Many courses were given on Nazi Germany or the Weimar Republic, but unlike others, the purpose of this one is the discussion of the interwar years, without extending the debate to the Second World War or the Holocaust. Doing so, we hope to teach the students to avoid projecting their knowledge of the crimes and destruction of the Third Reich on the history that preceded these events.

We, as a product of the Israeli education system, are aware of the tendency of history classes in high schools to teach students about the monolithic nature of German history, with an undeserving emphasis on the Sonderweg from Luther to Auschwitz. In addition, there is a tendency to ignore in high schools the complex cultural and legal questions that the National Socialist had to solve before 1939. Consequently, in the sessions dedicated to the Weimar republic, we will explore the cultural life and mood that led a democracy turn into an autocratic regime. We will endeavor to explain the students that the Nazi rise to power was not a foregone conclusion and that from the vantage point of a contemporary observer, other alternative outcomes could have materialized.

In the sessions dedicated to the Third Reich we will explore the mechanics of the regime i.e. the bureaucracy of the state and the Nazi party, the relations of the state and the military and the police and prison system. In addition to that, we will also discuss the racial ideology of the Nazi party and its implementation until 1939. It is important for us to explain the National Socialist ideology, by not condemning the ideology; but instead by trying to understand its logic and its appeal to the German public.

The course, which will be classified as an exercise, is targeted at first year history students. The structure of the course is traditional; our main concern is to introduce to the students the various schools of thought in historical research of today, such as cultural, economic, political and social history on the one hand and to present in class the various traditions of German history. In each session we will concentrate on one topic, allowing the students to read secondary material for background; but the emphasis will be on primary sources and text analysis. It is our main goal to teach the students how to read correctly archival material and other sources such as diaries.
First Semester

1. Introduction

In the introduction, we will analyze in class the sections pertaining the German reparation and responsibility for the war. An emphasis would be made on the creation of the new Republic in context of the post war international treaties. Thus, we will provide the students with a translation of the Treaty of Versailles and provide a general background for the condition of Germany immediately after the First World War.

Reading: ----

Source:

*Treaty of Versailles* (1919) (Hebrew)

2. The Disintegration of the State in 1918

In this session, we will discuss the German revolution and the suppression of the Communist revolts after the war, as well as the association of the Weimar Republic with the defeat in the war and the development of the ‘stab in the back’ myth, which will be explored more thoroughly in the fourth session.

Reading:


Source:


3. The Will for Democracy

It is often said that the democracy of Weimar was unstable from beginning to end. In this session, we will analyze parts of the Weimar constitution and explore the role of the prominent parties that were involved in the political process in the birth of the Republic. We will emphasize the Socialist involvement in the formation of the constitution and the party’s withdrawal from government soon after.

Reading:

Source:

*The Constitution of the German Republic* (1919). (Hebrew)

**4. The Fallen Soldier**

The fallen soldier and militarism in Germany are vital to understand the developments of Germany from the Second Reich to the republic. Thus, we will devote this session to the myths, and memories of the war and how they affected the fledging republic. In this context, we will analyze in class the first instance in which Paul von Hindenburg used the phrase ‘stab in the back.’

Reading:


Sources:

Paul von Hindenburg, *Stab in the Back: (1919) – A testimony before the Reichstag commission*. (Hebrew)

Selected caricatures taken from *Simplicissimus*

**5. Popular Culture in Weimar: The Working Class**

It is our goal not only to devote our attention to the political difficulties of the republic, but also to the vibrant cultural life that existed at the time. Consequently, we will devote this session to the popular culture of the working class.

Reading:


Source:


**6. Popular Culture in Weimar: The Bourgeoisie**
In this session we will discuss the role of the Cabaret and music halls in public life and, of course, their discontents. The purpose of these two sessions is to introduce students the history of popular cultural history.

Reading:


Sources:

Friedrich Hollander, *Cabaret* (1932).

7. The Reichswehr and the Militias

The demilitarization process caused left many scars on the Weimar republic; perhaps the most important of which is the appearance of the *Freikorp* militias and their influence on German politics. To understand the mood of the time, however, the veteran organizations such as the *Stahlhelm* also influenced right wing policies and rhetoric. While we will discuss the civil unrest in session three from the Socialist perspective, in this session we will take the perspective of the right wing.

Reading:


Source:

*Treaty of Versailles* – Military clauses (1919). (Hebrew)
*Berlin Stahlhelm Manifesto* (1927).

8. Radical Movements (the Communists)

The next three sessions will be devoted to radical movements in Weimar as they sprang up. In this particular session, we will discuss the Communist Party and its goals, exploring the tensions between the Soviet will and the unique German political climate. The reading material will allow us to discuss micro-history and its uses in historical research.
Reading:


Sources:

Rosa Luxemburg, Founding Manifesto of the Communist Party of Germany (1918).
Ernst Thaelmann, The SPD and NSDAP are twins (1932).

9. Radical Movements (the Nazis)

In this section we will discuss the evolution of the Nazi party in its ‘struggle years.’ We will place the Nazi party in the greater context of right wing folk parties and the lack of success of these parties until the great depression.

Reading:


Source:

The 25 Points of the National Socialist Party, (1920). (Hebrew)

10. Radical Movements (the Zionists)

Finally, we will discuss the Zionists as a radical movement within the greater German and Jewish political debates. The purpose of the discussion in class will be to introduce Zionism in a different light than is taught in high schools. In other words, Zionism as a radical idea of uprooting assimilated Jews from Europe to settle in Palestine.

