

Fall 2014

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

Tuesday/Thursday 6:00-7:30 PM

210 Stubbs Hall

Professor Kevin Mulcahy

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Hours: M-Th 1:00-6:00 PM

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For a sense of your instructor's views on cultural policy, see his Wiki page and the Wiki entry: "Cultural Policy"

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 uninhibited opportunity for exchanges with your fellow students and myself.

The class times, as above, is **1 hour and 30 minutes**, twice a week. This is necessary to facilitate presentation of visual material. Your forbearance is appreciated.

**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. It emanated from some abiding religious, philosophical, social and historical traditions that have characterized so-called Western civilization. Failing to acknowledge the origins of National Socialism as a form of civilizational 'original sin' is arguably delusional, as well as self-congratulatory.

Nazism also had a strong aesthetic dimension. 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 ideology.

There will be special emphasis on the rituals of the Nuremberg Party rallies as an expression of National Socialism as a ‘secular religion.’ The filming of the 1934 Rally, “Triumph of the Will,” a joint realization of Hitler (as patron) and Leni Riefenstahl (as documentarian), is an incomparable masterpiece of Fascist aesthetics and the aestheticization of politics, power, and person. The cult of the Fuhrer became reified.

There will be extensive readings, viewing of films and documentaries, with papers assigned to provide opportunities for demonstrating an understanding of various conceptual issues.

### **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)
- 5) The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War (by Lynn H. Nicholas)

### **Grading**

500 points—4 papers (Paper I: 100 points, Paper II: 100 points, Paper III: 200 points, Paper IV: 100 points)

100 points—10 book/movie quizzes (worth 10 points each)

200 points—Final Exam (Comprehensive)

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800 total points

**A: 800-720    B: 719-640    C: 639-560    D: 559-480    F: 479-0**

### **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 I: Forms of National Socialist Cultural Patronage**

**8/26**

#### Overview of Syllabus and Course Outline

Reading: “Command Cultures” (by Kevin V. Mulcahy—available on Moodle)

**8/28**

#### Ideology and Politics of Totalitarian Culture

Video: “Hitler’s Rise to Power” (1 hour)

**9/2**

#### Cultural *Gleichschaltung* (Coordination)

Video: “Goebbels” (1 hour)

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

**9/4**

#### *Volksgemeinschaft* (Racial Community)

Video: “Speer” (45 minutes)

Reading: Steinweis—Introduction, Chapters 2 & 3

9/9

Anti-Semitism and the Arts in Nazi Ideology and Cultural Policy

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

Reading: Evans: Prologue, Chapters 2 & 3

**Paper I: Due 9/11** (7 pages; 2,100 words with a separate cover page)

- Topic: Analyze the similarities and differences between National Socialist and Stalinist (Socialist Realist) cultural policies

9/11

Video: “The Architecture of Doom” (concluded)

**Part II: National Socialist Aesthetics**

9/16

Kulturbolchevismus/Judenkultur and the Nazi Kuntspolitik

Video: “Degenerate Art” (60 minutes)

Reading: H & N: Introduction

9/18

Discussion of Degenerate Art

9/23

Aesthetic Accommodation

Video: “Mephisto” (132 minutes)

Reading: H & N: Chapter 6

9/25

“Mephisto” (conclusion/discussion)

**Paper II: Due 9/30** (7 pages, 2,100 words with a separate cover page)

- Topic: Discuss the techniques by which the National Socialist state would be the triumph of Aryan racialism. (Note: Each student should be prepared to discuss this topic)

### **Part III: Fascism Aestheticized**

**9/30**

#### The Cult of Wagner

Video: “Die Walkure” (excerpts from Act 3)

Reading: Steinweis: Chapter 4, 5, & Conclusion

**10/2**

#### Nuremburg Party Rallies as Ritual

Video: “Triumph of the Will” (120 minutes)

Reading: H & N: Chapters 3, Appendix H

**10/7**

“Triumph of the Will” (conclusion/discussion)

**10/9**

#### Hitler Visualized

Video: “The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl Part 1” (180 minutes)

Reading: H & N: Appendix B; Trimborn Chapters 5-10

**10/14**

Video: Riefenstahl Video Part 2

Reading: Trimborn Chapters 13-16

**10/16**

Riefenstahl Video (conclusion/discussion)

Video: “Olympic Opening Ceremonies as Cultural Policy: Berlin 1936, LA 1984, Beijing 2008” (25 minutes)

**10/23**

#### The Moral Responsibility of an Artist?

Video: “Taking Sides” (105 minutes)

**10/28**

“Taking Sides” (conclusion/discussion)

**Paper III: Due 10/30** (14 pages, 4,200 words with a separate cover page)

- Topic: Evaluate the style and content of “Triumph des Willen” as it relates to the glorification of Hitler and National Socialism. Discuss the culpability, if any, of Leni Riefenstahl in creating propaganda as art. What is the moral responsibility, if any, of an artist in a political dictatorship?

### **Part IV: The Nazi Cultural Condition**

**10/30**

Cultural Capital: Looted Art

Video: “Rape of Europa” (117 minutes)

Reading: Nicholas: Rape of Europa (first half)

**11/4**

“Rape of Europa” (conclusion/discussion)

Reading: Nicholas: Rape of Europa (second half)

**11/6**

Hitler’s Cultural Capitol

Video: “Hitler’s Museum” (103 minutes)

**11/11**

“Hitler’s Museum” (conclusion/discussion)

**11/13**

SS Culture

Video: “Europa, Europa”

**11/18**

“Europa, Europa” (conclusion/discussion)

**11/20**

The Private Hitler

Video: "Swastika" (95 minutes)

**11/25**

"Swastika" (conclusion/discussion)

**Paper IV: Due 12/2** (7 pages, 2,100 words with a separate cover page)

- Topic: Evaluate the long-term consequences of the Nazi policy of looting art. What measures were taken to counteract this looting? You may wish to stream the movie, "The Monuments Men," over the Thanksgiving holiday to give your paper another dimension.

**12/2**

"Hitler's *Gotterdammerung*"

Video: "Downfall" (155 minutes)

**12/4**

"Downfall" (conclusion/discussion)

**12/9**

**Final Exam: comprehensive in scope (expect objective questions on readings and movies)**

8:00-10:00 PM