

HIS 711-02/ EXPLAINING THE THIRD REICH

Required Core Readings:

Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship; Problems & Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th ed. (2000).

-----, *The "Hitler Myth"; Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (1987).

Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook; An Anthology of Texts* (2002)

Course Description:

Several years ago the American journalist Ron Roseman published a book entitled simply *Explaining Hitler*. It was an ambitious and mostly successful work, a best-seller in fact, in which Roseman provided a highly readable and useful survey of how historians have gone about "explaining Hitler." Such an explanation, he argued, needed to be the point of departure for anyone engaged in "the search for the origins of his [Hitler's] evil." In this course we are going to be more ambitious than Roseman. We seek to explain not only Hitler, but the entirety of the Third Reich.

We will begin the semester by having everyone focus on two core readings, namely Ian Kershaw's lengthy historiographical essay on *The Nazi Dictatorship* and his classic study of *The "Hitler Myth"*. These two of Kershaw's volumes, together with his recent and masterful two-volume biography of Hitler, place him at the forefront of interpreters of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism. His two core texts will provide the platform from which we will each be jumping off into different areas of historical literature on the Third Reich. This is essentially a readings course in which we explore what other historians have had to say on the subject of our interest. The one exception, the Stackelberg/Winkle *Sourcebook* of documents, should be useful in keeping us grounded in primary source material. Peruse it carefully; it will be useful for everyone. The range of documents this sourcebook contains will be useful in our evaluations of the secondary readings.

Use Kershaw's historical essay and the topics of his several chapters to identify aspects of the Third Reich you want to pursue as well as a guide to the relevant literature. Let me suggest a number of possible topics: 1.) the rise of Nazism in inter-war Germany, 2.) the Nazi "seizure of power," 3.) the social basis of Nazi support, 4.) the functioning of the Nazi system – totalitarian or polycratic?, 5.) Nazi foreign policy, 6.) Nazi rearmament policy, 7.) Women in the Third Reich, 8.) Nazi cultural policy (arts, theater, etc) 9.) science/technology in the Third Reich, 10.) Nazis and education, 11.) Nazi economic policy, 12.) Nazis and the business world, 13.) churches in the Third Reich

14.) Nazi social policy, 15.) Nazi racial policy, 16.) the anti-Nazi resistance. This list is by no means exhaustive. It could go on and you are invited to add to or amend it according to interests.

Although part of the exercise will be for you to identify relevant literature, I will be happy to make suggestions both as to topics and to call your attention to specific books. Clearly people will need to pursue different topics. Overlap is possible, but it needs to be kept at a minimum. While I won't push it, I do, if necessary, reserve the right to assign topics.

Course Procedures:

Each student will select one general area in which to become expert. That expertise will be shared in our three-hour, Monday-evening class sessions. The general expectation is that each student will be reading about a book per week and reporting on that reading in class. Students will be expected to lead the discussions in the areas of their growing expertise. Some basic guidelines for oral reports will be issued separately.

At the end of the semester, students will be responsible for submitting a 25-30 page historiographical essay on the readings in their area of expertise. The paper will be due at the last class meeting on December 5th.

Grading Policy:

There will be no mid-term or final exam. The final grade will depend upon the effectiveness of classroom discussion (50 %) and the quality of the final paper (50%).

General Information:

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By appointment