

History 2147A
Nazi Germany
Fall 2025

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Office Hours: **Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description:

We analyze how the Nazi Party came to power; the regime's use of propaganda, intimidation and terror within Germany after 1933; Hitler's foreign policy; Nazi methods in occupied Europe; anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and other programs of mass murder; resistance within Germany; and the reasons for the regime's defeat.

Antirequisite(s): History 1404E

Course Syllabus:

In 1938 the German writer Thomas Mann, then living in exile in the United States, tried to explain to American audiences the reasons for the attraction of fascism, and why fascism also threatened the United States, from within as well as from without. Fascism, he wrote, "has deep and perhaps indestructible roots in human nature; for its essence is force. It is in physical and mental oppression that fascism believes; this is what it practices, loves, honors, and glorifies. Oppression is not only the ultimate goal but the first principle of fascism, and we know only too well that force as a principle is just as eternally human as its opposite, the idea of justice."

In this course we examine one variant of fascism, Nazi Germany. The Nazi regime certainly practiced, loved, honored, and glorified force and oppression. War was its goal, both for the material profits of conquest, and because the regime idealized the qualities of the warrior. For much of its existence the Nazi regime managed to persuade most of the German people, and in particular young men, to accept its goals and values. In this course we examine why it was so successful in this endeavor, what it actually accomplished and failed to accomplish, the costs it imposed on those parts of German society it persecuted and sometimes sought to eradicate, and the consequences of its rule for the peoples of conquered Europe and for the German people itself. We also examine the beliefs and actions of the hundreds of thousands of Germans who opposed the regime, and sometimes resisted at the cost of their freedom and their lives.

Assigned readings include both secondary works, historians' analyses of the events of the period, and original sources, including excerpts from *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's speeches, reports of foreign observers, and memoirs. The class will view and discuss excerpts from a few of the

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numerous excellent documentaries that have been made about the period. In approximately half of the classes there will be brief multiple choice quizzes to test familiarity with the assigned sources and lectures. There will also be mid-term and final examinations, which will also have primarily multiple choice formats. Students will be asked to write an in-class essay in response to a question about the book assigned for the course, Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*.

Learning Objectives:

Students who pass this class will be able to:

explain the reasons for the Nazi Party's electoral successes in the early 1930s and for Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933;

explain the principal methods the Nazi regime used to govern Germany after January 1933, the responses to Nazi rule of different groups in German society, and why Hitler's foreign policy was initially so successful;

explain why German policies in the countries it conquered assumed such brutal forms, and in particular why Germany undertook organized campaigns of enslavement and mass murder;

explain the forms taken by resistance to Nazi rule, especially within Germany, and the reasons for the success or failure of particular kinds of resistance; and

analyze critically a range of primary and secondary sources.

Methods of Evaluation:

Two in-class largely multiple choice quizzes based on the assigned reading material for the class on the day of the quiz, as well as the two preceding classes, as well as the lectures for these classes. The in-class quizzes may be made up after the class takes place only on the basis of a request for an accommodation submitted through the Student Absence Portal. 20%

Mid-term examination. There will be a closed book and closed notes, largely multiple choice mid-term examination, held in class, on October 16th. No use of electronic devices is permitted during the examination. The questions will be based on both the assigned reading and the lectures for the first half of the course. 15%

An in-class seventy-five minute essay written in response to a question regarding Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* (students may bring the book to class and use it and notes taken in it in responding to the question – however, no electronic devices may be used), to take place in class on November 20th: 15%

A final examination, to be held in the fall term examination period in December. **The final examination will cover the entirety of the course, not just the second half of the semester.** No books or notes or other written materials or electronic devices of any kind may be consulted during the final examination. While the final examination will consist primarily of multiple choice questions, it may also include a few short answer questions. 50%

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials:

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, translated by Stuart Woolf (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996).

The weekly assignments from primary and secondary sources can be found on-line on the course OWL website.

Course Schedule and Readings:

I suggest reading the documents for each week in the order in which they are listed.

**September 4 Why study Nazi Germany? Historical contexts.
Introduction to the course requirements.**

**September 11. The Weimar Republic, Hitler's failed putsch attempt in 1923
and successful campaign for the office of chancellor, 1929-1933.**

Jackson Spielvogel and David Redles, *Hitler and Nazi Germany. A History* (Pearson Education, 2014), 7-9, 12-20, 26-36. An overview of the troubled history of the German government between 1918 and 1933, the early years of the Nazi Party (1919-1923), and the dominant role that Hitler came to play in it.

Alan Bullock, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny* (Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 85-115. A close examination of Hitler's failed attempt to overthrow the government of Bavaria in 1923.

Jackson Spielvogel and David Redles, *Hitler and Nazi Germany. A History* (Pearson Education, 2014), 58-60, 63-66. How mass unemployment in Germany that rose dramatically starting in 1929, the Great Depression, greatly increased the votes received by the Nazi Party at the provincial and national levels, and the strategies Hitler adopted to pressure the president of the republic, Paul von Hindenburg, to appoint him chancellor.

