Nazism and Holocaust: New Directions
Prof. D. Herzog, Tuesdays 4:15-6:15, Fall 2019

The newest scholarship on the Third Reich and the Holocaust – as well as their prehistories and aftermaths – positions these highly fraught historical topics in a variety of conceptual frameworks, both old and newly refurbished, ranging from colonialism to fascism and from eugenics to genocide. Whether antisemitism is best understood as racism or religious prejudice or cynical excuse for cruelty; whether Nazism’s ideological formations were sincerely believed or opportunistically deployed for other purposes – and if so what those purposes were; how questions of gender and sexuality were centered in Nazi policies and shaped the experiences of perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and beneficiaries; what the connections might be between the mass murder of the disabled and the Holocaust of European Jewry; how best to understand the violence of colonial encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans as either literally preparatory for the Holocaust or, together with the history of racial repression in the United States, as both inspirational for Nazi policymakers and as a comparativist resource for deeper comprehension: all of these matters have been explored in the remarkable efflorescence of brilliant historiography of the last five to ten years. Additional new “turns” in the historiography of the Holocaust in particular include the “familial” turn (especially pertinent for understanding life in hiding and in the ghettos) and the “inebriation” turn (germane above all for grasping the atmosphere and practices in the killing fields and in death factories like Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka).

Learning Goals: Deepened understanding of the complex interpretive problems at stake in this scholarship; ability to explicate and analyze in discussion the substantive evidence and the methodological approaches used; and ability to formulate and present – both verbally and in writing – innovative research on a related topic.

Requirements: Careful reading and active and informed participation in class discussions are expected; two sessions will be set aside for collective engagement with texts chosen by the students and introduced by them; final projects consist of a conference-paper-style presentation on original additional research conducted by each student, utilizing also primary sources (e.g. from the USHMM’s extensive website, or from Anson Rabinbach and Sander Gilman’s The Third Reich Sourcebook (2013)), on a related topic of his or her own interest – to be handed in also in written form.

Aug. 27 Introduction to the class


Oct. 1 CUNY no classes. Rosh Hashanah.
Oct. 8 CUNY no classes. Yom Kippur.


Nov. 12  Discussion by all of student choice readings.

Nov. 19  Discussion by all of student choice readings; 2 student presentations.

Nov. 26  No class. Thanksgiving week.

Dec. 3  Student presentations, with powerpoint images, on their independent research projects.

Dec. 10 Final Papers due.