Fascism and its Legacy in Germany: 1918 to 2005

Dr Todd Weir
HIS3047
Level 3 Semester 2

15 University Square
Queen’s University Belfast
Belfast
BT7 1PA
Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 90 973423 (international code +44 28)
Website: www.qub.ac.uk/history
Fascism and its Legacy in Germany: 1918 to 2005

Dr Todd Weir

Course Description
It may be argued that the history of German fascism extended beyond the twelve years of National Socialist dictatorship. For, like all traumatic events, fascism cast a shadow over the traditions, crises and choices that preceded it. It cast a shadow over the future as well. As a source of contested memories and guilt, the crimes of the fascist era were a palpable part of German history after 1945, indeed up to this present day. This module will view German history since 1918 through the prism of fascism. It begins with an investigation of the social, economic and political conflicts that set the stage for the meteoric rise of Hitler and the National Socialist German Worker’s Party during the late Weimar Republic. The course will then examine the key elements of the Nazi dictatorship itself. In the final weeks, we will take up the politics of memory in post-war Germany. How did the antifascism of the wartime allies contribute to the country’s division and how did the memory of fascism become a weapon in the Cold War struggle between East and West Germany? Did the reunification of Germany in 1990 signify a healing of the wounds inflicted by National Socialism or, as recent monuments to the Holocaust suggest, or has the memory of fascism become a fixed part of German national identity? In answering these and other questions, students will read from key historical studies on twentieth century Germany and on fascism. They will also be introduced to some recent theoretical works on historical memory.

Attendance
The lecture will be held Thursdays at 10.00-12.00 in PFC 301. Tutorials will be held on Tuesdays at 9.30 or 13.00 in 17 University Square, room 105. In the event of illness or other unforeseen event, a student may be excused from attending class, but should inform the tutor in advance by email. If a student wishes to discuss anything relating to the course, s/he is welcome to contact the tutor by email or telephone, or visit the tutor’s office hours.

Dr Weir’s Contact Details
17 University Square, Rm. 17.102
Tel 9097-3312
Email: t.weir@qub.ac.uk
Office hours: Tuesday 3-4, or by appt.

Tutorials
It is essential that students attend tutorials and that they prepare for them. Each tutorial will consist of discussions of the previous week’s lecture, followed by an investigation of primary sources and secondary material related to the topic of the week. A printed handbook with almost all required readings will be sold to students at the cost of production. In addition, most materials will be posted on Queen’s Online (QOL) or otherwise available on-line. To prepare for the tutorial discussion students should read the indicated primary and secondary texts and carefully prepare responses to the topic questions. The first tutorials will take place on 9 February.

Reading
Students are expected to purchase

And either
3. Ian Kershaw, Hitler: Profile in Power (London: Longman, 1991). Note: This is NOT his more recent 1600-page two volume biography with the subtitles, Hubris and Nemesis.
The first two books are available from the University Bookshop for ca. £ 10-18 each. Most of the books listed in the recommended reading can be found in the Main and Seamus Heaney libraries. Most individual chapters and sources listed in the syllabus are now or will soon be available through Queen’s Online (QOL). You may find some of the books in the Linenhall Library opposite City Hall, which has open stacks and no membership required for reading on the premises.

**ASSESSMENT**

This course is assessed by an exam (50%), one essay (worth 30%), seminar participation (10%) and the journal responses (10%).

**Exam**
The two-hour exam will be held in May and will be two hours long. You will be expected to answer two essay questions out of a choice of eight.

**Essays**
You will write one essay for this course, which will count for 30% of your overall mark. This will be an in-depth investigation of one aspect of twentieth century German history. Students are expected to go beyond the articles and books excerpts given by the tutor and engage in some original research in the library. Two internet sources that you are encouraged to use are J-Stor and the collection of historical documents of the German Historical Institute (http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/index.cfm). If you do use these collection, please cite the source given at the beginning or end of every document, i.e. not the internet address. Possible essay titles will be handed out in due course.

