

Spring 2021

HIST 390-002: Historical Problem Through Film

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Historical Problem Through Film – Everyday Fascism

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History 390
Mondays 2.30-5.20
Synchronous Online
Spring 2021

Course Description:

Twentieth century European history has been in many ways defined by the history of fascism and its post-WWII legacy. After the disastrous Second World War, fascism was no longer simply a counterpoint or "another option" to democracy and/or socialism, but a warning sign of how society could succumb to a certain variant of authoritarianism. In this course we will explore how the depiction of fascism has evolved throughout multiple decades of European history, from the often 'comical' depiction of the dangers of fascism from early in the Second World War, to the understanding of its lived reality later in the war. We will then jump forward to the late 1960s and early 1970s when numerous European nations started grappling with how living under 'everyday fascism' had affected an entire generation of people. Finally, we will explore how the late 1970s and early 1980s saw an 'acceptance' or at least an understanding that the general population was not a 'victim' of fascism, but something more complicated, both 'collaborators' and yet 'unenthusiastic beneficiaries' of the regime under which they lived.

Course Goals:

At the end of the semester, students should:

- Be able to identify and interpret both primary and secondary source material.
- Have experience expressing their thoughts clearly and concisely in class discussion and in writing.
- Be able to interpret a film in its historical context.
- Understand key events in pre- and postwar European history and how the memory of fascism took on different meanings depending on the country and time period.

Course texts:

All secondary source readings will be available via Canvas as pdf documents.

Grading:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Discussion participation | 15% |
| Post-Film Quiz Participation | 10% |
| Part I: Film Assignment | 20% |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Part II: Film Assignment | 20% |
| Part III: Film Assignment | 20% |
| Concluding Thoughts | 15% |

Grade scale is as follows:

A: 90 points and higher

B+: 85-89.99

B: 80-84.99

C+: 75-79.99

C: 70-74.99

D: 60-69.99

F: 59.99 and lower

Assignments:

Class participation:

Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our online classroom. It is important that you try to remain "visible" to some extent during our online sessions.

Participation is assessed not only on how much you participate in discussion, but also on the quality of the points you bring up. Demonstrating that you read the readings carefully and are willing to discuss them is crucial. Paying close attention during our film screenings and taking notes will only strengthen your ability to discuss details of the film, rather than just an overarching "feeling" of a film. After each film screening I will give you a multiple choice quiz. They are not graded exactly by how many points you get on each one, but they will give me a sense of how well you paid attention during the film which will be factored into the post-film participation grade.

Attendance:

As this is a synchronous online course, attendance is expected and I will make a note of who is in class each week. I fully understand of the current pandemic climate we live in, but I

want you to be honest with me of any hardship you might be facing so I can help you get through the semester and do well in this course. I don't want you to 'disappear' and simply try to do the class work/film viewing on your own. The discussion parts do have a point to them and that is why I grade you on being active in the class.

Film Assignments:

The class is divided into three sets of three films, each with a distinct time period and each with a distinct theme. After each set of three films I will give you a take-home essay assignment that will challenge you to discuss the three films together and how they represent a certain idea or approach to the history or legacy of fascism for European history.

Concluding Thoughts:

This assignment will be a bit shorter than the regular film assignments but it will replace a final exam for the course. In this assignment you are expected to look over the entire course, the three assignments you will already have done, and take a broader view of what we can learn about how the depiction of fascism has changed in films over the decades we cover.

Course Policies:

Office hours: I am always very happy to get a chance to get to know my students so don't be afraid to come talk to me in office hours. I have set periods of availability on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 11 and 12, and on Fridays between 3 and 4pm. Please use the link on the Canvas page to book an appointment. If none of those times work for you, email me and we will figure something out.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is passing off someone else's work as your own and will not be tolerated. Students are expected to write their own original work and to give credit in the form of footnotes (i.e. citations) for any material that is not their own. I only expect you to cite the films, the assigned readings, and our discussions. If you use any outside material you **MUST** cite it properly and include that in your Works Cited page. Plagiarized papers will be given an automatic "0" with no possibility of a rewrite. For larger assignments, this will most likely result in a failing grade for the entire course. Violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students and adjudicated in accordance with the NJIT Honor Code. You will be expected to submit all of your written work through Turnitin on Canvas.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Week 1

January 25th

Readings: Introduction

Week 2

February 1st: Wartime Fascism I

FILM VIEWING

The Great Dictator (1940)

Reading: Paxton: The Five Stages of Fascism
Kaplan: Between Dignity and Despair

Week 3

February 8th: Wartime Fascism II

FILM VIEWING

To Be or Not to Be (1942)

Reading: Kershaw: Invasion of Poland

Week 4

February 15th: Wartime Fascism III

FILM VIEWING

Rome, Open City (1945)

Reading: de Grazia: How Fascism Ruled Women

Week 5

February 22nd:

DISCUSSION

How was fascism depicted in films that were made during the war?

Week 6

March 1st: Everyday Fascism I

FILM VIEWING

Lacombe, Lucien (1973)

Reading: Paxton: Vichy and the Old Guard

Week 7

March 8th: Everyday Fascism II

FILM VIEWING

Love and Anarchy (1973)

Reading: TBD

Week 8

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

March 22nd: Everyday Fascism III

FILM VIEWING

Cria Cuervos (1976)

Reading: Spain under Franco

Week 10

March 29th:

DISCUSSION

How did the reckoning that France and Italy had with the legacy of collaboration and complicity in the late 1960s affect the depiction of everyday fascism in the 1970s?

Week 11

April 5th: Legacy of Fascism I

FILM VIEWING

The Tin Drum (1979)

Reading: TBD

Week 12

April 12th: Legacy of Fascism II

FILM VIEWING

The Last Metro (1980)

Reading: TBD

Week 13

April 19th: Legacy of Fascism III

FILM VIEWING

Mephisto (1981)

Reading: TBD

Week 14

April 26th:

DISCUSSION

The late 1970s saw a more “artistic” approach to the legacy of fascism, as filmmakers addressed further the ways that everyday individuals not only participated but also

inadvertently benefitted from their participation with fascism. We will continue our discussion of the legacy of fascism for Europe recently trying to come to terms with the past.

Week 15

May 3rd

FILM VIEWING

Transit (2018)

FINAL Exam: Exam date to be decided based on final exam schedule