Understanding the Radical Right

(Draft)

Prof. Richard Wolin
Fall 2022
History 72100/Pol Sci/Comp Lit 8500
Monday, 6:30-8:30 (Fully in-person)

Vladimir Putin in Russia, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Marine Le Pen in France, Matteo Salvini in Italy, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and so forth: the world is awash in authoritarian populism. In order to better understand the origins and efficacy of these “soft dictatorships” or “illiberal democracies” (Orbán), we will pursue a twofold approach. First, we will review the leading theories of dictatorship and the authoritarian state as outlined by luminaries such as Carl Schmitt (The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy; 1923), Horkheimer and Adorno (Dialectic of Enlightenment; 1947), and Hannah Arendt (The Origins of Totalitarianism; 1951). Second, we will investigate the leading ideologues of fascism and the “total state,” thinkers who have recently experienced an enthusiastic revival among conservatives and reactionaries worldwide: Oswald Spengler, Carl Schmitt (again), Julius Evola, and the American paleocon Samuel Francis (1947-2005). In conclusion, we will examine the origins of “population replacement” ideology (Renaud Camus, Generation Identity, the Alt-Right) among representatives of the European “New Right”: Alain de Benoist and disciples such as Vladimir Putin-advisor and Steve Bannon-intimate, Alexander Dugin.

(The course is intended for PhD students; master’s students must receive permission of the instructor)

Works by your instructor that you might find useful:

- Heidegger in Ruins: Between Philosophy and Ideology (Yale UP, 2022)
- 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

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 29: Introduction

Sept. 5: Labor Day; class will not meet

Sept. 12: Understanding Fascist Ideology
Payne, *Fascism: A History*, 3-79
Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*
Eco, “Ur-Fascism”
Gentile, “The Doctrine of Fascism”

**Sept. 19:** Carl Schmitt and the Critique of Political Liberalism
Schmitt, “The Counterrevolutionary Philosophy of the State,” *Political Theology* (1922), 53-66
Schmitt, “The Way to the Total State” (1931)
Spencer, “Dictatorships”

**Sept. 26:** No classes scheduled

**Oct. 3: Democratic Responses to Carl Schmitt**
Heller, “Rechtsstaat or Dictatorship” (1929)
Kirchheimer, “Remarks on Carl Schmitt’s *Legality and Legitimacy*” (1933)
Habermas, “Carl Schmitt: A Horror of Autonomy”
Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception*, 67-96
Wolin, “Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism, and the Total State”

**October 10:** Columbus Day; no classes scheduled

**October 17:** Debating “Totalitarianism”
Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, 1-50
Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*
Rabinbach, “Moments of Totalitarianism”

**October 24:** “Revolution from the Right”: Debating the Conservative Revolution
Spengler, *Man and Technics* (1931)
Jünger, “Total Mobilization,” in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*
Schmitt, “The Führer Protects the Law”
Benjamin, “Theoretical Vision of German Fascism”
Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 18-129

**October 31 (Happy Halloween!):** The Frankfurt School Critique of the Authoritarian State
Fromm, “The Method and Function of Analytic Social Psychology”
Adorno, “The Psychological Pattern of Fascist Propaganda”
Adorno, “The Authoritarian Personality”
Adorno, “Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism”
Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”
Wolin, “Trump: Prophet of Deceit”
November 7: We Need to Talk about Populism!
Urbinati, *Me the People*
Muller, *What is Populism?*
Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History; “Populism in History”*

November 14: Fascism’s Return I: Alain Benoist and the Nouvelle Droite
Barnes, “Pedigree of GRECE” (I & II)
Allen Douglas, « La Nouvelle Droite »
Griffin, « Nouvelle Droite and Metapolitics »
T. Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone? 21-44, 79-83*
Taguieff, “The New Cultural Racism”
Wolin, “Designer Fascism,” in *Fascism’s Return*

November 21: Fascism’s Return II: Julius Evola and the « Strategy of Tension »
Evola, Preface to “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”
Evola, *Ride the Tiger*
Gillette, *Racist Theories in Fascist Italy*, 154-175
Ferraresi, “Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right”
Drake, “Julius Evola and the Origins of Fascist Ideology in Postwar Italy”
Wolff, “Evola’s Interpretation of Fascism and Moral Responsibility”

November 28: Paleoconservativism, or Neofascism American Style
Francis, *Beautiful Losers*
Francis, “Paleoconservatism Explained”
Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (selection)
Matthews, “Paleoconservatism”

December 5: The Road to January 6
Bennett, *The Party of Fear*, 409-475
Zeskind, *Blood and Politics*: chapters 28, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 44, 45
Swain, *The New White Nationalism in America*, 1-90
Belew, “Mainstreaming White Power”

December 12: Heidegger and the New Right
*The Heidegger Controversy* (selections)
Wolin, “From Beyond the Grave: Heidegger and the New Right”
work on papers
“The Great Replacement”
R. Camus, *The Great Replacement*, Part I
Jackson “License to Hate: Fascist Rhetoric in Anders Breivik's Manifesto”
CARR, “Decoding the Christchurch Terrorist Manifesto”
Bhatt, “White Extinction”

White Nationalism 1.0

Bannon’s Vatican Speech: What is “Traditionalism”?
“Julius Evola and Tradition,” in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right*
Wolff, “Evola’s Interpretation of Fascism”

The Rise and Fall of the Alt-Right: from Bannon and Breitbart
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” and “Kevin MacDonald,” in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right*
Trump and Charlottesville

The New Right in Germany and Austria
Wood, *Germany’s New Right as Culture and as Politics*, 1-92
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”

The New Right in Russia: Alexander Dugin, or “Putin’s Brain”
A. Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (selection)
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*