

Villanova University
HIS 3233-001: Hitler and Nazi Germany
Fall 2013, MWF 9:30 - 10:20 am, Bartley Hall, Room 024

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Office hours: W: 2-3; F: 1-2
and by appointment

Course Objectives:

The devastation wrought by Nazi Germany in the middle part of the 20th century remains one of the most brutal results of an incredibly violent century. At times, historians and the broader public have explained Hitler and the Nazis as something so alien and altogether evil that they bear little relationship to our contemporary world. But that perspective is untenable.

This course will explore the multi-causal sources of Nazi rule, its violence, and its genocidal politics. In particular, we will explore the ways in which individuals played a role in sustaining or resisting the Nazi regime. Sometimes people did both.

As students cultivate their ability to critically examine scholarly writing on history (historiography) and primary sources (emerging directly out of the times and places under study), we will work to understand the complex motivations that drove people's actions during the Nazi era. While we must not hesitate to hold individuals accountable for their actions—for good or ill—we must also acknowledge our common humanity, which demands that as we explore people's culpability for their past, we do not hesitate to turn a critical eye to our own place in history.

Note: This course does not fulfill the CLAS requirement for a Core History course.

Teaching philosophy:

Accuracy—Rigor—Humanity: My college coach preached a philosophy of “honest soccer,” by which he meant that he wanted his players to know the difference between a good play and a bad play and to develop their game accordingly. I strive to achieve a similar outcome in my teaching: to set high standards for factual accuracy, to push students to achieve a high level of effort *and* performance, but, at the same time, to emphasize that “honesty” must also recognize the challenges, constraints, and real-life complications that impact those pursuits.

Required Materials:

[Epstein, Catherine. *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.](#)

Haffner, Sebastian. *Defying Hitler*. Trans. Oliver Pretzel. New York: Picador, 2003.

Johnson, Eric A. and Karl-Heinz Reuband. *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany: An Oral History*. Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2006.

Kluger, Ruth. *Still Alive: A Holocaust girlhood remembered*. New York: The Feminist Press, 2003.

All books are available for purchase in the Villanova University Shop. The Epstein book is available as an e-book via Falvey Library. The remaining titles have been placed on 2-hour course reserve and can be obtained at the library circulation desk.

**Course
Organization:**

The course will utilize a combination of lecture and discussion. Some of the discussion will be quite structured, and students will be assigned particular tasks within their discussion groups. These tasks may include being asked to report back and/or evaluate the substance and operation of those discussions. Even during lectures, I encourage students to pose questions, request clarifications, and challenge my assertions. I hope that this course can facilitate a joint exploration of historical arguments and the evidence that supports them, but that aspiration depends on students' intellectual investment in the daily coursework and their willingness to wrestle with challenging subject matter.

One logistical note: During the course, I will at times distribute critical information via e-mail using your official Villanova e-mail address. You are responsible for checking that account regularly. If you use an outside e-mail address, be sure to set the preferences on your Villanova account to automatically forward messages to your preferred address. Check the online syllabus regularly for any updates.

Content Note:

At times this semester we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

Technology Policy:

Cell phones should be turned OFF when you enter the classroom. Not only does this action reflect common courtesy, it will help you avoid succumbing to the [myth of multitasking](#). Laptop computers/tablets may be used to access Electronic Reserve readings and/or to take notes during class unless this use disturbs anyone else.

Please note: Even for those students who never succumb to the allure of covert web surfing, [recent research](#) suggests that taking notes on a laptop is less effective than taking notes with pen and paper, but I encourage you to make use of whatever strategy works best for you.

Recording of classes: All forms of audio and visual recording, including photography, are forbidden in the classroom. I am happy to accommodate students who have a documented disability and need to record parts of class meetings, but I ask that you speak to me first to arrange such accommodation.

Assignments and Grading:

Midterm exam (20% of total grade): In class, **Friday, October 4**. You will be asked to write answers of varying lengths to a set of questions. You may NOT use your books/notes during the exam. I will discuss the exam with you in greater depth a few weeks into the course.