September 18. Hitler's goals; The first six months as chancellor.

"The programme of the Nazi Party, as adopted on February 24, 1920," from *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader*, ed. by J. Noakes and G. Pridham, Vol. 1, *The Rise to Power 1919-1934* (Exeter: A. Wheaton, 1983), 14-16.

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 37-65, 176-86. The assigned chapters from *Mein Kampf*, written (or more likely, dictated) while Hitler served a brief prison term for attempting to overthrow the government of the German province of Bavaria, explain to the reader why Hitler came to hate socialists and Jews, and his theory of propaganda.

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Gerhard Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany; Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-36* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), 1-23. Hitler's goal of gaining what he called living space, *Lebensraum*, for Germans, was central to his entire political project. Weinberg argues that Hitler firmly believed in this objective from the mid-1920s. It could only be achieved by conquest, and expulsion or murder of inhabitants of the conquered countries. Note that Weinberg composed this chapter relying solely on sources from the period before Hitler became chancellor. One key source, noted first in footnote fourteen, is what has been termed "*Hitlers Zweites Buch*," a follow-on, if you will, to *Mein Kampf* that was never published. This "second book," written in 1928, contains a far more explicit discussion of Hitler's foreign policy goals than found in *Mein Kampf*.

Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 569-587. A description of the steps Hitler took to destroy the Weimar Republic following his appointment to the office of chancellor. Individuals and terms mentioned in Craig's account that require some explanation, in the order in which they appear: Alfred Hugenberg, the head of a nationalist political party that allied with the Nazi Party and then was outmaneuvered (p. 571); Hermann Goering, one of Hitler's closest associates, an unscrupulous and brutal figure (p. 572); Franz von Papen, a former chancellor who became vice-chancellor in Hitler's government and was pushed aside, an ambitious mediocrity (p. 572); Heinrich Himmler, the head of Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS, an especially ruthless figure even by Nazi standards (p. 573); SPD - Social Democratic Party of Germany (p. 575); Centre - the Catholic Centre Party (p. 575); KPD - the Communist Party of Germany (p. 575); *Länder* - German provinces (p. 576); poem on page 577 - "Always practice loyalty and honesty/ Until the cold grave/ Depart not one finger's width/ From God's mercy"; Landsknechte - mercenaries (p. 577); *Stahlhelm* - Steel Helmet, the nationalist paramilitary organization, a rival to the Nazi SA (p. 581); *Mittelstand* - middle class (p. 581); *Machtübernahme* - Takeover of power (p. 587).

September 25. Domestic Policies; Creating jobs; Youth and the Churches

In-class quiz

Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany. The Führer State 1933-1945*, translated by Simon Steyne (Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 60-83.

Stephen Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built* (London: Methuen Publishers, 1937), 201-17.

Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death. The Making of the Nazi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 140-67.

Translations of Hitler's speeches found in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*.

Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* (New York: Putnam, 1940), 47-57. The conversation described by Rauschning took place on April 7, 1933.

John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 1-13, 40-44.

"With Burning Concern," Papal Encyclical of March 14, 1937, from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html (accessed on January 16, 2002), paragraphs 1-8, 23-43.

October 2 The growing power of the SS and the Gestapo; Treatment of the Jews

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Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, translated by Jean Steinberg (Praeger, 1970), 350-362.

Michael Meyer and Michael Brenner, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 4, *Renewal and Destruction* (New York: Columbia, 1996), 197-230.

Reports of American State Department officers on life in Germany in 1933: Frank Bajohr and Christoph Strupp, "Dritte Reich," *Berichte ausländischer Diplomaten über Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Wallstein, 2011), 386-7.

Marta Appel, *Memoirs*, in *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. by Stella Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 351-3.

Helmut Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 5-23.

"Pastor Julius von Jan's Protest against the 9 November 1938 Pogrom," from Peter Hoffmann, *Behind Valkyrie. German Resistance to Hitler. Documents* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 156-67.

Hans Berger, "Remembrances of Kristallnacht," in *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. by Stella Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 386-97.

October 9 Nazi foreign policy, 1933-1939.

Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 673-713.

Gerhard Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany; Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-36* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), 239-245, 282-291.

Hossbach Memorandum of November 1937, from German History in Documents and Images.

George Kennan, *From Prague after Munich, Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940* (Princeton, 1968), 10-13 (excerpts from a personal letter of January 6, 1939).

*Thomas Mann, *The Coming Victory of Democracy* (Alfred Knopf, 1938) 7-19. Thomas Mann, among the best known German writers of the time, attacked the Nazi government from the 1930s in a series of speeches and, during the war, radio broadcasts. Mann lived in exile from 1933, first in the United States and then in Britain.

October 16 Mid-term, in-class;

The mid-term examination will take 60 minutes, and will begin promptly at the start of the class.

Lecture on German military strategies during the war; Hitler's relationship with the army high command.

