

HIST 372: Nazi Germany

Prof. Brian Van Wyck, bvanwyck@umbc.edu

This course explores the origins, rise, and fall of the Third Reich. The course also examines the afterlife of Nazism in politics and popular culture, investigating how memory of Nazi Germany is preserved and deployed. In the first part of the course, we will consider the aftermath of the First World War and the conditions of the Weimar Republic which informed National Socialism's rise and the National Socialists' appeal to ordinary Germans. The second part of the course covers the changes especially in daily life ushered in by the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. The third part focuses on National Socialism at war, particularly the concept of wartime Nazi Germany as a "racial state" and its links to Nazi foreign and wartime policy and the crimes of the Holocaust. Lastly, the fourth section of the class deals with the retrospective assessment and interpretation of the Third Reich, exploring themes such as the prosecution of war crimes, postwar assessments of collaboration versus coercion, and depictions of Nazi Germany in memory and popular representation through the present day.

As an upper-level history course, class meetings will consist of a combination of lectures and discussion, with the latter focused especially on primary source readings assigned for every class meeting. In written assignments, you will practice and demonstrate skills analyzing and contextualizing primary sources and assessing historical arguments. Written exams will ask you to develop and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the National Socialist period in modern German history. And finally, class discussions will encourage to develop your own perspective on the period and its interpretation and to marshal historical evidence to support your judgements.

Course Objectives

- **IDENTIFY** key events in the history of the Third Reich.
- **EXPLAIN** the rise of National Socialism from a fringe party to mass movement and the political, social, and cultural contexts that led to its demise.
- **DESCRIBE** how the NSDAP remade Germany during its years in power, how ordinary Germans remade themselves in response to Nazi imperatives, and how National Socialism affected all areas of German life.
- **ASSESS** the factors contributing to the appeal of National Socialism to Germans from different groups, regions, and classes and with different religious and gender identities.
- **COMPARE** contrasting arguments about the role of complicity and coercion in Nazi rule.
- **EVALUATE** popular cultural representations of Nazism, both for historical accuracy and stereotypical or problematic assumptions as well as for what insight they can offer into the historical and popular memory of the Nazi past.
- **ANALYZE** primary sources for the information, stated and unstated, they can reveal about their author(s) and the period in which they were produced.
- **WRITE** analytical essays that are well organized and make effective use of evidence in the form of specific, contextualized examples from primary and secondary source readings.
- **DEFEND** opinions with persuasive arguments and evidence in exams, papers, and class discussions.

Course Expectations

ENGAGEMENT: Your success in (and enjoyment of!) this course depends on your engagement. You are expected to come prepared to class, having completed all required reading, and ready to offer thoughtful and substantial contributions to class discussion.

INTEGRITY: You are responsible for ensuring that your work in the class is your own and for conforming to the expectations of the Undergraduate Honor Statement by properly citing ideas and quotations you use to support your arguments in written assignments.

RESPECT: This course deals with issues of mass violence and discrimination based on religious, racial, gender, national, and political identity. As such, it is imperative that we be considerate and open to other perspectives and viewpoints in class discussions on sensitive topics. Disagreement is welcome and encouraged but must be presented in a respectful manner and with reference to course material and concepts.

COMMUNICATION: All course communications will take place through Blackboard and will also be forwarded to your UMBC email account. You will be responsible for all information included in Blackboard and email correspondence and must check one or the other regularly and use it as your primary means of communication with me.

Assessment

Engagement (20%)

Participation in class is integral to this course, as described in the course expectations above. Engagement means more than attendance – it requires thoughtful participation in class discussions, drawing on knowledge from readings, primary source material, and lecture. We may complete small group assignment, short pieces of reflective writing, multiple choice quizzes, or short ID questions in class, all of which are included in your engagement grade.

There is no fixed amount you must contribute to class discussion and quantity of contributions does not always equal quality of contributions. I will distribute a discussion rubric and guide which will describe the specific “moves” that make for a successful class discussion. Throughout the semester, we will employ a variety of discussion strategies and policies based on your feedback and reflections to ensure that all students have the opportunity to contribute. If you feel you were unable to contribute in a particular class meeting, contact me after class and we will agree on an alternate assessment of your engagement with that week’s readings.

Source analysis paper (March 2) (10%)

A short paper of 3-5 pages (double spaced) requiring that you choose a primary source from the Nazi Propaganda Archive (<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/>) and analyze its connection to aspect of the historical context you have examined in class and in readings. You will answer questions such as: what does this source reveal about the goals the Nazis sought to achieve (i.e. their ends) and how they sought to achieve these goals (i.e. their means)? What does

the source privilege, omit, and/or distort? What insight does the source provide into assumptions, worldviews, or values of the National Socialist movement (stated and unstated)?

Included in your grade on this assignment will be a short presentation on the source, introducing the source and your major conclusions about it, as part of a class discussion on Nazi propaganda methods.

