Neofascism: from the New Right to the Alt-Right

(Draft)

HIST 72800/P SC 71908/CL 80100
Fall 2020
Monday, 6:30-8:30

How did the far-right reestablish political legitimacy after its crushing defeat in 1945? How did it recertify the discredited ideas of race, hierarchy, anti-parliamentarism, autocracy, and patriarchy after seemingly hitting rock bottom? To what extent – and by what methods – have its efforts to counteract the intellectual hegemony of left-wing thought by popularizing a “Gramscism of the right” been successful? To what extent have New Right ideas influenced the political self-understanding of the leading authoritarian populist parties, whose proliferation has been one of the hallmarks of twenty-first century global politics? Finally, to what extent have the depredations of “neo-liberalism” prepared the terrain for the New Right’s success?

Here, it is important to note that the slogan, the “Great Replacement,” which was invoked by the mass murderers in Utoya, Norway, Christ Church, NZ, El Paso, and Pittsburgh, was originally a New Right slogan.

One explanation for the New Right’s success pertains to its successful rehabilitation of German conservative revolutionary thought from the 1920s: the political doctrines of Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, Oswald Spengler, etc., while cleansing their work of its ties to interwar fascism.

Finally, at what point in time did the New Right worldview cross the Atlantic to provide ideological support for the Alt-Right? In what ways do the New Right and the Alt-Right differ from the traditional right? Did the Alt-Right contribute to Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential election? Is the Alt-Right still a force in contemporary American politics, or was it merely a passing political fad?

Note on Virtual Teaching Platform:

As I am sure you know by now, in fall 2020 all Graduate Center classes will be taught online. Our course will combine synchronous and asynchronous pedagogical approaches. We will make use of two virtual teaching platforms: Blackboard and Zoom (NB: one need not have an individual Zoom account to participate in Zoom meetings). In advance of our virtual meeting on Monday evenings, I will post a link on Blackboard to a 30 – 40-minute Zoom lecture that is intended to acquaint you with the salient themes for the week’s readings and to provide direction and orientation for class discussion. (I can also pass along the link via email if necessary.) In order to facilitate further discussion, we will also rely on
Blackboard’s Discussion Board feature. Lastly, I am weighing the pros and cons of appointing a student “discussion interlocutor” for each class whose job it would be to raise critical interpretive questions and press for clarification of key themes.

**Texts:**

C. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*
A. de Benoist, *View from the Right*
A. Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*
T. Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*
Y. Camus and N. Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe*
Woods, *Germany’s New Right as Culture and as Politics*
Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*
K. Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement*
Sedgwick, ed. *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right*
Neiwert, *Alt-America: the Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*
T. Main, *The Rise of the Alt-Right*
Johnson, ed. *The Alternative Right*
Boggs, *Fascism: Old and New*
A. Mammone, *Neofascism in France and Italy*

**Works by your instructor that you might find useful:**

- *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton UP, 2018)
- “Words that Kill: The Ideology of the French National Front,” *The Nation*
- “Designer Fascism,” in *Fascism’s Return*, ed. R. Golsan

**Weekly Assignments:** (N.B.: Unless otherwise indicated, all texts are available in PDF or iBook format either on Blackboard or via Google Drive link)

**August 31:** Introduction

**Sept. 7:** Labor Day; class will not meet

**Sept. 14:** “The Great Replacement”: The Ideology Behind the Massacres at Christ Church, El Paso, Pittsburgh, Charlottesville, and Oslo (Breivik)
R. Camus, *The Great Replacement*, * Part I*
“The Great Replacement” * (Christ Church Mosque Murder Manifesto)*
James McCauley, “How Gay Icon Renaud Camus Became the Ideologue of White Supremacy,” *The Nation, July 2019*
CARR, Christchurch *
Borchgrevink, “The Book Launch,” A Norwegian Tragedy: Breivik and the Massacre
on Utoya, 297-333 *

