Political Science 4060: Special Topics-National Socialist Cultural Policy: The Politics and Ideology of Totalitarian Aesthetics

Tuesday 6:00-8:50 PM

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For a sense of your instructor’s views on cultural policy, see his WIKI page.

Note: The use of laptops and cell phones is prohibited during class. I wish to have your undivided attention and for you to have the fullest opportunity for exchanges with your fellow students and myself.

Course Description

It is a commonplace observation, and an accurate one, to see the National-Socialist regime as a murderous, war-mongering, genocidal dictatorship. The Gestapo, S.S., Einsatzgruppen, Dachau, Auschwitz, Treblinka are familiar institutions of terror. The Leader (Der Fuhrer) is, not incorrectly, seen as a megalomaniac, obsessed with anti-Semitism, a Bolshevik menace, and the need for lebensraum and ‘Aryan Supremacy.’

Yet, the “History Channel” take on the National-Socialist regime risks a trivialization of Hitler and Nazism. This view sees the regime as an aberration of ‘Western civilization’ founded upon a cult of evil, an odd charismatic dictator, an ethos of maniacal goals devoid of rational analysis. This perspective is not incorrect, but incomplete and misleading. The nature of the Nazi state was far worse.
Without irony, Hitler saw himself as an artist who reluctantly became a politician. He was oft-quoted as declaring that to understand the Nazi revolution, it had to be understood as a cultural revolution. It was a struggle to defend the 'Aryan' aesthetics and idealism that constituted the Nazi ideology (belief-system) and weltanschauung (world view). At root, National Socialism was a carefully developed belief system organized as a weltanschauungskrieg (worldview warfare) to protect Aryan values from the corruption of modernity rooted in Jewish intellectual bacilli and 'kulturbolschewismus' (Bolshevik culture). Both were bent upon the destruction of the purity and superiority of Aryan civilization.

The goals of this course are related to the Nazi kunstpolitik—the most ambitious arts policy initiated by a government and its coordination (gleichschaltung) by state agencies principally supervised by Dr. Josef Goebbels as Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. These policies and programs were related to an overall volksgemeinschaft—the spiritual values of a 'people's community' based on National-Socialist principles.

There will be special emphasis on the rituals of the Nuremburg Party rallies as an expression of National-Socialism as a 'secular religion.' There will also be extensive readings, reviewing of films and documentaries with papers assigned to provide opportunities for demonstrating an understanding of these concepts.

**Required Texts**

1) The Third Reich In Power (by Richard J. Evans)

2) The Arts In Germany: Continuity, Conformity, Change (edited by Jonathan Huener and Francis R. Nicosia [H&N])

3) Art, Ideology, & Economics In Nazi Germany (by Alan E. Steinweis)

4) Leni Riefenstahl (by Jurgen Trimborn)

**Grading**

100 points—4 papers (worth 25 points each)—No Late Papers

50 points—10 book/movie quizzes (worth 5 points each)—No Makeups

50 points—Final Exam (Comprehensive)

200 total points

**A: 200-180  B: 179-160  C: 159-140  D: 139-120  F: 119-0**
Class Attendance

- Class participation is expected and required. As attendance is the *sine qua non* of participation, more than one absence will result in a letter-grade reduction of your final course grade.

- Be a good citizen about arriving on time and staying for the entire class.

- Arriving late and/or leaving class early is only allowed in the case of a dire emergency and only after consultation and approval from the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1: Forms of Cultural Patronage

Week 1  8/27

Lecture: Ideology and Politics of Totalitarian Culture

Video: Hitler's Rise to Power (1 hour)

Reading: Syllabus and Course Outline

Read: “Command Cultures” by Kevin V. Mulcahy (On Moodle)

Week 2  9/3

Lecture: Anti-Semitism and the Arts in Nazi Ideology and Policy

Video: “The Architecture of Doom” (119 minutes)

Reading: Judendkultur/Kulturbolschewismus: Prologue, Chapters 2 & 3
evans

Paper I (5 pages, 1500 words with cover page): Analyze the similarities and differences between National Socialist and Stalinist cultural policies as discussed in “Command Cultures.”
Week 3

9/10

Lecture: Cultural Gleichschaltung (Coordination)

Video: “Goebbels” (1 hour), Furtwangler Conducting Hitler’s Favorites

Reading: Evans 5, 6; H & N, Appendix C, D

Quiz 1: Book-Readings on Evans 5, 6 and H & N readings

Week 4

9/17

Lecture: Volksgemeinschaft (Racial Community)

Video: “Speer” (45 minutes), Eva Braun Home Movies (114 minutes)

Reading: Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany-Steinweis
Introduction, Chapters 2, 3

Paper II (5 pages, 1500 words with cover page): Discuss the techniques by which the National Socialist state would be the triumph of Aryan racialism.

Part II: Nazi Aesthetics

Week 5

9/24

Lecture: Aryan Romanticism

Video: “Degenerate Art”

Reading: H & N, Introduction

Quiz 2: Movie
Week 6 10/1
Lecture: Music: Musical Aryanization
Video: “Die Walkure,” (241 minutes) Act 3; Video: “Carmina Burana”
Reading: Steinweis-Chapter 4, 5, Conclusion
Quiz 3: Book-Steinweis-Chapter 4, 5, Conclusion

Week 7 10/8
Lecture: Artistic Collaboration
Video: “Mephisto” (132 minutes)
Reading: H & N, Chapter 6
Quiz 4: Movie

Part III: Party Rituals

Week 8 10/15
Lecture: Nuremburg Party Rallies As Ritual
Video: “Triumph of the Will” (120 minutes)
Reading: H & N, Chapter 3; H & N Appendix H
Quiz 5: Movie

Week 9 10/22
Lecture: The Aestheticization of Hitler
Video: “The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl Part 1”
Reading: H & N, Chapter 6; Appendix B; Trimborn Chapters 5-10
Quiz 6: Book-Readings (H & N Chapter 6, Appendix B, Trimborn Chapters 5-10)
Week 10

10/29

Lecture: The Moral Responsibility of an Artist

Video: Riefenstahl Video Part II

Reading: Trimborn Chapters 13-16, Conclusion; Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism" (On Moodle)

Quiz 7: Movie-Riefenstahl Documentary

Week 11

11/5


Video: Olympic Footage

Paper III (5 pages, 1500 words with cover page): Evaluate the style and content of “Triumph des Willens” as it relates to the glorification of Hitler. Discuss the culpability, if any, of Leni Riefenstahl in creating propaganda as art.

Part IV: The Aftermath

Week 12

11/12

Lecture: Looted Art

Video: “Rape of Europa” (117 minutes)

Reading: H & N, Chapter 1, 6; Appendix

Quiz 8: Movie
Week 13  
11/19

Lecture: Assessing Blame

Video: “Taking Sides” (105 minutes)

Reading: H & N, Chapter 4; Appendix A, G; H & N, Appendix D, H

Quiz 9: Movie; Quiz 10: Book

Week 14  
11/26

Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15  
12/3

Lecture: The ‘Gotterdammerung’ in the Bunker

Video: “Downfall” (155 minutes)

Paper IV (5 pages, 1500 words with cover page): What is the moral responsibility, if any, of an artist in a political dictatorship?

Final  
12/10

8:00-10:00 P.M. usual classroom

Final Exam-Comprehensive Scope