HISTORY OF NAZI GERMANY
Dr. Viola Alianov-Rautenberg

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course grapples with crucial questions and novel approaches to one of the most intensely researched topics of the 20th century: the history of Nazi Germany. The course provides a broad overview of the history of the National Socialist movement and regime from political, social, and cultural perspectives. We start with the origins and ideological foundations of National Socialism as a political movement against the background of World War 1 and the Weimar Republic. We then discuss the growth and rise to power of the National Socialist Party and Hitler’s role in this process. Following this, we focus on the Nazi state: topics include the SS and the police apparatus, the forging of the “Volksgemeinschaft” and the “racial state”, persecution of Jews and other minorities, as well as the economic policies of Nazi Germany. We will also consider the nature of everyday life, youth and family, entertainment and leisure in the Third Reich and situate Nazi politics in the context of gender and sexuality. Finally, we are concerned with the question of collaboration and resistance in Nazi Germany and with the eventual collapse and defeat of the Third Reich. Throughout the class, we investigate perspectives from “inside” Nazi Germany, focusing on victims, perpetrators, and onlookers. In doing that, we will consider both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, in other words, we investigate not only how power was exercised by the Nazi regime but also how ordinary Germans reacted to this.

The proposed course complements the existing offerings of the Weiss-Livnat Program in Holocaust studies, especially the classes on World War 2, the Final Solution, and German Jewish life in Nazi Germany. Students will not only gain a thorough understanding of the history of Nazi Germany. They will also learn about different methodological approaches in the research literature and develop skills in the contextualization of primary sources. Therefore, this class enables the students to either set out on their path in pursuing a Ph.D. in the history of the Holocaust and related fields as well as prepare them for careers or activism in (Holocaust) education through providing a solid base to confront simplistic views as well misconceptions on Nazi Germany in popular culture and debate as well as the internet.

LEARNING GOALS
After finishing this course, students will be able to

- Identify key developments, themes, concepts, persons, institutions, and events in the history of Nazi Germany
- Develop an area of expertise in the scholarship and debates concerning Nazi Germany
- Engage with different methodological approaches and competing interpretations in the study of Nazi Germany
- Evaluate and contextualize primary sources in the history of Nazi Germany in its historical context
- Propose own arguments in the interpretation of primary sources and present them in speaking and writing

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active participation includes reading all required texts, participation in discussions, summarizing previous lessons (protocols of 3 classes during the semester), short response papers (discussing the required readings for 7 out of 14 meetings), as well as an oral presentation and a seminar paper.

READINGS

- Essential Readings

- Further Key Readings (in Excerpts/Chapters)
COURSE OUTLINE (including provisional readings and primary sources)

WEEK 1: Introduction. History and Historiography of Nazi Germany

- READINGS
Catherine Epstein, Nazi Germany: Preface.

WEEK 2: Aftermath of World War 1 and the Emergence of Nazi Ideology

- READINGS
Epstein, Nazi Germany, Chapter 1.
Richard J. Evans, Emergence of Nazi Ideology (in Caplan).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

- PRIMARY SOURCES
Treaty of Versailles (1919)
Nazi Party Program (1920)
Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday (1943)

WEEK 3: The Weimar Republic and the Nazi Rise to Power

- READINGS
Epstein, Nazi Germany, Chapter 2.
Peter Fritzsche, The NSDAP 1919-1934: from fringe politics to the seizure of power (in Caplan).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

- PRIMARY SOURCES
  Vicky Baum, People of Today (1929)
  Elsa Herrmann, This is the new Woman (1929)
  Franz von Papen, Speech to Bavarian Industrialists (1932)
  Lea Grundig, Six Million Unemployed (1964)

WEEK 4: Hitler
- READINGS
  Jeremy Noakes, Hitler and the Nazi State: leadership, hierarchy, and power (in Caplan).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS
  Ian Kershaw, The Fuehrer Myth: How Hitler won over the German people, Spiegel Online (January 30, 2008).

