

Surviving Totalitarianism

Patterns of Individual and Collective Behaviour in Hitler's and Stalin's Europe

SCH HIS2265

W, Th 8.30-10.00, Room 220

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Recent mainstream tendencies in historical scholarship are moving into two seemingly opposite directions. On the one hand they focus on global issues, global interactions, research into topics that show how interdependent various parts of the world and various fields of human and non-human life are. 'Big History' (for example works by David Christian) traces the origins of history back to billions of years ago exploiting the results of numerous other disciplines including natural sciences. Borders between humanities and natural sciences are frequently blurred in this approach. The major motivation for this tendency is clearly to find the deepest lying origins of present day environmental challenges and to put the history of mankind into the context of the universe.

Another main tendency is tracing microhistorical developments (e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, Natalie Zemon Davies), using sources relating to individual fates, the dynamics of families or other small social groups. Psychohistory (e.g. Lloyd Demause) and more recently the history of emotions (e.g. Peter Gay, Ute Frevert) have also produced path breaking works. Further on lots of today's historians are preoccupied with problems of collective memory and politics of memory (e.g. Jeffrey Olick, Stefan Troebst).

This course is trying to exploit theoretical and methodological incentives from all these directions. It examines major patterns of individual and collective behaviour during the most tragic period of the twentieth century, the years of World War Two. It presents complex situations in the societies of totalitarian political systems when all possible options of action seem to include huge risks both for the individual and for his/her in-group. The course deals with theoretical aspects and case studies of this problem focusing on the Second World War and its immediate aftermath in the countries under shorter or longer control of Hitler's and Stalin's regimes. It analyses various forms of collaboration, resistance and retribution. In addition to scholarly literature the course also uses fiction and films as sources.

The course invites the students to consider and compare legal, moral and political aspects of small scale and large scale decision making processes. Students are requested to bring their more or less comparable personal experiences into class discussions.

The readings of the course deal with numerous patterns of collective and individual behaviour, such as cooperation, collaboration, resistance, revenge, retribution, apology, regret, guilt assignment and praise assignment. Students will be given sources on case studies, they get guidance to the respective theoretical and methodological literature with special emphasis on the uses and abuses of certain concepts in the course of their attempts at the analysis of their case studies. Students will also be asked to review and comment each other's short papers in class in a structured way.

The course puts great emphasis on the possible lessons to be drawn from the study of patterns of collective and individual behaviour in Hitler's and Stalin's Europe for the personal and professional lives of the students. It encourages class discussion on how political, religious, moral framework conditions determine limits and possibilities of responsible decision making.

The course intends to familiarize students with key events of European history in a global context from the early 1930s to the early 1950s, tracing the framework conditions that made the emergence of fascist, national socialist and communist systems possible. It wants to develop the analytical skills of students by discussing major decision making processes in some most critical situations in the Europe dominated by the authoritarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin. These situations include both top level political discussions and microhistorical events in smaller communities.

Learning Objectives:

---Clarification of basic concepts: victim, perpetrator, onlooker, resistance, collaboration, reprisal, retribution.

--- Encouraging students to compare legal, political and moral aspects of various possible options considered when choices are made.

--- Inspiring students to develop both empathy and a critical approach towards the agents of history.

---Making the students find out about transparent and less transparent forms of prejudices that guide individual and collective decisions in more and less complex situations.

---Students will be asked to develop intellectual bridges between the past events and situations to be discussed and their personal experiences connected to their respective national, social, cultural identities.

Weekly Schedule

Week One:

Introductions. Possible approaches to the past. Disciplines and interdisciplinarity. Clarifying concepts: intellectuals, perpetrators, victims, onlookers, mass, crowd, mob, crime, sin, retribution.. Key issues of European history under Hitler and Stalin, Bruegel's message. (T. Snyder: Introduction)

Week Two

Foreign occupations in European history. The first German conquests: same invaders, three models: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland. (Deák: Chapter Two)

Week Three

A new Europe in the making: Europe's options between September 1, 1939 and June 22, 1941. (Deák: Chapter Three)

Week Four

Options for nations and countries between two imperial powers, from the summer of 1941 to the winter of 1942 (Deák: Chapter Four)

Week Five

Ways and means of collaboration with Hitler's Germany (Deák: Chapter Five)

Week Six

Stalin's policy of creating and fighting external and internal enemies (Snyder: Chapter Four)

Week Seven

Review and midterm

Weeks Eight and Nine

Ways and means of resistance against Hitler: my freedom fighter as your terrorist (Deák: Chapters Six to Eight)

Weeks Ten and Eleven

How to deal with the defeated? Revenge, reprisal, retribution: legal, moral, political approaches. (Deák: Chapters 8-9)

Week Twelve

The Dilemma of the 'Deputy'. Hitler, Stalin and The Catholic Church (Hochuth: The Deputy)

Week Thirteen

Clashing interpretations: Richard J. Evans versus Timothy Snyder (London Review of Books, vol.32, number 21.)

Week Fourteen

Review

Week Fifteen

Review and final

Assessment

Grading system: 100 points total

---participation in class discussions 15 points

---mid-term exam 25 points

---final exam 30 points

---term paper (about 2000-2500 words) 30 points

95-100 A+ , 90-95 A, 85-90 A-, 80-85 B+, 75-80 B, 70-75 B-, 65-70 C+

60-65 C, 55-60 C-, 50-55 D, < 50 F

Basic Readings

István Deák: Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015. Pp. xxiii + 257. ISBN 978-0813347899.

Timothy Snyder: Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin. Basic Books, New York, 2010. Pp. vii+ 524. ISBN 978-0465002399. Introduction.