The essay must be handed in by 12 noon on Monday 19 April. Submission of late essays will be penalised by 5 marks per working day up to a maximum of five days, after which a mark of zero will be recorded. Your essay should be approximately 2500 words long. It must be word-processed and include properly formatted footnotes and a bibliography (see School handbook for guidelines), numbered pages and a word count. You should submit two copies of the essay to the School Office. Please consult the School’s guidelines about submitting assessed essays, to be found in the undergraduate handbook on the School of History website under ‘Current Students’.

One copy of your essay will be returned to you with comments and a mark; the other will be retained for our records, since it constitutes part of the assessment process for the module. Remember: do not put your name or student number on your essays, as essays are marked anonymously.

**Tutorial Participation and Group Presentation**
Students will be assessed on the tutorial participation and this mark will count for 10% of the final mark. This assessment will reflect the level of preparation for the tutorials and the student’s willingness to contribute constructively to discussions. Preparation includes first of all the critical reading of the required secondary and source texts for the week. Students are encouraged, of course, to also delve into the recommended reading. There will be short group presentations in the final week.

Participation and journal responses are the one portion of the final mark over which the student has the greatest control. Beyond the 10% allocated directly to participation, it has been shown time and again that those who attend regularly and participate actively tend to do best on the anonymously graded exams and essays. Those who attend infrequently tend to fare poorly.

**Journal responses**
To prepare for the tutorial discussion, students should read the required preparatory reading assignment as well as a selection of recommended further readings and produce a one-page typed response to that reading. In the response, students should review, reflect on, or critique the week’s
reading assignment. This exercise will serve two important functions. First, it is intended to insure thorough preparation of the reading. Second, in distilling the key features of the week’s theme onto a single typed sheet (500 words max.), students will become adept at succinctly summarizing the principal arguments of the topics under consideration, or their own reactions to various intellectual positions.

In writing your response, you should deal with at least one of the questions given for that week in the handbook. Responses will be collected at the beginning of each tutorial and generally returned the following week. These exercises will be assessed, and account for 10% of the course grade. At least five rapid responses are due over the course of the semester, each, up to five, counting for 2% of the 10% allocation. Students may choose to turn in more than five, in which case the highest five marks will be the basis for assessment (the lower marks dropped). **No late responses will be accepted, nor can they be emailed.**

**Module Content**
This course explores twentieth-century German history through the lens of the fascist dictatorship. It focuses on the events leading up to the National Socialist seizure of power, the structures and dynamics of Nazi rule and the effects of the war on Germany since 1945.

**Aims**
The aims of this course are:
1) to provide students with an understanding of German history since 1918.
2) to acquaint students with a variety of historical sources from this period as well as with secondary materials and historiographical debates.
3) to promote the development of key skills required to study history effectively.

**Learning outcomes**
On completion of this module, students will be able to demonstrate, through examination answers, the assessed essay and tutorial contributions:
1) an understanding of the main political and social developments that led to the rise of the Nazi movement and its successful erection of a dictatorship.
2) an understanding of the essential structures of Nazi rule and their relationship to Nazi ideology.
3) an understanding of the reasons for the racist war of domination in Eastern Europe and the Holocaust.
4) an understanding of the importance of the changing role played by the memory of and guilt surrounding fascism and the Holocaust in the political systems of both East and West Germany after 1945.
5) an awareness of the historiography of German history and an ability to engage in key debates on the subject.

**Skills**
On completion of this module, students will have acquired the following skills:
1) the ability to engage critically with various kinds of historical evidence, including primary and secondary literature.
2) the ability to distill historical research into a cogent, well-written, well-organized and well-argued essay.
3) the ability to engage with confidence and authority in critical discussions with classmates and the tutor on a wide variety of themes related to fascism and German history.
4) the ability to formulate original responses to questions based on research, reading and tutorial discussion.
Weekly schedule

**Week 1: Introductory lecture: Fascism in history (Feb. 4)**

Read: Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, Chapter 1

Recommended overview of fascism:

* * *

**Week 2 (9 Feb.): The Weimar Republic and the Collapse of Liberal Democracy**

**Questions for Discussion:**
- What was the impact of the war on the generation of veterans?
- What was the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the German political system during the Weimar Republic?
- What effect did the Inflation of 1923 have on the German middle classes?
- Fritzsche describes the Weimar Republic as a period defined by a mix of danger and possibility, of the fear of destruction and the hope for utopian rebuilding. In what way did the architect and engineer come to represent the aspirations of political actors on the right and the left? What was common to all?
- Many of the sources describe intellectual hopes for a “national revolution.” How do you imagine that is different from traditional conservatism?

**Read:**
Peter Fritzsche, “Landscape of Danger, Landscape of Design: Crisis and Modernism in Weimar Germany.” (QOL)

**Sources:**
Joseph Roth. *What I Saw*: Sections 31, 32. (QOL)

**Recommended:**
Richard Bessel, “Germany from War to Dictatorship,” and
**Week 3 (16 Feb.): Accounting for the rise of the Nazi movement and its seizure of power**

**Questions for discussion:**
- Who were the earliest members of the NSDAP?
- What does the “beer hall putsch” tell us about the Nazi movement and how did it change as a result?
- What was the essential role of the paramilitary SA (storm troopers) to the Nazi movement?
- What was the relationship of the Nazi movement to traditional German conservatives?
- What was the relationship of Nazis to big business?
- What was the relationship of Nazis to democracy?
- Did the Nazi “seize” power?
- Were the Churches and the National Socialist movement natural enemies?
- What was the conservative strategy of “taming”?
- What is meant by “Gleichschaltung” (Coordination)?
- Compare the Fromm and Ulbricht texts. What different explanations do they offer for the class basis of fascism?

Topics for the essay will be distributed.

**Read:**
- Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, Chapter 3
- Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, Chapters 2 and 3 or Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*, Section 3 “Converting the Soul.”

**Sources:**
- Erich Fromm, “Psychology of Fascism” (1941) in: *Escape from Freedom*. (QOL)

**Recommended:**
- Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, Introduction and Ch. 1. (QOL)

**Recommended Film:** *Made in Britain*, Dir. Alan Clarke, 1982. This film is a portrait of a young British skinhead (played by Tiim Roth). It raises interesting questions about the relationship of violence, social crisis and the appeal of rightwing racist ideologies.
Week 4 (23 Feb.): Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party

Questions for discussion:

- Why did the exile political scientist Ernst Fraenkel refer to the Nazi regime as a “dual state”?
- How did the Nazis justify their extra-legal actions?
- What were the significant events of 1934?
- What does the introduction of the Hitler greeting “Heil Hitler!” in 1933 and the personal oath of the Army to Hitler suggest about the regime?
- What was the relationship of force and consent in the Nazi regime?
- Did the majority of Germans support the Nazis? If so, at which times and why?

Read:

Kershaw, Hitler, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 up to page 118 OR Richard Evans, The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939, Sections 1 and 2 “The Police State” and “Mobilizing the Spirit”


Sources:


Recommended:


Ian Kershaw, Hitler, vol. 1 Hubris and vol. 2 Nemesis (London: Allen Lane, 1998 & 1999), This is Kershaw’s definitive 1600-page biography.


Recommended Film: Triumph of the Will (1935).
Week 5 (2 March): The Volksgemeinschaft, Racial State and Antisemitism

Questions for discussion:
- What is meant by the German term Weltanschauung (“world view”) and why was it so important to the Nazis?
- Describe the importance of race to the Nazi Weltanschauung? What precedents were there for racial engineering in the sciences of eugenics and anthropology and in Weimar era social care?
- Explain the centrality of Antisemitism to the Nazi Weltanschauung. How did Nazis portray Jews as their universal enemies?
- What importance do you think colonialism had in the Nazi worldview?
- What policies did the Nazis undertake to form the “Volksgemeinschaft” (“people’s community”) of “Aryan” Germans?
- What changes did Nazis make to traditional treatment of habitual criminals, the mentally disabled and ill?
- What role did the Nazis foresee for women?

Read:
Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, Chapter 4
Kershaw, Hitler, Chapter 1 or Richard Evans, The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939, Sections 5 and 6 “Building the People’s Community” and “Towards the Racial Utopia”

Sources:

Recommended:

Recommended Film: Jud Süß, Dir. Veit Harlan (1940)
Week 6 (9 March): International Fascism and War: Europe 1933 to 1942: Totalitarianism.

Questions for discussion:
- What was the New European Order of the National Socialists around 1940? What structures worked for Nazi hegemony and why didn’t the Nazis make full use of them?
- Compare National Socialism to Italian fascism and other fascist regimes. How are they similar and different? How is Mussolini’s conception of fascism different from the view Hitler expressed in Mein Kampf?
- Can a single definition of fascism cover all totalitarian, authoritarian regimes of the interwar period? What definitions have been offered?
- Compare National Socialism to Soviet Stalinism. What similarities and differences do you see?

Read:
Ernst Nolte, “Fascism in Europe (1919-1945)” and “Appendix B” in: Three Faces of Fascism, pp. 10-21, 459-462. (QOL)
Michael Mann, Chapter 1, Fascists (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), pp. 1-30. (QOL)

Sources:

Recommended:
Week 7 (16 March): War and Holocaust

Questions for discussion:
- What are the “intentionalist” and “functionalist” explanations of the Nazi rush to war and to the Holocaust against the Jews?
- Why was German occupation of the countries to the East so much more brutal than the occupation of Western Europe?
- What are the implications of Goldhagen’s thesis of the “eliminatory anti-Semitism” of the Germans and how does Browning’s work both support and challenge this thesis?
- According to Bartov, did the German Army retain a distance from the Nazi extermination campaign against Jews and Slavs on the Eastern front?
- According to Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, what were some of the psychological effects of internment in the Nazi death camps like Auschwitz?

Read:
Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (New York: Harper, 1992) Make sure to read the afterward, which describes his dispute with Goldhagen.
Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, Chapter 5

Source:

Recommended:
Omer Bartov, Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP), Chapter 4, pp. 106-178. (QOL)

Recommended Films: Shoah, Dir. Claude Lanzmann; Jacob the Liar, Dir. Konrad Wolf.
Week 8 (23 March): Fascism in post-war struggle between East and West: West Germany until the 1960s.

Questions for discussion:
- What was the initial allied policy on the occupation and denazification of Germany and how did friction between the Soviet Union and the West alter this policy?
- What factors supported the democratization of West German society?
- What role(s) did the legacy of Nazism play in the West German political system under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1949-1963)?
- Following the Second World War West German intellectuals seemed to follow one of two patterns. Either they engaged in a “politics of silence” or they tended to criticize the political system for its tendency towards restoration. Who fell into these positions and why?
- Why would left-liberal intellectuals see themselves as a “democratic fire brigade” or an “ideological waste disposal”?

Read:
Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, Chapters 6, 7.
Jan-Werner Müller, “Nation, State and Intellectuals in West Germany since 1945” in Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000), pp. 20-63. (QOL)

Recommended:
Mary Fulbrook, German National Identity after the Holocaust (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), Introduction and Chapters 1 and 3. (QOL)
Elizabeth Heinemann, “the Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity;” Robert Moeller, “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims;”
Sabine Behrenbeck, “Between Pain and Silence: Remembering the Victims of Violence in Germany after 1949,” in: Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s, Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), pp. 37-64 (especially conclusion). See also the other essays in this volume. (QOL)


Recommended Film: Die Mörder sind unter uns (1946).
March 25 Film showing.

Easter Break (March 27-April 19)

Week 9 (20 April): The GDR: The Antifascist German State?

Questions for discussion:
- What role did antifascism play in the self understanding of the East German regime and in its competition with Adenauer’s West Germany?
- How did Walter Ulbricht use the legacy of fascism to justify his antidemocratic actions, such as the forced merger of the Communist and Social Democratic parties in 1946?
- What is the relationship of antifascism to the creation of the East German socialist intelligentsia? Why did most intellectuals in East Germany not criticize the regime too harshly? What was the dilemma of the revolt of 17 June 1953? The East German state had a repeated pattern of allowing cultural freedom and criticism but then cracking down. Can you explain this?