- PRIMARY SOURCES
  Adolf Hitler, Speech in his own defense (1924)
  Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (1926) Excerpts
  Adolf Hitler, Reichstag’s Speech (1939)
  Adolf Hitler, Political Testament (1945)

WEEK 5: Nazi Party State: Consolidation of Power
- READINGS
  Epstein, Nazi Germany, 3.

- PRIMARY SOURCES
Horst Wessel Song (1929)
Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State, (1933)
Melita Maschmann, A German Teenager’s Response to the Nazi Takeover in January 1933 (1969)
Viktor Klemperer Diaries (Excerpts)

WEEK 6: “Volksgemeinschaft” and Racial State

- READINGS
  Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto, Volksgemeinschaft. Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime (in Steber/Gotto).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

- PRIMARY SOURCES
  Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring (1933)
  Reich Citizenship Law and Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, Nuremberg Laws (1935)

WEEK 7: Outcasts in Nazi Germany

- READINGS
  Epstein, Nazi Germany, 4
  Richard Evans, Social Outsiders in German History: From the 16th Century to 1933 (in Gellatey and Stoltzfus).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS
  Friedlander. The Exclusion and Murder of the Disabled (in Gellatey and Stoltzfus).

- PRIMARY SOURCES
  Appeal for the Boycott of all Jewish Enterprises (1933)
  Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (1933)
Hitler’s Authorization of killing the incurably ill (September 1, 1939)
Lina Haag, A Handful of Dust (1947)
Viktor Klemperer Diaries (Excerpts)

WEEK 8: Ordinary Germans and Nazi Germany

- READINGS
  Epstein, Nazi Germany, Chapter 5.

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS
  Wolf Gruner, Indifference? Participation and Protest as individual responses to the persecution of the Jews as revealed in Berlin police logs and trials, 1933-45 (in Schrafstetter and Steinweis).
  Peter Fritzsche, Babi Yar, but not Auschwitz: What did Germans know about the Final Solution? (in Schrafstetter and Steinweis).

WEEK 9: Nazi Economy

- READINGS
  Adam Tooze, The economic history of the Nazi regime (in Caplan).
  Goetz Aly, Hitler’s Beneficiaries: How the Nazis bought the German People, New York: Metropolitan 2007 (Excerpts).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

WEEK 10: Gender Roles, Family Life, and Sexuality in Nazi Germany

- READINGS

Jane Caplan, Gender and Concentration Camps (in Caplan and Wachsmann).


- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS


- PRIMARY SOURCES

Hitler’s Speech to the National Socialist Women’s Organization (1934)
Emilie Mueller-Zadow, Mothers who give us the future (1936)
Founding of Lebensborn (1936)
The Women’s Front and the Women in the Party (1943)

WEEK 11: Everyday Life and Entertainment in Nazi Germany

- READINGS

S. Jonathan Wiesen, Driving, Shopping and Smoking (in Swett).

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

Pamela E. Swett, Selling Sexual Pleasure in 1903s Germany (in Swett).

- PRIMARY SOURCES

Jud Suess (1940)

WEEK 12: World War 2, the Holocaust, and the Homefront

- READINGS

Epstein, Nazi Germany, Chapter 6 and 7.

- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS


- PRIMARY SOURCES

Oath of officials and soldiers of the Wehrmacht (1934)

Adolf Hitler, Speech to Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht (1939)

WEEK 13: Resistance and Collaboration

- READINGS

Epstein, Nazi Germany, Chapter 8.


- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

Michael Burleigh, When God Wills it even a Broom can shoot. Resistance in Germany, 1933-1945, in Burleigh, The Third Reich.

- PRIMARY SOURCES

Leaflets of the White Rose, 1942 and 1943

WEEK 14: Collapse of Nazi Germany and Aftermath

- READINGS

Epstein, Nazi Germany, Epilogue.


- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS


- PRIMARY SOURCES
Directive of the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Forces of Occupation (1945)