Nazi Germany: An Introduction

Dr. Kobi Kabalek

Semester: Spring 2019
Class Time: Sunday, 13:15-14:45
Room:
Office Hours: Sundays, by appointment
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Course Description:

This seminar provides students with a broad overview of a variety of themes that are essential to the study of the political, cultural, and social history of Nazi Germany. It covers the origins and main features of Nazi thought and the cultural context in which it developed; various perspectives on the notion of a Nazi revolution; the power relations and hierarchies within the Nazi party and in “Hitler’s state”; it discusses whether the regime succeeded in forging a “national community” and what were the racial and social elements in this endeavor; the policies of exclusion against “enemies of the Reich” and the Nazi regime’s use of legal means, terror, and social pressure for this purpose; perceptions and practices regarding gender roles and sexuality and their functions within the Nazi state; the persecution and murder of German Jews, and the state’s exclusion and murder of those deemed “racially unfit” to belong to the German people. The course further considers the benefits that “Aryan” Germans could gain from the Nazi regime in its “good years” and the destruction and violence that they underwent in Nazi Germany’s “bad years” as well as the question of German resistance against Nazism. The class focuses mainly on views from “inside” Nazi Germany, considering the perspectives of victims, perpetrators, and complacent onlookers and fellow-travelers.

Course Requirements:

Weekly reading assignments: The articles and chapters assigned aim to provide different perspectives on the topic of each week’s discussion and to offer starting points for further reading. As such, you do not have to read every single page of the texts assigned, but rather read enough to understand central arguments and interpretations and their significance for the course.

Response papers: Every student must submit 2 short response papers (no more than 500 words!) in the weeks of your choosing. A response paper should not summarize the assigned readings. It should discuss at least two of the assigned texts and connect them. The connection can take the shape of a common historical problem, point to contradictions or similarities between the texts and try to explain what these contradictions/similarities are based on. The paper may also use the readings to raise analytical questions relevant to our course and/or the study of the Holocaust. Do not ask questions that are easily answered or which you already know very well. Try to be creative in composing your responses and in doing so you may also include texts and ideas that you know
from other sources in order to enrich the insights you gain from the reading. Papers must state your name, date, and the response paper number (by weeks) and they are to be submitted to me as email attachments (in Word) no later than 11:00 a.m. on the day of the seminar. Late response papers will not be accepted.

**Class participation:** active attendance in at least ten weeks of the course is required. Unexcused or repeated absence will influence your grade.

**Final paper:**
By **May 5, 2019**, you should submit an initial **proposal** (2-3 pages, double-spaced, font 12) for either

a) an **Exercise** (no more than 10 pages, double-spaced, font 12, including footnotes and bibliography), or

b) a **Seminar Paper** (25-30 pages, double-spaced, font 12, including footnotes and bibliography).
A proposal should include research questions and a preliminary bibliography. Late proposals will not be accepted.
You must receive my written approval of the proposal before you can pursue your final paper.
Final papers should follow standard academic practice, especially when quoting or using ideas of other scholars.
This only applies if you intend to submit a paper of whatever kind.

**Submission Dates:**

*Exercises:* **July 14, 2019**
*Seminar Papers:* **October 27, 2019**

Delay in submitting your exercise (referat) or seminar paper will influence your grade. A paper submitted one week after the deadline will reduce 5 points from your grade, a later submission will reduce 5 additional points.

**Final Grade:**
Class participation 20%
Response papers 30%
Final paper 50%

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**Course Outline and Reading List**

**Week 1 (February 24): Introduction**
Week 2 (March 3): Nazi Thought in Its Cultural and Ideological Context

Week 3 (March 10): The Nazi Revolution
3. Watch film: *Hitlerjunge Quex* (dir. Hans Steinhoff, 1933)

Recommended:

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), 456-467, 577-583 (excerpts from vol. 1, chapter 12, and vol. 2, chapter 1).

Week 4 (March 17): Hitler and the Volksgemeinschaft – Vision and Reality

Recommended:


Week 5 (March 24): Terror, Denunciation, and Social Pressure


Week 6 (March 31): Resistance


Week 7 (April 7) Body and Power: Gender, Sex, and Romance in Nazi Society


Recommended:

Week 8 (April 14) Eugenics, Euthanasia, and the Persecution of the Jews


Recommended:


**Passover break – April 17-April 26**

**Week 9 (April 28) “Good Times”: Plunder, Prosperity, and Leisure**


**Recommended:**


**Week 10 (May 5) “Bad Times”: Fear, Violence, and Destruction in the Final War Years**


**May 12 – NO CLASS**

**Week 11 (May 19): The Wehrmacht**

Week 12 (May 26): Unreal Realities

Week 13 (June 2): German Society at the End of the War
Film: *The Murderers Are Among Us* (dir. Wolfgang Staudte, Soviet Occupation Zone, 1946)

Week 14 (June 9): Conclusion

Recommended: