

Political Science 514

The Ideology of the Holocaust

Professor Information:

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Office Hours: 8:00-9:00 Monday-Thursday
And by appointment

Course Description: This is a seminar about the spiritual and intellectual crises of modernity as illustrated by the horrific events that are known collectively as “The Holocaust.” The Shoah (to give it its proper designation) was both unique and typical at the same time. The unleashing of the destructive forces inherent in human nature was made possible by the peculiar combination of technological advancement and spiritual emptiness that seems to be characteristic of the modern (and now “post-modern” age). Our concern in this class is the dearth of the soul that must be filled and the role of ideology in providing meaning to human existence with disastrous consequences for human existence.

This seminar will examine the history of the ideological predilection that both created and sustained the Shoah. It is organized in reverse chronological order because the nihilism that found its expression in the Shoah remains with us to the present and it predates the events that constitute the destruction of humanity.

Course Objectives: Students in this course will--

1. Have a more complete and nuanced understanding of the modern expression of ideological thinking.
2. Recognize the elements of ideological thinking as opposed to noetic and philosophical reasoning.
3. Analytically examine and discuss key primary and secondary source material to develop their perspective.
4. Communicate their ideas verbally and in writing in a clear, concise, and logical way using appropriate grammar, syntax, and structure appropriate to a scholar.
5. Critically approach and examine scholarly work.

Required Reading: The following texts are required for this seminar. A list of recommended readings will also be provided at a later date. Students will also be required to be familiar with materials on reserve in the library and provided by the instructor as assigned.

Arendt, Hannah. 1973, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. ISBN: 978-0156701532

Bergen, Doris L. 2009. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition. Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN: 978-0742557154

Camus, Albert. 1992. *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0679733843

- Cohn, Norman. 1970. *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, revised and expanded edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0195004564
- Hitler, Adolf . 1998. *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim. Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 978-0395925034
- Lipstadt, Deborah. 1994. *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. Plume. ISBN: 978-0452272743.
- Moore, R.I. 2007. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 2nd edition. Wiley Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1405129640
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1989. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. Vintage. ISBN: 978-069724650
- _____. 1977. *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kauffmann. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0140150629
- Shermer, Michael, et.al. 2009. *Denying History*, 2nd revised edition. University of California Press. ISBN: 978-0520260986
- Voegelin, Eric. 2003. *Hitler and the Germans*. University of Missouri Press. ISBN: 978-0826214669
- _____. 1999. *Modernity Without Restraint*. University of Missouri Press. ISBN: 978-0826212450

Attendance Policy: This is a graduate seminar. As with most graduate seminars the primary instructor and student is you. Your attendance is therefore required. Seminar courses require the active engagement and participation of seminar members. If you are not here you are not engaged and you are not participating. Not only does this have a negative effect on your performance but results in negative consequences for the other students in the seminar. Unlike an undergraduate survey course the class is not organized around a lecture, but rather class discussion and analysis of the texts assigned and the scholarly output that is created by students as a condition of the course. This cannot occur if you are not here.

Course Requirements and Grading: This course is organized as a series of mini conferences with presenters and discussants. Each week you will be responsible for either a brief critical précis of the reading assigned to be presented to the class or you will act as a discussant for the presentation. In other words we are creating a situation in which you will gain experience as a scholar through original work or through the process of peer review. In addition, each student is responsible for developing a final presentation to be delivered to the class at one of our last two meetings at which time every student not presenting will act as a discussant for the presenters. Details of the final class presentation will be distributed separately as it is a more formal paper and presentation than the weekly assignment.

The critical précis is a brief paper (4-8 pages) that examines some aspect of the reading assigned in a given week. The précis is not merely a synopsis, but rather builds on the text to make a comprehensive

argument based on the text. It is an exercise in critical and creative thinking. The précis will be due on Friday by 6:00 p.m. prior to the class meeting at which it will be presented. In other words, if you are assigned a précis for September 2, your paper must be email to the participants in the class by 6:00 p.m. on August 30. This will allow time for the class to read, think, read again, think again and develop a series of talking points, questions, and conclusions based on the précis and the assigned text.

Discussants will be specifically assigned to each précis assignment. The role of the discussant is to act as a peer reviewer for the presenter. Discussants are expected to come to class prepared to challenge the presenter's arguments and conclusions respectfully, thoughtfully, and offer alternative explanations for assertions made in the précis argument. The point is to generate thoughtful and meaningful discussion of the topics and arguments at hand.

Formatting and style for all written work should follow APSA style (available here: <http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>) and use conventional structure, syntax and grammar. You should use one inch margins and either Calibri (no larger than 11 pt.) or Times New Roman (no larger than 12 pt.) font with pages numbered. Be sure that you include a title and your name on the first page of all written work and that multiple pages are stapled together (no paper clips, binder clips, glue, etc.).

You will receive a grade both as a presenter and as a discussant in addition to an overall participation grade. In other words, even though you may not be formally designated as a discussant for a given précis you are expected to participate in the general discussion.

The grade distribution for the this course is as follows:

Critical précis assignments:	20%
Discussant scores:	15%
Final paper:	30%
Final presentation:	15%
Participation:	20%

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

93-100%	A
82-92%	B
71-81%	C
61-70%	D
0-60%	F

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library, Room 132; Phone (903) 886-5150

Student Conduct: Texas A&M University – Commerce policy dictates that all syllabi include the following excerpt from the student handbook: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.”

In seminar classes (especially at the graduate level), you are expected to challenge and push one another forward. For some people this is awkward and discomfiting. You are expected to be respectful to one another, this class, and the institution. After all, a university education is a privilege, not a right—and a public institution such as ours it is a privilege given to you by the citizens of Texas that ought not be abused. Your professor reserves the right to drop any student from the course whom he deems to be incapable of following “the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.”

Course Calendar

(Readings and dates are, of course, subject to revision given exigencies of the course and there will be other assignments related to various sections of the course given at the appropriate time.)

August 26: Introduction to the Course

September 2: Labor Day

September 9: Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, and *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism in Modernity Without Restraint* and Camus, *The Rebel*

September 16: Camus, *The Rebel*

September 16: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

September 23: Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*

September 30: Shermer, et. al., *Denying History*

October 7: Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*

October 14: Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

October 21: Bergen, *War and Genocide*

October 28: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

November 4: Nietzsche, selections from *The Portable Nietzsche* (to be announced)

November 11: Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*

November 18: Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*

November 25: Final Presentations

December 4: Final Presentations