Midterm ID exam (March 15) (20%)

An in-class midterm exam consisting of twenty questions asking you to identify and briefly explain the significance of important figures, terms, and concepts introduced in the reading and lectures.

Secondary source analysis paper (April 27) (10%)

A short paper of 3-5 pages (double spaced) requiring that you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of two different interpretations of the reasons for German participation in mass killing, determining which you find more convincing, and offering evidence from the historians themselves and from class readings to make a convincing case for your position.

Included in your grade on this assignment will be participation in an in-class debate on the subject of the paper.

Cultural assessment paper (May 17) (20%)

A 4-6 page (double spaced paper) analyzing an instance of contemporary media representation of Nazism and life in the Third Reich (i.e. film, TV episode, novel, video game, etc.). Based on your knowledge of the period in question, you will evaluate how it does and does not accurately reflect historical reality. Your paper should include at least three points of analysis that draw on lectures, readings, and discussions as evidence, in addition to including at least one primary source from the sourcebook (either one from the syllabus or an appropriate source chosen on your own).

Included in your grade will be a short in-class presentation on your topic and a peer review exercise requiring that you offer detailed and individualized feedback on papers from two of your classmates that will be shared with you. You will have the option of revising your paper on the basis of your classmates' feedback and questions you receive during your short presentation.

Final exam (May 22) (20%)

An in-class final exam consisting of three essay questions on major course themes, requiring you to offer interpretative and well-supported conclusions that reference readings, primary sources, and lecture material.

Required texts

Roderick Stackleberg and Sally A. Winkle (eds.), *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002) ISBN: 978-0415222143. eBook, paperback, and hardcover editions are all acceptable.

Jackson Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History* (New York: Pearson, 2013). ISBN: 978-0205846788. eBook, paperback, and hardcover editions are all acceptable.

All other readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site and are marked with an asterisk () on the schedule.*

Course policies

Student Disability Services: Accommodations for students with disabilities are provided for all students with a qualified disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA & ADAAA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act who request and are eligible for accommodations. The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is the UMBC department designated to coordinate accommodations that would create equal access for students when barriers to participation exist in University courses, programs, or activities. If you have a documented disability and need to request academic accommodations in your courses, please refer to the SDS website (sds.umbc.edu) for registration information and office procedures. SDS email: disAbility@umbc.edu; SDS phone: (410) 455-2459. If you will be using SDS-approved accommodations in this class, please contact me to discuss implementation of the accommodations. During remote instruction requirements due to COVID, communication and flexibility will be essential for success.

Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity is an important value at UMBC. By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. For additional information, please see the [Undergraduate Student Academic Conduct policy](#) (pdf) or consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory.

Please note: per Department of History policy, any incidence of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade in the course.

I am happy to consult with you regarding any questions or concerns about academic integrity and encourage you to ask me when in doubt, rather than risk serious consequences.

Equity and Inclusion: For policies on equity and inclusion and for support resources, see: <https://oei.umbc.edu/sample-title-ix-responsible-employee-syllabus-language/>

Course Schedule

Please note: This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. All changes will be announced in class and via Blackboard.

PART I: THE RISE OF NAZISM

Who was ultimately responsible for the National Socialists' rise to power?

Were local or national factors more important in explaining Nazism's popular appeal?

Week 1

Jan. 31: Introduction

Feb. 2: Wilhelmine Germany

Doc. 1.3: Heinrich von Treitschke, "The Aim of the State," 1897 (9-10)

Doc. 1.8: Konstantin von Gebsattel, "The Jewish Question," 1913 (29-30)

*Klara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Franc Mehring, *Spartacist Manifesto*

Spielvogel, 1-9

Week 2

Feb. 7: The Weimar Republic

Doc. 2.16: Program of the Communist International, 1929 (95-96)

Doc. 2.17: Lea Grundig, "Visions and History," (97-98)

Spielvogel, 12-26

Feb. 9: Early Nazism and the NSDAP

Doc. 2.6: The Program of the NSDAP, 1920 (63-66)

Doc. 2.15: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* Vol. 2, 1926 (92-94)

*Benito Mussolini, *Fascist Doctrines*

Spielvogel, 26-43

Week 3

Feb. 14: How Did the Nazis Come to Power?

Doc. 2.19: Hitler's Speech to the Industry Club in Düsseldorf, 27 Jan. 1932 (102 - 113)

Doc. 3.5: Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State, 28 February 1933 (135)

Spielvogel, 48-68

Feb. 16: The Consolidation of Power

*Thomas Mann, *An Appeal to Reason*

Doc. 3.8: Law to Remove the Distress of People and State, 24 March 1933 (142-43)

Spielvogel, 69-80

PART II: NAZI GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR

What was the Volksgemeinschaft and how successful were the Nazis in building it?

Was pre-war Nazi Germany built more on consent or more on terror?

Were the Jews unique among the groups persecuted by the Nazis?