October 23 The first years of the war, September 1939 to June 1941

Alexander Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland. Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (University of Kansas Press, 2003), 1-28, 64-5, 72-5.

Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler's Europe. Nazi Rule in Poland under the General Government* (I.B. Taurus,, 2015), xii-xiii, 57-85.

Jan Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation, The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 73-86.

Article on the German occupation of Belarus, from *Germany and the Second World War* - focuses on 41-44 time period

Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany 1900–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130-43, 160-80.

October 30 The invasion of the Soviet Union: Methods of Warfare and Occupation Policies

Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Germany and the Second World War*, vol 4, *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 481-5, 1140-1149, 1160-1161, 1172-1177.

Christian Streit, “Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht,” from *War of Extermination. The German Military in World War II, 1941-1944*, eds. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Berghahn Books, 2000), 80-91.

Hannes Heer, “How Amoralism Became Normality: Reflections on the Mentality of German Soldiers on the Eastern Front,” from *War of Extermination. The German Military in World War II, 1941-1944*, eds. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Berghahn Books, 2000), 329-344.

Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939-44*, trans. by George Klukowski (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 184-201. Dr. Klukowski was a physician in a town in Poland.

November 6 Fall term study break

November 13 The Holocaust

In-class quiz

Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, 265-67, 276-80, 479-83.

Pamela E. Swett , and S. Jonathan Wiesen, *Nazi Germany : Society, Culture, and Politics* (Bloomsbury, 2004), 230-245.

Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (Da Capo Press, 2000; original 1964), 284-93.

Victor Klemperer, “The Star,” “The Jewish War,” *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI _Lingua Tertii Imperii, A Philologist’s Notebook*, trans. by Martin Brady (Athlone Press, 2000), 166-71, 172-73.

Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide. The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), 179-205.

Sönke Neitzel and Harald Walzer, *Soldaten. On Fighting, Killing and Dying: The Secret World War II Transcripts of German POWs*, translated by Jefferson Chase (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012), 44-9, 56-65, 345-51.

November 20 In-class essay on Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*.

Peter Longerich, *Holocaust*, 410-11. Operation 1005.

November 27 The home front; Resistance.

Victor Klemperer, "I believe in Him," *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI _Lingua Tetra Imperii, A Philologist's Notebook*, trans. by Martin Brady (Athlone Press, 2000), 103-9, 117-18.

John Michalczyk, *Confront: Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Peter Lang, 2004), 196-205. Please note that this account of the White Rose resistance group was written by Georg (Juergen) Wittenstein, who participated in some of the activities of the group but was spared execution in 1943.

*Fliers of the White Rose group, from *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader*, ed. by J. Noakes and G. Pridham, vol. 4, *The German Home Front in World War II* (Exeter: 1984), 457-9.

*"Extracts from the Diary of Captain Wilm Hosenfeld," in Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist. The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945*, translated by Anthea Bell (Toronto: McArthur and Co., 2003), 193-208; with a description of Hosenfeld's assistance to the Jewish author of the memoir, 176-81.

Winfried Heinemann, "Military Resistance Activities and the War," from Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Germany and the Second World War*, vol 9/1, *Wartime German Society 1939-1945: Politicization, Disintegration, and the Struggle for Survival* (Clarendon Press, 2008), 780-785, 792-797, 810-815, 918-925.

December 4 End of the war; Mass expulsions of ethnic Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The Shadow of the Nazi past in West Germany.

Katja Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall. A History of East Germany* (Basic Books, 2023), 39-49.

Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe* (Harvard, 2001), 108-138 (Chapter entitled "The Expulsion of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia")

Michael Stolleis, "Theodor Maunz. The Life of a Professor of Constitutional Law," from Stolleis, *Law under the Swastika* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 185-92, 250-2.

Alan Cowell, "German Scholar Unmasked as former SS Officer," *New York Times* (June 1, 1995), 3.

Richard von Weizsäcker, May 8, 1985 speech to the West German Bundestag. Richard von Weizsäcker was at the time of this speech the president of the German Federal Republic.

**FINAL EXAMINATION TO BE HELD IN-PERSON DURING THE TIME
SCHEDULED BY THE REGISTRAR DURING THE FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD,
DECEMBER 11-22**

Additional Statements

Communication policies: I am happy to speak with students after class, or during my weekly office hours. If these times are not convenient, I am happy to arrange alternative times to meet. I am in my office most days of the week. Please write me at enathans@uwo.ca to schedule a time to talk. I am also happy to talk by phone or via Zoom.

Use of electronic devices: No electronic devices, or books or notes, may be used during the quiz or the final examination.

Classroom behavior: Please turn off cell phones and refrain from using any recording devices during the class. Please remove earbuds during the class.

Use of electronic devices: No electronic devices, or books or notes, may be used during the quiz or the final examination.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): Students may use artificial intelligence tools in studying for the class and in preparing the assigned essay.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at:

https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.