Final Exam (25% of total grade): The exam will be cumulative. Students will be asked to write essays that analyze and integrate material from multiple sources and address a range of subjects. In contrast to the midterm, the final exam will be *open book/open note* (provided those notes are not accessed electronically)
Tuesday, December 17, 2:30-5.

Johnson/Reuband Assignment (2X10% of total grade): In preparation for our in-class discussions of retrospective accounts of the Nazi period, each student will be assigned two (2) interview subjects, one from the collection of “Jewish survivors’ testimonies” and one from the collection of “Ordinary Germans’ testimonies.” On the basis of a close reading of each testimony, students will prepare a short blog post analyzing the key insights they derived from the assigned testimonies. (blogposts will be due on **Sunday, November 25** and **Thursday, December 5**).

NYT Assignment (25% of total grade): What did Americans know about Nazi Germany in the years before World War II? As a class, we will collaboratively explore *New York Times* reporting on Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany from the Nazi seizure of power (January 1933) until the German declaration of war on the United States (December 1941). Students will be responsible for a portion of that nine-year period and prepare blogposts to summarize their findings for the class in preparation of our discussion on **October 11**.

I will provide additional guidelines for these assignments during the first week of the course.

Attendance and Participation (10% of total grade): First, it is worth emphasizing that attending class and completing assigned readings are quite simply the best ways to succeed in this class, regardless of whether you measure “success” in terms of your final grade or in the acquisition of an expanding understanding of the subject matter. However, in assessing “participation,” I recognize that there are a range of ways that students can/will take part in the intellectual work of this course. To that end, I will use a number of different elements to calculate your attendance grade. These include:

- Daily class sign-in sheets
- My daily notes about your class engagement
*In assessing your participation, I am less concerned with the **quantity** of your participation than its **quality**. I do not expect you always to have the answer. In many ways, asking good questions that reflect on assigned readings and/or previous classes most effectively demonstrates your ongoing engagement with the course. Questions posed during office hours/meetings with the professor count too.*
- Student self-assessments of your participation (submitted on two dates during the semester)

Note on attending “history” events outside of class: Another option for participating in the intellectual work of this course is engaging in the broader

disciplinary conversation about history/historical subjects that take place on campus. I have included a number of those events on the syllabus. In only one instance am I *requiring* that you attend (the **September 23** conversation on antisemitism). For all other events, I believe that your attendance will help you to get more out of this course. In each case, you will have the opportunity to indicate your attendance by signing in at the event.

Late work/missed exams: I know that life is complicated and occasionally impacts your ability to manage your coursework. Although I am happy to work with you to address any situations that arise, that can only happen if you reach out to me in a timely fashion. Should you require an extension on any assignment, please contact me **before** the scheduled due date to make the necessary arrangements. *One final note:* Students will not be excused from the scheduled final exam to accommodate travel plans.

Academic Integrity and Grading :

Academic integrity rests at the foundation of intellectual life in a university. Plagiarism or cheating on **any** coursework will not be tolerated. All students are expected to uphold [Villanova's Academic Integrity Policy and Code](#). Any incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for disciplinary action. If you have any questions about documenting sources or what constitutes academic fraud, please speak to me or consult the [academic integrity portal](#). We will discuss these issues as they relate to specific assignments at varying points throughout the course.

Grades will adhere to the criteria stated in the undergraduate catalog. As a reminder, an "A" is defined as:

“the highest academic grade possible; an honor grade which is not automatically given to a student who ranks highest in the course, but is reserved for accomplishment that is truly distinctive and demonstrably outstanding. It represents a superior mastery of course material and is a grade that demands a very high degree of understanding as well as originality or creativity as appropriate to the nature of the course. The grade indicates that the student works independently with unusual effectiveness and often takes the initiative in seeking new knowledge outside the formal confines of the course.”

Disabilities:

It is the policy of Villanova to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations are encouraged to discuss options with me after class or during my office hours during the first two weeks of class. More information about obtaining the required documentation or addressing learning disabilities is available from Nancy Mott, Director of the Office of Learning Services (tel. 610.519.5176 or e-mail nancy.mott@villanova.edu) or from that office's [web site](#).

