German history.

About a third of the class will address the perpetration of the Holocaust, the nadir of Western civilization. We will grapple with the roots of the Holocaust in ideology, culture, prejudice, and even in some of the most mundane practices of modern life. One of the central aims for this course is to think about whether Nazism, and the crimes that it perpetrated, were part-and-parcel of what we think of as "modernity," or were a horrific deviation from it.

### Requirements:

There will be an in-class, closed-book final exam.

In addition, there will be three 5-6 page papers: due **Oct. 6**, **Nov. 3** and **Dec. 1**.

I want to emphasize here that the discussion of readings in class will be a significant part of this class. Participation in discussions will count for 20% of the final grade.

Papers: 15%, 20%, 20% respectively

Discussion: 20%  
Final Exam: 25 %

**Please note:** plagiarism of any kind—that is taking another's words and/or ideas from a book, another student, or from the internet without full and complete citation—will not be tolerated regardless of the circumstances, and will result in an "F" for the final class grade.

Books for purchase:

Hans Fallada, *Little Man, What Now?* (*Kleiner Mann, was nun?*)  
William S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*  
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*  
Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*

Articles, essays, and sources available on the course Website:

Ernst Jünger, *Storms of Steel* (excerpt)  
Erich Maria Remarque, *All's Quiet on the Western Front* (excerpt)  
Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* t (excerpt)  
Nancy Nenno, "Feminity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin"  
Ian Kershaw *The "Hitler Myth"*  
Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (excerpt)  
Detlev Peukert "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science"

On Reserve: Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany : a History* (DD247.H5.S648)  
Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* (DD256.5.F4181)

Class Outline

Week 1

Sept 8 (Wed.): Introduction to class and requirements: what is "fascism?" what is "nazism"?

Week 2

Sept. 13 (Mon.): Imperial Germany and the First World War  
Discussion: short excerpt from Friedrich Fabri, *Does Germany Need Colonies?*

Sept. 15 (Wed.): Total War and Total (?) Defeat

Week 3:

Sept. 20 (Mon.): Revolution and the Weimar Constitution  
Discussion: Jünger, Remarque, letters from the front & home front

Sept. 22 (Wed.): The Treaty of Versailles; Economic Shock; Paramilitary Politics

Week 4:

Sept. 27 (Mon.): Recovery, and Weimar Culture I: Art and the Avant-Garde (visual presentation)  
Read: Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* , 1-14 (Hitler)  
Fest, pp. 15-26, Kershaw *Hitler Myth*, pp. 14-24

Sept. 29 (Wed): Weimar Culture II: The New Woman  
Discussion: Gunter Berghaus, "Girlkultur: Feminism, Americanism, and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany" *Journal of Design History* (1988)  
Nancy Nenno, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin"

Week 5:

Oct. 4 (Mon.) Film: "The Blue Angel" (*Die Blaue Engel*) (1930, 107 min.)

Oct 6 (Wed.) Countercurrents: Anti-Semitism, Völkisch nationalism  
(and the Origins of the Nazi Party)  
Read: Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* , 15-26 (Hitler)

**\*5-6 page paper due Friday, Oct 9, 4 p.m.**

Week 6:

Oct. 11 (Mon.) (Holiday: Columbus Day)

Oct. 13 (Wed.) Discussion: Hans Fallada, *Little Man, What Now?* (1933)

Week 7:

Oct 18 (Mon.) The Great Depression and the Polarization of Politics

Oct 20 (Wed.) Discussion: William S. Allen *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, 4-147

Week 8:

Oct 25 (Mon.) The Nazi Seizure of Power and *Gleichschaltung*

Read: Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* , 27-38 (Hitler)

Oct 27 (Wed.) National Socialist Propaganda and Aesthetics: the New Mass Media  
film: Excerpts from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*  
Discussion: The films of Leni Riefenstahl  
Fest, 83-97 (Goebbels)

Week 9:

Nov. 1 (Mon.) Discussion: Allen, *Nazi Seizure of Power*, pp. 152-279

Nov. 3 (Wed.) The Racial State

Read: Nuremberg Laws (September 1935)

Detlev Peukert "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science"

Week 10:

Nov. 8 (Mon.) The Rise of the SS State, and Everyday Life under Nazism  
**\*5-6 page paper due**

Nov. 10 (Wed.) Outbreak of the Second World War  
Fest, 62-67 (Hitler)

Week 11:

Nov. 15 (Mon.) The Course of the War, and the Eastern Front  
Begin reading Browning, *Ordinary Men*

Nov. 17 (Wed.) Origins of the "Final Solution" and the Machinery of Mass Murder  
Film excerpt from *Die Ewige Jüde*  
Discussion: Report of Einsatzgruppe C (1941)  
Minutes of the Wannsee Conference (1942)

Week 12:

Nov. 22 (Mon.) Discussion: Browning, *Ordinary Men*  
Fest, 276-287 (Höss)

Nov. 24 (Wed.) Meeting with Instructor: Review of "Der Brand" (Strategic Bombing)

*(Thanksgiving vacation begins Nov. 25)*

(read Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*)

Week 13:

Nov. 29 (Mon.) The Defeat of Germany and *Götterdämmerung*  
Discussion: Allen, 294-303  
Fest, 291-307

Dec. 1 (Wed.) "Zero Hour" and Denazification  
**\*5-6 page paper due**

Week 14:

Dec 6 (Mon.) Film: *Germany Year Zero* (1947, 78 min.)  
<or> *Somewhere in Berlin (Irgendwo in Berlin)* (1946, DEFA), 79 min.

Dec 8 (Wed.) Discussion of film;  
The Legacy of Nazism in History, Memory and Myth

**Final Exam** Week is Dec. 13-17