Read:
Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, Chapters 8, 9, 10.
John Torpey, Intellectuals, Socialism and Dissent, Chapter 1. (QOL)

Sources:
Walter Ulbricht, “The National Mission of the German Democratic Republic and the Peace Forces of West Germany, 5 May 1965. (QOL)

Recommended:

Week 10 (27 April): Post-Fascism in West Germany: the 1960s

Questions for discussion:
- What events triggered a renewed interest in the Holocaust in the mid 1960s in West Germany?
- How was antifascism articulated within the conflict between the activists of the student movement of 1968 and their parents?
- How, according to Herzog, did the sexual revolution of the 1960s become imbricated with the memory of the Holocaust? When reading the introduction, try to get an idea of the phases of the relationship between sexuality and memory of fascism. What was the relationship under the Nazis, the 1950s and the 1960s? What was the operating theory of the 1960s that connected sexual repression and the right? What role did Holocaust memory play in this construction? Did 1960s radicals mistake the 1950s with the Third Reich (pp. 160 -162) and why did they do so? How does Herzog explain her contention that “the West German generation of 1968 [exhibited a] contradictory mixture of intense emotional identification with and supreme insensitivity to, the murdered Jews of Europe” (p. 162)? Do you buy the argument about the centrality of fascism to this construction?

Read:
Dagmar Herzog. Sex After Fascism; Introduction & Chapter 4. (QOL)
Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, Chapter 11, 12.

**Sources:**
Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967)  

**Recommended:**

**Recommended Film:** *Wings of Desire*, Dir. Wim Wenders 1987

**Week 11 (4 May): Post-Fascism in West Germany: The Historians’ Debate**

**Questions for discussion:**
- What were the key positions articulated in the so-called “historians’ debate” over the Holocaust in 1985-87 in West Germany?
- Saul Friedländer offers you a philosophical look at the difficulty he has, as a historian, of representing the Holocaust. Why, according to Friedländer, is this so? What was the nature of his dispute with the German historian Martin Broszat in 1985? How did this fit into the “historians’ debate”? What was at stake for the German national identity?

**Read:**
Saul Friedlander. *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*: Intro & Chapter 5. (QOL)

**Recommended:**
Essays by Dominick LaCapra, Dan Diner, Jörn Rüsen and Phillip Burrin in *Passing into History: Nazism and the Holocaust beyond Memory*, special issue of History and Memory, vol. 9, nos. 1 and 2 (Fall 1997). (QOL)  
Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historians' Debate* (Boston: Beacon, 1990) contains many of the major essays that formed the “historians’ debate” of 1986-87.)
Week 12 (May 11): Holocaust and memory in reunified Germany

Questions for discussion:
- Why did German reunification again raise the issue of war guilt?
- Why was Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s 1993 redesign of the war memorial in the Berlin New Guard House (Neue Wache) so controversial?
- Why, according to Huyssten and Young is the Holocaust so difficult to memorialize? What are the implication of Jürgen Habermas’s statement made in 1987 that “Auschwitz has changed the basis for the continuity of the conditions of life within history”? (p. 16)
- According to Young, how have memorials to the victims of fascism varied according to country and changed over time?
- Read the Lepenies chapter carefully as a source: How does he use the memory of fascism to criticize East German intellectuals?
- Are fascism and the Holocaust now a closed chapter in German history or does their memory continue to play an active role in domestic and international politics?

Read:
Fulbrook, The Divided Nation, Chapter 12, 13,14.
Jane Kramer. The Politics of Memory (QOL).
Huyssten, Andreas. “Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age.” (QOL)
Young, James. “The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History.” (QOL)
James Young. At Memory’s Edge: Chapters 6 & 7 (QOL)

Recommended:
(QOL)
German Unification and its Discontents: Documents from a Peaceful Revolution:
Document 17 – speeches in Alexanderplatz (QOL).

Recommended Film: 2 or 3 Things I Know about Him, Dir. Malte Ludin, 2005.