Week 4

Feb. 21: The Early Nazi Period

Doc. 3.6: Hermann Goering, *Reconstruction of a Nation* (136-140)

Doc. 3.11: Lina Haag, *A Handful of Dust* (146-49)

Doc. 3.13: NSDAP Order for the *Gleichschaltung* of the Free Labor Unions 21 April 1933 (152-153)

Spielvogel, 83-94; 97-100; 107-114

Feb. 23: Hitler's Dictatorship

* Baldur von Schirach, "Hitler as No One Knows Him" (1933)

In class: excerpts from Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (1935)

Spielvogel, 88-89; 125-134; 140-147

Week 5

Feb. 28: Nazi Culture and Art

* Wolfgang Schultz, "One Recognizes a National Socialist by His Home!" (1939)

Spielvogel, 151-162

Mar. 2: Nazi Propaganda

Source analysis paper due in class

Short source analysis presentations

Week 6

Mar. 7: The Volksgemeinschaft: Who Belonged?

Doc. 4.4: Founding of the Organization "Lebensborn e.V.," 13 Sept. 1936 (200-201)

* The German National Catechism (1934)

Spielvogel, 94-97; 174-179

Mar. 9: ...And Who Did Not?

Doc. 3.14: Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, 14 July 1933 (154 155)

Doc. 3.26a-d: The Nuremberg Laws, 1935 (186-190)

Week 7

Mar. 13: Jewish Life in Germany

* Marion Kaplan, "In Public: Jews are Turned into Pariahs"

Spielvogel, 100-107; 114-117; 162-174

Mar. 15: **Midterm (in class)**

Week 8: SPRING BREAK

PART III: WAR AND GENOCIDE

What were the Nazis' long-term foreign policy aims?

Did National Socialist Germany prioritize the war or the genocide of the Jews?

Week 9

Mar. 28: Early Foreign Policy Successes: Rolling Back Versailles

Doc. 5.1: Hitler's Reichstag Speech, 1 Sept. 1939 (254-257)

Doc. 5.8: Re-Germanization of Lost German Blood

*Neville Chamberlain, *In Defense of Appeasement*

Spielvogel, 184-200

Mar. 30: Poland 1939

Doc. 5.1: Hitler's Reichstag Speech, 1 Sept. 1939 (254-257)

Doc. 5.8: Re-Germanization of Lost German Blood, Dec. 1940 (271-272)

Week 10

Apr. 4: Victory in the West: The Nazi New Order

*Heinz Guderian, *French Leadership... Could Not Grasp the Significance of the Tank in Mobile Warfare*

Spielvogel, 200-205; 220-229

Apr. 6: Bloodlands: The Nazi Crusade against Bolshevism

Doc. 5.12: The Commissar Decree, 6 June 1941 (277-279)

*The Indoctrination of the German Soldier: For Volk, Führer, and Fatherland

Spielvogel, 205-209

Week 11

Apr. 11: The Holocaust

Doc. 6.3: Alfred Rosenberg, "The Jewish Question as a World Problem," March 1941 (337-339)

Doc. 6.16: Lucie Begov, "A Ghost Emerges – The Gas Chambers – We Didn't Believe It" (375-378)

Spielvogel, 253-262

Apr. 13: The SS Camp System

* Heinz Heger, ed., *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 38-46, 67-76, 96-105

Spielvogel, 262-276

Week 12

Apr. 18: Perpetrators: Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?

Doc. 6.2: Testimony of Nurse Berta Netz, Munich, 1962, 334-37

Doc. 6.10: Affidavit of Hermann Friedrich Graebe, 357-59

*Christopher Browning, "One Day in Jozefow"

*Daniel Goldhagen, "Police Battalion 101"

Apr. 20: The German Home Front

Doc. 5.24a-5.24c: Student resistance: Leaflets of the White Rose (303-307)

Spielvogel, 229-238; 241-249

Week 13

Apr. 25: Final Victory, Total Defeat

Doc. 5.28: Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Names That Nobody Knows Anymore* (313-318)

Doc. 5.31: Erika S., Diary, Hamburg, 1944-45 (323-328)

Spielvogel, 209-210; 212-216; 238-241

Apr. 27: **Ordinary Men Debate**

Secondary source analysis due in class

PART IV: AFTERMATHS

Why has the memory of National Socialism been so contentious in postwar Germany up the present day?

What explanations for the Nazi era have emerged at different times and in different places after the war?

Week 14

May 2: Nazism on Trial

Doc. 7.2: Soviet dissent at Nuremberg, "Incorrect judgement with regard to the General Staff and OKW," 1 Oct. 1946 (386-391)

May 4: Nazi Afterlives

* Gerald Steinacher, "'A Man with a Wide Horizon': The Postwar Professional Journey of SS Officer Karl Nicolussi-Leck"

Week 15

May 9: Hollywood and the Third Reich

May 11: The Fourth Reich: Uses and Abuses of History

Week 16

May 17: Memory and/or Popular Representation

Cultural assessment paper due in class

Cultural assessment paper presentations

Final exam: May 22

(Optional): revised cultural assessment paper due before final exam