For physical access or temporary disabling conditions, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 610.519.4095 or email Stephen.mcwilliams@villanova.edu.

Campus Services:

[Villanova Counseling Center](#) in Corr Hall: 610.519.4050

The Counseling Center can help you make an adjustment in your study habits, deal with a crisis, or address an ongoing personal matter.

Writing Center:

[Villanova Writing Center](#): Book an appointment [online](#), in person (210 Falvey Library), or by phone at 610.519.4604.

Class/Reading Schedule

Complete all readings **before** the class for which they are assigned. Items marked [ER] can be found in the Electronic Reserve folder on the course Blackboard page. Please bring the assigned readings to each class along with your reading notes and marginalia.

Please note: on occasion I may revise the reading/lecture schedule slightly. Any changes will be announced in class and noted in the online syllabus. While I realize that there is a fair amount of reading in this class, I have tried to keep each week's assignments within reasonable bounds. Longer reading assignments tend to be in more readable texts, which should make them a bit less daunting.

We'll discuss reading strategies, but you may want to [check out these suggestions](#) for wrestling with reading assignments in history courses.

M Aug 26 Introduction: thinking about an uncomfortable subject

W Aug 28 German historical background: A special path?
Reading: Epstein through p. 20

F Aug 30 World War I and Revolution
Reading: Haffner through p. 38

M Sep 2	NO CLASS—Labor Day Holiday
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W Sep 4 The Weimar "System"
Reading: [Constitution of the Weimar Republic](#) (Read Articles 1-19, 41-59, 109-65)
[Versailles Treaty](#): Please read Part II, Part V, Part VII

F Sep 6 Founded in Crisis? Weimar to 1923
Reading: Haffner, pp. 39-68
Optional: *Das Tagebuch*, Editorial on the Occupation of the Ruhr [ER]
Friedrich Kroner, Overwrought Nerves [ER]
The Dawes Committee Report [ER]
Thomas Wehring, "Berlin is becoming a Whore" [ER]

M Sep 9 Hitler: An Introduction
Reading: Epstein, chapter 2

W Sep 11 Roots of the National Socialist Movement
Reading: [The German Workers Party \(DAP\): The Twenty-five Points \(1920\)](#)
Excerpts from *Mein Kampf* [ER]

F Sep 13 Nov 9, 1923
Reading: Articles from the *New York Times*:
["Ebert Summons People" \(9 November 1923\), p. 1.](#)
["Coup starts in Beer Hall" \(9 November 1923\), p. 1.](#)
["Hitler invaded Kahr Meeting" \(9 November 1923\), p. 1.](#)
[\[no title\] \(9 November 1923\), p. 1.](#)
["Hitler's troops said to be marching on Berlin" \(9 November 1923\), p. 1.](#)
["Brief battle ends revolt" \(10 November 1923\), p. 1](#)

M Sep 16 The "Golden Twenties?"
Reading: Haffner, 67-93

- W Sep 18 Toward the Republic's Dark Resolution
Reading: E. M. Mungenast, "The murderer and the state" [ER]
 Siegfried Kracauer, "Murder trials and society" [ER]
 Heinrich Hauser, "The Unemployed" [ER]
- W Sep 18** Lepage Center Roundtable: "Revising Early America"
7pm Driscoll Hall, Room 132
 RSVP [here](#)
- F Sep 20 *Machtergreifung*: The Nazi Revolution
Reading: Haffner, pp. 94-157
- M Sep 23 *Gleichschaltung*: The Nazi State
Reading: Epstein, chapters 3-5
- M Sep 23** *The Rise of Antisemitism*
4pm Roundtable discussion with Professor Steege and [Professor Billie Murray](#)
(REQUIRED) Driscoll Hall, Room 132
- W Sep 25 National Socialism and the Churches
Reading: [Reich Concordat with the Catholic Church](#) (1933)
- Th Sep 26** **History Department Lore Kephart Lecture**, Connelly Center, Villanova Room
7pm Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America
(recommended) Professor [Nancy MacLean](#), Duke University
Register [here](#).
- F Sep 27 Social transformations under National Socialism
Reading: Kluger, pp. 13-60
- M Sep 30 The German War
Reading: Epstein, chapters 6, 8
- W Oct 2 Total war and the aesthetics of heroic death
Reading: [Joseph Goebbels, "Nation, Rise Up, and Let the Storm Break Loose"](#)
- F Oct 4 **Midterm Exam**
- M Oct 7 **No Class: Group meetings to work on NYT Assignment**
- T Oct 8** **Due** (via Blackboard): 1st Participation Self-Assessment
- W Oct 9 In-Class work Session: *NYT* Assignment
- Th Oct 10** **DUE:** *NYT* Blogpost Entry
 Time TBD
- F Oct 11 **Discussion:** Historical U.S. Perspectives on the Nazi Regime
- Oct 14-18 *No Class—Fall Break*

- M Oct 21 Origins of mass murder
Reading: Nuremberg Laws (1935):
[Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor](#)
[Reich Citizenship Law](#)
- W Oct 23 The Mechanics of Genocide
Reading: Epstein, chapter 7
- F Oct 25 Experiencing the Shoah
Reading: Kluger, Part II
- M Oct 28 Justifying mass murder
Reading: [Wannsee Protocol](#)
[Himmler Speech in Poznan, 1943](#)
[A German Field Marshall instructs his troops \(1941\)](#)
- W Oct 30 Resistance and Morality?
Reading: [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Who can resist temptation?" \(December 1942\)](#)
[The Fifth Broadsheet of the "White Rose" \(January 1943\)](#)
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| W Oct 30
7pm | Lepage Center Roundtable: "Revising the Civil War"
Driscoll Hall, Room 132
RSVP here |
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- F Nov 1 *Götterdämmerung*: the destruction of the Third Reich
Reading: Heinrich Böll, "Stranger Bear Word to the Spartans..." [ER]
- M Nov 4 Survivors in Germany
Reading: Kluger, pp. 133-170
- W Nov 6 Postwar Traumas, Postwar Trials
Reading: [Charter of the International Military Tribunal \(1945\)](#)
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| W Nov 6
7pm | Lepage Center Roundtable: "Revising the Cold War"
Driscoll Hall, Room 132
RSVP here |
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- F Nov 8 Legacies: Take 1
Reading: Epstein, Epilogue
- M Nov 11 Telling Holocaust Stories
Reading: Kluger, pp. 171-214
- W Nov 13 The "Quarrel of the Historians"
Reading: [Ernst Nolte](#) and [Jürgen Habermas](#) (1986)
- F Nov 15 Rethinking German debates about the Nazi Past
Reading: [Martin Walser on living with German guilt \(1998\)](#)
- M Nov 18 Reckoning with the past, Reckoning with History
Reading: Johnson/Reuband, through p. xxiii

- W Nov 20 Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders
Reading: *Get a start on Johnson/Reuband for the upcoming class sessions*
- F Nov 22 Jewish Survivors
Reading: Johnson/Reuband, Part 3
- Su Nov 24 DUE:** Blogpost on Jewish Survivors' Testimony
Time TBD
- M Nov 25 Jewish Survivors' Testimonies
Reading: *student blogposts as prep for discussion*
- Nov 27-29 *No Class—Thanksgiving Break*
- M Dec 2 Ordinary Men, Ordinary Germans, and the Terminology of Everyday Life
Reading: *Get a start on Johnson/Reuband for the upcoming class sessions*
- W Dec 4 "Ordinary Germans"
Reading: Johnson/Reuband, Part 4
- Th Dec 5 DUE:** Blogpost on Ordinary Germans' Testimony
Time TBD
- F Dec 6 "Ordinary Germans'" Testimonies
Reading: *student blogposts as prep for discussion*
- M Dec 9 Nazis, Neo-Nazis, and the Resonance of the Past
Reading: To be selected from the current press
- W Dec 11 Concluding Discussion
- Th Dec 12 Due** (via Blackboard): 2nd Participation Self-Assessment
- T Dec 17 Final Exam: 2:30-5pm**