
PSCI 254

Spring 2026
12:30-13:45 TR
Gavett 310

Fascism

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Harkness 317

Office Hours: Wed. 13:30-14:30

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PURPOSE

Fascism is a common term of political opprobrium, but few know what it actually means. This course examines the ideologies and practices of fascist movements to understand both the past and the present. Students learn about the economic, political, and cultural circumstances from which fascism emerged, and we consider the fascist obsession with national, sexual, and racial identity. Class time is divided between lecture and discussion; students are encouraged to participate.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation is based on three exams (25% each), and a 3000-word paper (25%). The exams are given as scheduled and are not given early—please make any travel plans accordingly. You must take all three exams to pass the course. The paper is due during the course’s university-scheduled final period. This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 3 hours per week. The course also includes challenging independent reading for 1 hour per week.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Be familiar with the University’s [policies](#) on academic integrity and disciplinary action. Violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty.

Remember that the same technology that has made plagiarism easier to accomplish has also made it easier to detect. If you do not cite a source, it is plagiarism. If you do cite it, it is scholarship.

Use of any form of AI will result in a grade of zero for the paper.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Find the readings online by clicking on the blue links.

1. Introduction

January 20: Welcome

- None (first day of class).

January 22-January 27: Introduction and Questions

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 1-2.
- Glasius, “What Authoritarianism Is . . . and Is Not.”
- Orwell, “What is Fascism?”
- Palous, “Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism.”
- Schmitter and Karl, “What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not.”

2. History

January 28: Italy 1

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 3-4.
- Acemoglu, De Feo, De Luca, Russo, “Revisiting the rise of Italian fascism.”
- Brustein, “The ‘Red Menace’ and the Rise of Italian Fascism.”

February 3: No class

- None.

February 5: Italy 2

- Elazar, “Electoral democracy, revolutionary politics and political violence: the emergence of Fascism in Italy, 1920–21.”
- Elazar, “Class, State, and Counter-Revolution: The Fascist Seizure of Power in Italy, 1919-1922.”
- Russo, “World War I and the Rise of Fascism in Italy.”

February 10 - February 12: Germany 1 and 2

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 5-6.
- King, Rosen, Tanner, Wagner, “Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler.”
- Koenig, “Loose Cannons – War Veterans and the Erosion of Democracy in Weimar Germany.”
- Koshar - “From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany.”
- Satyanath, Voigtlaender, Voth, “Bowling for Fascism: Social Capital and the Rise of the Nazi Party.”
- Spenkuch, Tillmann, “Elite Influence? Religion and the Electoral Success of the Nazis.”
- Voigtländer and Voth, “Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany.”

February 17-February 19: United States

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 7-8.
- Amann, “A ‘Dog in the Nighttime’ Problem: American Fascism in the 1930s.”
- Burtin, “Fascism Has an American History, Too.”
- SPLC, “Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence.”
- Steigmann-Gall, “Star-spangled fascism: American interwar political extremism in comparative perspective.”

February 24-February 26: Elsewhere

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 9-10.
- Bromhead, Eichengreen, O’Rourke, “Political Extremism in the 1920s and 1930s: Do German Lessons Generalize?”
- Love, “What’s the Big Idea?’: Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism.”
- Payne, “Spanish Fascism.”
- Soucy, “French Fascism and the Croix de Feu: A Dissenting Interpretation.”

March 3: Catch-up and review

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 11-12.

March 5: Exam 1

- None.

March 10-March 12: Spring break

- None.

3. Politics

March 17-March 19: Theoretical approaches

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 13-14.
- Eley, “What is Fascism and Where does it Come From?”
- Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism.”
- Vivarelli, “Interpretations of the Origins of Fascism.”
- Wellhofer, “Democracy and Fascism: Class, Civil Society, and Rational Choice in Italy.”

March 24-March 26: Generic fascism

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 15-16.
- Eco, “Ur-Fascism.”
- Eatwell, “Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism.”
- Griffin, “Uniqueness and Family Resemblances in Generic Fascism”
- Levy, “Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives in Europe, 1914-1945: Issues for Comparativists.”
- Kallis, “The ‘Regime-Model’ of Fascism: A Typology.”

March 31-April 2: Boundaries

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 17-18.
- Allardyce, “What Fascism Is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept.”
- Berezin, “Fascism and Populism: Are They Useful Categories for Comparative Sociological Analysis?”
- Prowe, “‘Classic’ Fascism and the New Radical Right in Western Europe: Comparisons and Contrasts.”
- Roberts, “How Not to Think about Fascism and Ideology, Intellectual Antecedents and Historical Meaning.”

April 7: Future

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 19-20.
- Berman, “Populism Is Not Fascism: But It Could Be a Harbinger.”
- Copsy, “Fascism... but with an open mind.’ Reflections on the Contemporary Far Right in (Western) Europe.”
- Johnson, “Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism.”
- Rosenberg, “Democracy’s Final Act?”

April 9: Exam

- None.

4. **Culture**

April 14-April 16: The Work of Art; propaganda

- Benjamin, “The Work of Art.”
- Stanley, “How Propaganda Works.”
- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 21-22.

April 21-April 23: Sontag and Aesthetics

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” chapters 22-23.
- Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism.”
- Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity.”
- Braun, “Expressionism as Fascist Aesthetic.”
- Mosse, “Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some Considerations.”

April 28: Culture and kitsch

- Lewis, “It Can’t Happen Here,” finish book.

April 30: Exam 3

- None.