Reading:


Source:
Martin Buber, *The Jew and his Jewishness* (1912). (Hebrew)

12. The Crash of ’29

The turning point of this course will be in this session, since the affects of the crash of ’29 in the United States had long standing repercussions on Germany and the Nazi rise to power. In this session we will discuss the events that led to the crash and the immediate repercussions on German politics.

Reading:


Sources:

Translated articles from the:

*Voelkischer Beobachter* (Hebrew).
*Berliner Morgenpost* (Hebrew).

12. Cultural Pessimism

Through the reading of conservative and pessimist philosophers, we will discuss the theoretical roots of anti-liberalism and anti-democratic notions shared by many Germans. The primary goal of this discussion is to show the students that not all anti-liberals were in fact Nazis, nor was the Nazi theory out of touch of respectable theoretical tradition.

Reading:


Source:

Ernst Juenger, *On Danger* (1931)

13. The Red Menace

The final session of the semester will be devoted to the red menace and the fear from a Communist encroachment of the world, without which the Nazi party would never have risen.

Sources:

**Second Semester**

14. The Brüning Days

This session will be focused on the political moves that lead to the collapse of the republic before the nomination of Hitler as Reich Chancellor. Much of the attention will be devoted to Brüning’s term as Chancellor and the various cabinets that had risen and fallen until Hindenburg’s decision to appoint Hitler Chancellor. In addition, we will discuss Hitler’s seizure of power and the elections that predated the appointment as well as the last free elections held in Germany a few months after it.

Reading:


Source:
Translation of Goebbels’ diary pertaining to seizure of power.

15. The Legal Revolution

We will discuss in class the ‘legal revolution’ of the Nazi party, which turned Germany from a Republic to the Third Reich without any drastic changes in the constitution. The purpose of this session is to analyze the first pieces of legislation that were enacted upon the seizure of power.

Reading:


Source:

*Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat* (Reichstag Burning Decree), 28 February 1933. (English)
16. Racial Hygiene

Ideology, not politics is what made the Nazi party distinct from other right wing folk parties. In this session, we will explore the Nazi fascination of eugenics and racial hygiene and the attempts to realize the ideal. We shall discuss the utopian nature of the Nazi ideology and discuss the various biological enemies of the Reich, other than Jews.

Reading:


Source:

*Gesetz zur Verhuetung erbkranken Nachwuchses* (Sterilization law), 14 July 1933.

17. The Nuremberg Laws

This session will be devoted to the implementation of the racial ideologies of the Nazis and other laws that were enacted immediately after the seizure of power such as the sterilization law of 1933.

Reading:


Source:

The Nurember Laws:

*Reichsbuergergesetz* (Reich citizenship law) 15 September 1935

*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* (The law for protection of blood and honor) 15 September 1935
18. Nazi Physicians

In this session we will explore the role of physicians in Nazi Germany before the mass exterminations had begun. We would like to present the students a profile of the profession that was Nazified most rapidly, and which the regime required to implement its racial policies.

Reading:


Source:


19. The SS Empire

This session will be devoted to the SS and its rise to power from an elite group in the 1920’s to the economic empire it has mutated over the years. In this section, we would like to explain the students the organization of the SS and its various departments, its nature and its function within the Third Reich.

Reading:


Source:

A translation of the SS personal file of Dr. Enno Lolling, who would become the chief inspector of sanitation in concentration camps. (Original material from the Bundesarchiv.)

20. The Tools of Oppression

In this session we will discuss the various tools of oppression that was available to the Nazi leadership as it rose to power and the improvements it has made upon. Therefore, the session will be concentrated on the evolution of the Gestapo and
the introduction of the concentration camp as a penal colony as well as civilian prisons.

Reading:


Source:

A case reproduced in Gellately’s book.

21. Party against the Bureaucracy

The following two sessions will be devoted to the actual power struggles that existed in the Third Reich. In a sense, these sessions will be devoted to the actual effects of the Fuehrer Prinzip on the state, by tracing the symbiosis between the party and the state bureaucracy. In this session we will take the party perspective on how it encroached the state and the position of the SS within the party and the state.

Reading:


Source:

*Hitler’s Table Talk*, 1 – 2 August 1941.
*Hitler’s Table Talk*, 16 November 1941.
*Hitler’s Table Talk*, 3 May 1942.

22. The Bureaucracy against the Party

In his table talk, Hitler often criticized the bureaucracy and its inefficiency. He himself had a great dislike towards bureaucrats but tolerated them for practical reasons. In this session we will explore how the bureaucracy reacted to the party and the places where it resisted the dictation from the political leadership.
Reading:


Source:


23. The *Wehrmacht*

In this session we will discuss the *Wehrmacht* and its position in the Third Reich, taking the fear of the military from the SA—discussing the political need for the night of the long knives—as well as the von Fritsch and von Blomberg affairs as an example of the complex relations between military and political leaderships.

Reading:


Source:

The personal oath taken by soldiers to Hitler in 1934. (Hebrew)

24. Understanding Nazism: The Fuhrer Prinzip

In the following two sessions, we will discuss different perspectives in understanding the Nazi phenomenon. This session will be devoted to Ian Kershaw’s biography of Hitler and his theory on working towards the Fuhrer. We shall discuss the process of decision making in the Third Reich. The goal of this session is to dismantle the notion that the Nazi control over Germany was monolithic and government by Hitler’s personality alone.

Reading:


25. Understanding Nazism: Bourgeois Revolution or Fascism?

This session will be devoted to two different and opposing perspectives on Nazism. The first, being that of George Mosse who tried to trace the origins of nazism in bourgeois German culture; while Nolte tried to find a more general idea of fascism, and trying to stir away from a German *Sonderweg*. 
Reading:


26. Conclusions

Reading: