

HSS 404  
NAZI GERMANY: CAPSTONE

Fall 2012  
Office hours: Mon and Wed. 11:30-12:30 pm  
Tuesdays 4 – 6 pm

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This course comprises in-depth seminar investigations of important issues and problems central to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi state: a perennially fascinating theme that compels us to address some of the most profound questions perplexing mankind, past, present, and future (i.e. dehumanization, ethics, free will, and the nature of ultimate evil). The approach in this course is less narrative than theme-based and analytical, focusing on the intellectual roots of Nazism and Nazi ideology, the Hitler phenomenon, its explanatory contexts and legacy, the various anti Hitler plots and reasons for their failure, the structure and governing style of National Socialism, anti-Semitism and its background, Nazi war-making—and the critical shortcomings of Hitler as tactician, which largely explains the final defeat and collapse of his regime. Generally, the course will concentrate on leading personalities, their ideas and objectives, how these shaped their major policies and how these policies in turn influenced the course of German and world history during the interwar period and beyond. It will also, however briefly, explore how commentators and historians have attempted to explain the nature and legacy of this destructive regime.

I. Our starting point will be a close examination of the disastrous consequences for Germany of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, with special emphasis on how German discontent among all classes after 1918 facilitated the emergence of totalitarianism. This will be followed by a discussion of the transition from Republic to Nazi Totalitarianism, showing how a combination of internal and external factors aided Hitler's rise to power. The impact, if any, of his personality and rhetoric will also be explored.

II. This section will examine how the reactionary notions of nationalism, "Aryan racism," and Teutonic world rule, together with its totemic symbols, emerged from earlier German occult and millenarian sects and were absorbed into the mainstream of Nazi ideology. (Their actual significance, a topic of ongoing controversy, will be discussed in class.)

III. Explaining Hitler: Here we will briefly examine numerous Hitler theories together with the agendas and fantasies that these theorizers have brought to their subject. The central focus is on the enigma of Hitler's psyche and its implications for his political pathology and agenda. (Given the complexity of the topic, obviously only a brief synopsis is possible: sources can be suggested for those students wishing to pursue the theme in greater detail.)

IV. Survival of a Tyrant: A selection overview of the various attempts on Hitler's life, focusing on the varied motives of would be assassins, what these attempts reveal about ever shifting attitudes towards Hitler's policies, and why they ultimately failed. The major emphasis will be on the July 20, 1944 plot "Valkyrie."

V. This section analyzes the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 against a background of national discontent, grassroots activism, behind-the-scenes political intrigues, and parliamentary instability. Desperation, violence, terror, and intimidation form a dark component of the dynamics leading to Hitler's success.

VI. The Violent Peace: An examination of the tactics—a combination of bluff, opportunism, coercion, and single-minded fanaticism—used by Hitler to neutralize the Versailles system, made major gains for Germany and brought Europe to the brink of war.

VII. The Nazis and War: Campaigns 1939-1945

VIII. Hitler's failings as "Supreme Commander" and consequent repercussions.

Assignments:

Mark

Book Review	20 due Wed., Oct. 17
Mid Term	30 date to be decided
Research Paper	40 due Mon., Dec. 3
Class Participation	10

Texts:

Joseph Bendersky, A History of Nazi Germany (2000). 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

Jane Caplan (ed.), Nazi Germany, (Oxford, 2008).

Ronald Lewin, Hitler's Mistakes (1984).

Lee Baker, The Second World War on the Eastern Front, (Pearson, 2009).

Additional Suggested Readings:

Inevitably the literature on Nazism is immense comprising studies in most world languages. Most conveniently accessible for class purposes are the classic works by Allan Bullock, William Shirer, H. Trevor-Roper, John Toland, and C.B. Flood.

Other useful items include (but are **not** limited to):

Abraham, D. The Collapse of the Weimar Republic (NY, 1986).

Baird, J.W., The Mythical World of Nazi Propaganda (Oxford, 1975).

Bezymenski, L., The Death of Adolph Hitler (London, 1968).

Binion, R., Hitler Among the Germans (Oxford, 1976).

Bracher, K.D., The German Dictatorship (London, 1973).

Carr, W., Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics (Oxford, 1986).

- Casey, W., The Secret War Against Hitler (London, 1989).
- Cohn, N., Warrant for Genocide (London, 1970).
- Deist, W., The Wehrmacht and German Rearmament (London, 1981).
- Fest, J., Hitler (London, 1974).
- Fest, J., The Face of the Third Reich (London, 1972).
- Gellately, R., The Gestapo and German Society (Oxford, 1990).
- Haffner, S., The Meaning of Hitler (London, 1979).
- Hamilton, R., Who Voted for Hitler? (Princeton, 1982).
- Jäkel, E., Hitler's Worldview (1981).
- Kershaw, I., Hitler (New York, 1998).
- Mommsen, H., From Weimar to Auschwitz (Cambridge, 1991).
- Nicholls, A., Weimar and the Rise of Hitler (London, 1989).
- Peukert, D., Inside Nazi Germany (London, 1987).
- Rosenbaum, R., Explaining Hitler (New York, 1998).
- Stackelberg, R., Hitler's Germany: An Interpretative History (London, 1999).
- Stoakes, G., Hitler and the Quest for World Dominion (London, 1987).
- Strawson, J., Hitler as Military Commander (London, 1971).
- Turner, H.A., Hitler's 30 Days to Power: January 1933 (London, 1996).
- Waite, R.G., Hitler (New York, 1977).

## Policies

- This is an **intellectually demanding course** and all students will be expected to do all the readings listed in the syllabus and start work on their written assignments before the submission date, (ideally three weeks after start of course).
- Assignments **MUST** be submitted on time. Excuses for work submitted late will **not** be accepted (medical reasons, death in family apart). There are **no** exceptions (except as noted below). Late submissions will have grades deducted (one grade per day of lateness) unless a valid reason given (i.e. illness, supported by a doctor's note). This point **must** be clearly understood before students **agree** to take this class. Last minute pleas based on undocumented reasons **will** be rejected.
- It is the **student's** responsibility to ascertain that all assignments have been duly submitted and all required term work completed **prior** to termination of the semester. By signing the attendance sheets students explicitly **acknowledge** their understanding and **acceptance** of this condition.

- Assignments submitted **must** conform to the specific category stated in this syllabus i.e. an essay is an essay, not a book review. Essay topics are chosen by the student, subject to Professor's approval.
- Plagiarism in any written assignment will result in an automatic failure and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Book reviews should be 4-5 pages in length (title must be approved by instructor) and research papers between 15-20 pages, excluding bibliography. Web sources for the essay must be kept to a minimum (no more than **two**).
- Students **must not** put assignments under the professor's office door. They should be submitted on the due date at the beginning of the class or taken to the History office where the secretary will date stamp them.
- When submitting the final paper, students must also hand in the first/second draft plus a copy of the notes used for the construction of the essay.
- There will be no "make-up" exam. If you miss the final exam for any reasons other than those applying to written assignments listed above, you will receive an F.
- There will be no "re-writing" of assignments (book review and/or essay). Students having problems with written English must consult the Humanities Dept. Writing Center (Cullimore, 4<sup>th</sup> floor), Professor Janet Bodner.
- All submitted work must contain the following signed statement: **I have fully complied with the NJIT Honor Code. Signed: Your Name.**