Totalitarianism in Comparative Perspective

Focusing on the Soviet Union, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, this course explores totalitarianism in Europe from a comparative perspective, considering how these regimes have been analyzed by historians and represented in film, memoir, and literature. We will begin by examining the political and ideological dimensions of totalitarian rule, focusing on the cult of the leader, systems of governance, and terror and propaganda. We will then address the issue of human agency, exploring the ways in which individuals served variously (and in some cases simultaneously) as perpetrators, collaborators, resisters, bystanders and victims in totalitarian societies. In the process, we will consider how different scholarly approaches such as women’s and gender history, cultural and social history, nationality studies—as well as the fall of communism and subsequent access to new source materials—have challenged conventional portraits of life under totalitarian regimes. In addition, we will evaluate the utility of totalitarianism as a category of historical analysis.

Required Texts:
Anthony Cardoza, *Benito Mussolini: The First Fascist* (Longman Publishing Group, 2005)
Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine* (Signet, reissue, 2005)
Additional readings will be on e-reserve

Class Participation, Attendance, and Reading Responses 20%
This is a reading-intensive course; typically we will read one book a week or its equivalent. Thus it imperative that you keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to engage actively in class discussion. Since this class meets only once a week it is important that you attend every class meeting (except in the case of an emergency or documented illness).
Each week you will write a 2-page (typed, double spaced, 12 pt font) critical response to the reading. Rather than a summary, this should be a critical analysis of the readings in which you evaluate the main arguments, methodological and theoretical approaches, and significance of the work to the historical understanding of the regimes under investigation. The papers will be due each Monday by 3 pm in my mailbox (outside of Rice 316) and will be read briefly by me prior to the session. They will be returned in class so that you may draw on them for discussion. Those leading discussion are not required to submit reading responses. Because no late responses will be accepted, you are exempt from one reading response over the course of the semester.

**Leading Discussion and Book Review 20%**

On designated dates two individuals will be responsible for leading class discussion. This will involve preparing and distributing a list of questions to the class (via e-mail no later than 10 a.m. Monday) and leading part of the class discussion (roughly ½) that day. Please meet with me at least 4 days prior to this assignment to talk about how you will organize your discussion.

Your discussion should focus on, but need not be limited to, four major issues:

1. The main arguments of the work and its larger historiographical claims (also consider the position and agenda of the author; is he/she self reflective and or explicit about his/her scholarly/political/social position?)
2. The theories and methodologies employed by the author in the book (Marxist approach; gender analysis)
3. The sources (e.g. surveys, archival docs., oral histories) used in researching the particular topic
4. If relevant, consider the relationship of the work to broader theories of totalitarianism

Feel free to be creative in organizing your discussion. For example, you may use film clips, art, music or other media to enhance your presentation.

In addition to leading discussion you will also write a 3-4 page book review/review essay. For examples of scholarly reviews check the book review section of leading history journals such as *The American Historical Review* or the *Journal of Contemporary History*.

**Final Term Paper (Research Paper or Historiographical Essay) of roughly 5,000 words or 20 pages (60%)**

I will distribute guidelines for the paper during the second week of classes.

**Grading Scale**

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A- = 90-93%  B = 83-86%  C = 73-76%  D = 66-60
B- = 80-82%  C- = 70-72%  F = 59% and below

Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day (B to B-). Extensions will be granted in cases of documented personal illness and family emergency.

**Honor Code** All work is governed by the Honor Code. Any student found cheating, plagiarizing, turning in another’s work as his/her own or otherwise violating the instructor’s explicit or implicit instructions will be subject to a hearing before the Student Honor Committee. To learn more about the code, please go to:

**Services for Students with Disabilities**
If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course please contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in G27 Peters Hall, ext. 58467.

**Week I: What is Totalitarianism?**

**February 4: Course Introduction/ Defining Totalitarianism**
*How have various scholars theorized totalitarianism? How have broader geopolitical concerns influenced theories of totalitarianism and the study of totalitarian regimes?*

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* pt.3. (Harcourt and Brace, 1951) pp. 3-62

**Week II: The Making of Fascist Italy**

**February 11: The Making of Fascist Italy**
*How and why did Mussolini become a fascist? What groups supported him and why? What is Fascism?*

Read: Anthony Cardoza, *Benito Mussolini: The First Fascist*
F.T. Marinetti The Futurist Manifesto (1909) at:
http://www.cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html
Bruno Wanrooij, “Rise and Fall of Fascism as a Generational Revolt,” *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 22 no. 3 (1987) e-reserve
Esmonde Robertson, “Race as a Factor of Mussolini’s Policy in Africa and Europe” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23, No. 1 (Jan, 1988) e-reserve
Week III: Gender, Politics, and Everyday life in Fascist Italy

February 18: Gender, Politics, and Everyday life in Fascist Italy
How did gender influence the organization of fascist society in Italy? How were women and men affected by the policies and politics of the fascist state? How did they respond to these policies? How does a gendered lens impact our understanding of Fascism in Italy?

Read: Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922-1945*

Week IV: Resisting Fascism

February 25: Resisting Fascism
Read: Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine*
View *Open City* (1945; dir. Roberto Rossellini; 105 min.) on reserve in the main library: DVD 650

Week V: Nationalism Socialism and the Nazi Rise to Power

March 3: The Nazi Rise and Seizure of Power: A Local View
How did the Nazis assume and consolidate power? What insight do local studies offer into the popular appeal of Nazism?

Read: William Sheridan, *Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930-1945*

Week VI: Creating the (Modern?) Racial State

March 10: Creating the (Modern?) Racial State
To what degree was the Nazi State modern? To what degree did National Socialism build on and/or depart from existing political traditions in Germany? Was the Nazi Genocide planned or improvised?

Detlev Peukert, “The Genesis of the ‘Final Solution’ from the Spirit of Science” e-reserve
Christopher Browning, “Holocaust/’Final Solution’: Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941” e-reserve
Ian Kershaw, “‘Working Towards the Führer’ Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship” both in *The Third Reich*, ed. Christian Leitz (Blackwell, 1999) e-reserve
Jurgen Kocka, “German History before Hitler: The Debate on the German Sonderweg,” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 23, no. 1 (Jan 1988) e-reserve
Friday, March 14: Research Proposals due via email

**Week VII: Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Nazi Germany**

**March 17: Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Nazi Germany**

*How did gender influence the organization of Nazi society? How were women and men, in particular Jewish men and women, affected by the policies and politics of the Nazi state? To what degree were women the victims of Nazi policy? To what degree were they complicit in Nazi genocide? What were Nazi views on sexuality?*


**Week VIII: Spring Break**

**Week IX: Resisters, Perpetrators, Bystanders**

**March 31: Resisters, Perpetrators, Bystanders**

*What were the roles of ordinary individuals in perpetrating, supporting, resisting, or simply tolerating Nazism and the Holocaust? How does focusing on the role of ordinary individuals change our understanding of Nazi genocide?*

Sebastian Hafner, *Defying Hitler*
Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (Harper Perennial, 1993) pp. 55-77; 159-89 e-reserve

**Week X: Historicizing Stalinism**

**April 7: Making Sense of Stalinism**

*How did Stalin consolidate power? Does Stalinism signify a radical departure from Marxist-Leninism or its logical evolution?*
from *Stalinism*, ed. David L Hoffmann, (Blackwell, 2003) all on e-reserve:
Martin Malia, “The Soviet Tragedy: a history of Socialism in Russia”
Peter Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism”
Terry Martin, “Modernization of neo-traditionalism? Ascribed nationality and Soviet priomordialism” e reserve

**Week XI: Repression and Resistance: A Gendered Perspective**

**April 14: Repression and Resistance: A Gendered Perspective**

*How were women and men affected by repressive state policies? How did they resist them? Were mass repressions such as the Terror purely state orchestrated or were average individuals involved in this process?*

Lydia Chukovskaya, *Sofia Petrovna*
view *Burnt by the Sun* (1995; dir. Nikita Mikhalkov; 134 minutes) on reserve in the library: VCR 1497

**Week XII: Stalinist Civilization and Everyday Life**

**April 21: Stalinist Civilization and Everyday Life**

*How did Stalin propose to transform Soviet society? What was “Homo Sovieticus?” How did people experience Stalinism in their daily lives?*

Week XIII: The Great Patriotic War through Soldiers’ Voices

April 28: The Great Patriotic War through Soldiers’ Voices
How did Soviet soldiers experience and write about the Great Patriotic War?

Katherine Merridale, Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945 (Metropolitan, 2006)

WEEK XIV: Remembering Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism

May 5: Remembering Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism
TBD

Final papers due during Exam week.