

Germany and Totalitarianism

PHIL 215/PHIL 370/ENGL 304/ENG 392

Instructors

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Course Description

The overarching purpose of this course is to provide students with a better understanding of the origins and nature of totalitarianism, focusing particularly on 20th century Nazi and Soviet forms of totalitarianism. To this end, we will travel first to Nuremberg, Germany, where we will visit sites such as the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, and then on to Berlin with its abundance of museums, memorials, and cultural and historical sites of interest, where we will spend the majority of the time. Our journey will be informed by philosophical and literary analyses of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism, such as Hannah Arendt's, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, as well as texts by Christa Wolf and Paul Celan, among others. We will compare and contrast philosophical and literary approaches to the topic; ponder the limits of our ability to adequately understand and memorialize the terrors of totalitarian government; and discuss connections between 20th century totalitarianism and the anti-democratic, authoritarian tendencies of the current, global political landscape.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to explain the foundation of a Western idea, event, or artistic movement with reference to primary works (AIWT learning objective)
- Students will be able to discuss features that distinguish totalitarian government from other forms
- Students will be able to contrast ways in which different forms of art and literature have responded to totalitarian government, and discuss the prospects and limits of such responses
- Students will learn how German culture both shaped and was shaped by its totalitarian period, and in doing so develop a unique critical lens through which to think about American culture, past, present and future

Prerequisites

ENGL 223 with a C- or higher is a prerequisite for ENGL 304
Consent of instructor and ENGL 223 is a pre- or corequisite for ENGL 392

Physical Requirements

- Our trip plans include walking up to 3-4 miles on a given day. Participants must be able to carry/wheel their luggage from the airport to the metro and then approx. 10-15 minutes to the hotel.

Materials

- Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Hill and Wang, 2006), ISBN 10: 0374500010
- Other readings (see below) will be available as electronic documents on Google or Scholar
 - o Students should either print out these readings prior to departure and bring them, or download them to a device that they will bring with them.
- Laptop
- Composition book for keeping hand-written site notes.

Reading List

- Arendt, Hannah. *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Ch. 10, Sec. 1, "The Masses" (~15pp)
- Arendt, Hannah. *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Ch. 12, Sec. 2, "Secret Police" (~15pp)
- Arendt, Hannah. *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Ch. 12, Sec. 3, "Total Domination" (~22pp)
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Ch. 7, "The Wannsee Conference, or Pontius Pilate" (excerpt, 7pp)
- Bräunig, Werner. "On the Road" (7pp)
- Celan, Paul. *Todesfuge* (poem, 1pp)
- Funder, Anna. *Stasiland* (~30pp)
- Kästner, Erich. "Singing from the Far Right" (poem, 1pp)
- Shapiro, Gary. "Report from Richmond's Monument Wars: Public Art, National Trauma, Being with the Dead" (~3pp)
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Abuses of Memory* (~20pp)
- Wiesel, Elie. *Night* (~100pp)
- Wolf, Christa. *Kindheitsmuster (A Model Childhood)*, Ch. 6 (22pp)
- Wolf, Christa. "Change of Perspective" (excerpt, 3pp)

Assessments

Participation = 10%

Attendance = 10%

Pre-departure Reflections = 15%

Introductory Site Presentation = 15%

Trip Journal entries x 4 = 25%

Final Reflection Paper = 25%

Grading Scale

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D+ = 67-69

D = 63-66

D- = 60-62

F = below 60

Assignment Descriptions

Participation: We will have regular group discussions about course readings, cultural and historical sites on our itinerary, and our impressions and experiences of both. In addition to demonstrating active engagement with course readings and activities by answering and asking questions, students will be expected to participate actively in small-group activities and exercises.

Attendance at course meetings is *mandatory* at all scheduled activities and meetings unless otherwise noted. Here is how the attendance grade will be determined:

- Full attendance (no unexcused absences) = full 100% attendance grade
- One unexcused absence at a course meeting = 50% attendance grade
- Two unexcused absences at course meetings = 0% attendance grade
- More than two unexcused absences at course meetings = failure of the class

Pre-departure Reflections: Brief (1-2 pp.) written responses to prompts based on the material covered in the pre-departure meetings. (There will be one pre-departure reflection assigned after each pre-departure meeting.)

Introductory Site Presentation: Each student will be responsible for providing a basic, oral introduction to one of the cultural or historical sites on our itinerary for the rest of the group before we visit the site and for helping to lead discussion of the site after the visit. Depending on enrollment, students will do this assignment singly or in pairs.

Trip Journal: The trip journal should consist of **four** entries of about 300 words each. Each entry should discuss something we have seen on the trip (e.g. a museum, building, artwork, etc.) in light of one of the assigned readings, as well as the student's own thoughts. Students can choose to write about what strikes or interests them most, but the entries should relate to activities from four *different* days.

Final Reflection Paper: 1200-1500 words (~5 pages) culminating paper due two weeks after return date. Several paper prompts will be provided by the instructors for students to choose between. Engagement with some primary course texts and reference to some historical or cultural sites from our itinerary is required. Some additional research may be also required to complete the assignment.

Students taking the class as ENGL 304 (W) will have to submit the following augmented assignments: 1) Pre-departure final paper topic proposal (1 page); 2) Annotated Bibliography (1-2 pages; due one week after return date); 3) final paper rough draft (6-7 pages; due 10 days after return date); 4) final paper (8-10 pages long; due two weeks after return date). Alternatively, instead of an academic paper, students may choose to submit creative writing (personal essay, short story, novella, a collection of poems), 8-10 pages long. A proposal, an annotated bibliography (if appropriate), and a draft are still required.

Disabilities:

In order for a student to receive an accommodation for a disability, that disability must be on record in the Office of Student Affairs, 3rd Floor, David Student Union (DSU). If you believe that you have a disability, please contact Jacquelyn Barnes, Student Disability Support Specialist in Student Affairs (594-7160) to discuss your needs.

Students with documented disabilities are to notify the instructor at least seven days prior to the point at which they require an accommodation (the first day of class is recommended), in private, if accommodation is needed. The instructor will provide students with disabilities with all reasonable accommodations, but students are not exempted from fulfilling the normal requirements of the course. Work completed before the student notifies the instructor of his/her disability may be counted toward the final grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Success:

We want you to succeed in this course and at Christopher Newport. We encourage you to come see us during office hours or to schedule an appointment to discuss course content or to answer questions you have. If we become concerned about your course performance, attendance, engagement, or well-being, we will speak with you first. We also may submit a referral through our Captains Care Program. The referral will be received by the Center for Academic Success as well as other departments when appropriate (Counseling Services, Office of Student Engagement). If you are an athlete, the Athletic Academic Support Coordinator will be notified. Someone will contact you to help determine what will help you succeed. Please remember that this is a means for us to support you and help foster your success at Christopher Newport.

Academic Support:

The Center for Academic Success offers free tutoring assistance for Christopher Newport students in several academic areas. Staff in the center offer individual assistance and/or workshops on various study strategies to help you perform your best in your courses. The center also houses the Alice F. Randall Writing Center. Writing consultants can help you at any stage of the writing process, from invention, to development of ideas, to polishing a final draft. The Center is not a proofreading service, but consultants can help you to recognize and find grammar and punctuation errors in your work as well as provide assistance with global tasks. Go as early in the writing process as you can, and go often!

You may visit the Center for Academic Success to request a tutor, meet with a writing consultant, pick up a schedule of workshops, or make an appointment to talk one-on-one with a University Fellow for Student Success. The Center is located in Christopher Newport Hall, first floor, room 123.