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Office Hours: Tues. 10:30-12:30 or by appt.

FR SEMR 48g
Wed. 2-4 pm
Robinson 106

Fascism From Mussolini to Today

Ever since the concept *fascism* emerged around 90 years ago, people have been struggling to define the term. Even in the two classic cases of fascism – Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy – scholars often claim more differences than similarities. The recent proliferation of terms (neofascism, Islamofascism, ecofascism, etc.) has only further muddled definitions and historical understandings. In this freshman seminar we ask: What is fascism, what does it look like in practice, and how is its historical legacy used – or abused – in today’s society? To answer these questions, we will combine historical study with literature, political science, and anthropology. Each week is structured around answering a different problem in the study of fascism, such as its relationship to socialism, its racial policies, or its application to current-day politics.

Assignments/Grading:

As a freshman seminar, this course will be graded pass/fail. Nonetheless, you are expected to engage with the material at a high level and complete all the readings. You will be assessed based on the following assignments:

- Participation: Attendance is mandatory and you are expected to contribute to class discussions regularly. You will be assessed on the quality of your comments more than quantity. (30%)
- Class discussion leader: Each student will be responsible for leading the first 20 minutes of discussion one week. You will *not* give a presentation, but rather act as discussion facilitator. Creative activities (group work, debates, role playing) are encouraged, and I will give ideas for these early in the semester. (15%)
- Course blog: Each week you will be asked to post ideas to the course blog *ahead of* class (by midnight the night before). This is an informal forum to test out ideas and respond to your classmates. Many weeks you will have a specific blog assignment. You are expected to contribute every week to the blog, but are allowed to skip up to *three* weeks (for when you are overwhelmed by other classes). (20%)
- A final paper of 8-10 pp. will be due during reading period. It may cover any topic germane to the course. You will develop your topic throughout the semester and present your progress to the professor and other students. (35% of grade)

All written work, unless otherwise approved by the professor, must be completed on your own (no collaboration) and must be done originally for this course (no double submissions). Plagiarism is a serious offense and cases will be referred to the Harvard Administrative Board.

The following books are available for purchase at the COOP, and on reserve at Lamont:

- * Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography* (2006 ed.)
- * Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*
- * Art Spiegelman, *Maus, Vol. 1*
- * Philip Dick, *Man in the High Castle*
- * Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism*

All other readings will be made available on the course website.

Week 1 | Sept. 4: Introduction – Fascism’s Many Meanings

- In-class reading: Italian Fascist and Nazi Party Programs

Week 2 | Sept. 11: What’s in a Name? The Origins of Fascism in Italy

- Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, Chs. 2, 4
- * Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, Chs. 1-5, 7, and “The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism”

Blog assignment: Analyze Mussolini’s autobiography in 1-2 paragraphs. How much of it is ‘credible’? In what ways is he crafting an image of himself? Can we use this as a ‘reliable’ source?

Week 3 | Sept. 18: Fascism, Socialism, and Conservatism: What’s the Connection?

- Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives*, Ch. 1-2, 4
- Leon Trotsky, *Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It*

Blog: Free response. Possible questions: In what ways was conservatism different from fascism? How would you characterize Trotsky’s view of fascism?

Week 4 | Sept. 25: The All-Powerful Leader, the All-Powerful State?

- Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, Ch. 2
- Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Profiles in Power*, Intro, Chs. 1-2, 5
- **Film: L. Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (excerpts)**

Blog: Free Response

Week 5 | Oct. 2: Ruling by Consent or Terror? Everyday Life under Fascism

- Robert Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, Ch. 5 (only pp. 135-147)
- Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, Chs. 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, Conclusion

Blog: Every student will receive an interview conducted with a Nazi citizen. Briefly explain the interviewees’ position in society (job, gender, age, religion, locality, etc.) and analyze his/her experience under Nazism.

Week 6 | Oct. 9: Regenerating the Nation? Women and Youth

- Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, Ch. 3
- * Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, Ch. 7-8
- *The Toadstool* (Nazi anti-Semitic children's book – online)

In-class film: Excerpts of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*

Blog: On the course website you will find propaganda posters from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Pick one and briefly analyze the message it seems to convey.

Week 7 | Oct. 16: Master Races? Italian and Japanese Imperialism

- Alexander DeGrand, *Italian Fascism*, Chs. 6, 8
- John Dower, *War Without Mercy*, Chs. 1, 10, illustrations

Blog: Post your initial ideas for your final paper topic.

Week 8 | Oct. 23: Building a Nazi Racial Utopia? Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

- * Burleigh & Wippermann, *The Racial State*, Chs. 3, 4, 6
- * Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (all of Vol. 1)

Blog: Free Response. Note: This is a heavy reading week, so start early!

Week 9 | Oct. 30: What if Hitler Won? Alternative History

- * Philip Dick, *Man in the High Castle*

*Blog: Pick a country (US, England, Germany, Japan, China, etc.) and imagine you were born there in 1945, right after the Axis had **won** World War II. Write a brief fictional account of growing up under this imaginary regime. How would your life be different?*

Week 10 | Nov. 6: Neofascism? Radical Right Groups in Europe

- Interviews with right-extremists in: *Extreme Right Activists in Europe*, Ch. 7, 9
- Eliza Griswold, "The Terrifying Rise of Greece's Nazi Party," *The New Republic*, 2012

Blog: Find a neofascist or radical nationalist party website and briefly compare/contrast their 'platform' with your understanding of historical fascism.

Nov. 6: Annotated bibliography of 6-8 sources due in class.

Week 11 | Nov. 13: 'Liberal Fascism?'

- * Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism*, Introduction, Chs. 3-4, 9-10
- Debate between Goldberg and scholars of fascism

Blog: Select a passage from Goldberg that you find striking and analyze his interpretation of history.

Week 12 | Nov. 20: Fascism Everywhere or Nowhere?

- Robert Paxton, "Five Stages of Fascism"
- 2008 debate on 'Islamofascism,' <http://www.aina.org/news/20080208141046.htm>

Blog/presentation: In groups of two, find a usage of 'fascist' 'Nazi', 'Hitler' etc. that has resonated in contemporary popular culture (articles, essays, films, music, TV, video games, social media, etc).

Post links to this media on the blog. Prepare a 5-minute, in-class presentation analyzing how the term conveys a particular understanding (or misunderstanding) through its usage. You are encouraged to incorporate songs, videos, pictures, etc. into your presentation.

Nov. 27 | No class – Thanksgiving Recess

Assignment: By Wed. Nov 26 at 5 p.m., turn in a 1-2 page outline of your final paper that includes a thesis paragraph.

Week 13 | Dec. 4: Presentations and Final Discussion

- No Readings

Prepare a ~5 minute presentation on your paper, and prepare for Q&A on your topic.

Final papers are due Monday, Dec. 9 at 5 p.m. Late submissions are deducted 1/3 of a grade every 24 hours. Extensions will only be granted for medical or personal emergencies and require a letter from a Resident Dean.