Sept. 21: Fascism’s Return: The Origins of Neofascism in Postwar Europe
de Benoist, View from the Right (selections)
T. Bar-On, Where Have All the Fascists Gone? (selection)
Allen Douglas, « La Nouvelle Droite »
Recommended: Y. Camus and N. Lebourg, Far-Right Politics in Europe

Sept. 28: No classes scheduled

October 5: Alain de Benoist and The Birth of the New Right
De Benoist, Manifesto for a European Renaissance
Taguieff, “New Cultural Racism”
Griffin, « Nouvelle Droite and Metapolitics »
Wolin, “Designer Fascism”
2016

October 12: Columbus Day

October 14 (NB: class meets on Wed.): “Revolution from the Right”: The
“Conservative Revolution”
Spengler, Man and Technics *
Key Thinkers of the Radical Right, Introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3
Herf, Reactionary Modernism, * 18-129

October 19: Bannon’s Vatican Speech: What is “Traditionalism”?
J. Horowitz, “Bannon’s Vatican Speech” (2014) *
“Julius Evola and Tradition,” in Key Thinkers of the Radical Right
Evola, Revolt Against the Modern World (selection) *
Teitelbaum, The War for Eternity

October 26: White Nationalism 1.0
Swain, The New White Nationalism in America (selection)
Zeskind, Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the
Margins to the Mainstream *
Belew, Bring the War Home: White Power Movement and Contemporary America *

November 2: Neofascism American Style: Paleoconservativism vs. Neocons
Buchanan, The Death of the West (selection) *
Key Thinkers of the Radical Right, chapters 7, 8, 9, 13
Gottfried, “An Old Paleocon Sets the Record Straight,” * The American
Conservative (2018)
Matthews, “Paleoconservatism” *
Francis, “Paleoconservatism Explained” *

November 9: The Rise and Fall of the Alt-Right: from Bannon and Breitbart to Johnson, ed. The Alternative Right, 1-60, 133-147, 253-258, 277-287
T. Main, The Rise of the Alt-Right, chapters 3, 7, 9, 10
Neiwert, Alt-America: the Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump
“Richard Spencer and the Alt-Right,” in Key Thinkers of the Radical Right
“Kevin MacDonald,” in Key Thinkers of the Radical Right
Trump and Charlottesville

November 16: The New Right in Germany and Austria
Woods, Germany’s New Right as Culture and as Politics
Salzborn, “Renaissance of the New Right in Germany”
Krebs, Fighting for the Essence: Western Ethnocide or European Renaissance
T. G. Ash, “The Alternative for Germany”

November 23: The New Right in Russia: Alexander Dugin, or “Putin’s Brain”
A. Dugin, The Fourth Political Theory (selection)
Barbashin, “Putin’s Brain,” Foreign Affairs (2014)
Clover, Black Wind, White Snow, 175-248
Dugin on Trump: An Interview
Laruelle, “Alexander Dugin and Eurasianism,” in Key Thinkers of the Radical Right
Laruelle, “Dangerous Liaisons: Eurasianism, the European Far-Right and Putin’s Russia,” in Eurasianism and the European Far Right *

November 30: Heidegger and the New Right
The Heidegger Controversy (selections)
Wolin, “From Beyond the Grave: Heidegger and the New Right”

December 8: work on papers

December 15: Conclusion; papers due

Written Assignment: Final papers are due on December 15. You are to choose a syllabus-related topic (in consultation with yours truly) and write a 12-15 page essay. The assignment is meant to be an “interpretive essay” rather than a full-blown “research paper.” By the same token, the essay should demonstrate extensive familiarity with the relevant secondary literature with respect to your chosen topic as – this should be clear from the notes and bibliography – well as the relevant conflict of interpretations. What matters is your capacity to discern and reconstruct the major interpretive standpoints, to evaluate the stronger and weaker arguments and positions, and to arrive at fresh conclusions that, ideally, will advance our understanding of the material.
Incomplete policy: