

The Human Condition and the Totalitarian Experience

Dr. Thomas Werneke

Email Address:	fubest@fu-berlin.de
FU-BEST Course Number:	FU-BEST Online 3
Live Sessions:	Thursday, 8 – 9:30 p.m. CET (Berlin time)
Duration:	Feb. 11 – May 13, 2021
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	30
ECTS Credits:	4

Course Description

The course focuses on the classical concept of the totalitarian state developed by Hannah Arendt and others, which takes Hitler and Stalin as the primary models for this uniquely 20th century political system. We will be covering some of the subsequent modifications in the theory of totalitarianism, insights gained from the close examination of historical changes and developments, especially in the former Soviet Empire. Here are some of the questions we will be dealing with: what are the key elements of totalitarianism? What are the fundamental elements of totalitarian rule? What were the official positions and the popular attitudes toward the rulers and such totalitarian atrocities as the Holocaust and the mass imprisonment? What insights into the totalitarian system and mindset can be gained from psychology and psychoanalysis? Under what psychological/social conditions are individuals capable of offering opposition or resistance, as did the German resistance and the “rescuers” of Jews under Nazi domination or dissidents in the Soviet Union?

While the manifestations of totalitarianism may now appear to be bygone of merely historical interest, the social psychology of “totalitarian situations” remains acutely important, even in present-day democratic societies. The massacre at My Lai, the obedience experiments carried out by Stanley Milgram, similar events and similar studies, provide evidence of how easily average citizens – and by no means only the “authoritarian personalities” as described by Theodor W. Adorno and Erich Fromm – have the potential of behaving inhumanely in specific situations, when unthinking submission, even to the most questionable orders, seems to be the easiest way to deal with the stress and insecurity of the moment.

Learning Objectives

- Introducing the history of National Socialism (including the Holocaust) and Stalinism (including the Great Purge) as well as other violent events in modern history
- Studying different approaches that try to explain the individual, collective, and societal premises of the Holocaust and other genocidal case studies
- Training to form and express arguments during (scholarly) debates in class, and to articulate complex thoughts during an in-class presentation
- Training how to read, capture, and employ theoretical approaches in the field of the humanities
- Improving essay-writing skills in the field of the humanities

Student Prerequisites

Students should have completed at least three semesters of higher education when the course starts and need to possess English language abilities in speaking and writing on the Upper Intermediate Level (at least B2, preferably above).

General Requirements

Attendance of the weekly live sessions is mandatory (for the specific time slot, see above). These live sessions will be combined with recorded video lessons and intensive work through the online course platform, both individually and in groups. Please see course requirements for the various formats and weight of the course assignments as well as forms of assessment. This course features a certain amount of independent coursework and thus expects you to be able to set up a self-disciplined study routine. We recommend that you make sure to have a quiet and appropriate working space. To ensure a comfortable learning environment for all, please adhere to our [Code of Online Conduct](#).

Technical Requirements

Stable internet connection.

Fully functional device, such as computer, laptop or tablet (use of smart phones is not recommended) with camera and microphone, headset recommended.

Recommended operating systems: Windows 7 or higher or MacOS 10.13 or higher. Avoid using a VPN.

Software: Webex Meetings.

Course Requirements

Essay: 300 Points (30%)

Final Exam: 200 Points (20%)

Online-Presentation: 200 Points (20%)

Weekly written responses on the readings: 150 Points (15%)

Live Online Attendance (min. 75% required) &

Participation (incl. Independent Project report and an in-class presentation): 150 Points (15%)

Grading

FU Grade	Points of 500	Points of 1,000
1.0	490-500	980-1,000
1.3	475-489	950-979
1.7	450-474	900-949
2.0	425-449	850-899
2.3	400-424	800-849
2.7	375-399	750-799
3.0	350-374	700-749
3.3	325-349	650-699
3.7	300-324	600-649
4.0	250-299	500-599
5.0	< 250	< 500

Literature

Provided online.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Reading, etc.
Week 1	<p>Introduction to the course; overview of the concept of Totalitarianism</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Totalitarianism,” in: International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills, London 1968, vol. 16, pp. 106–113
Week 2	<p>The concept of Totalitarianism and its limits of explanation</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geyer, Michael, Fitzpatrick, Sheila (Ed.): Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared, Introduction, Cambridge 2009, pp.1–26 • Bauman, Zygmunt: Modernity and Ambivalence, Ithaca/NY 1991, pp.1–52
Week 3	<p>The Mind of Perpetrators and Popular Attitudes towards Atrocities in National Socialist Germany</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, London 1965, pp. 21–35, 135–150 • Ian Kershaw, “German Popular Opinion and the ‘Jewish Question’, 1939–1945: Some further Reflections,” in: Arnold Paucker (ed.), The Jews in Nazi Germany 1933–1945, Tübingen 1986, pp. 365–386
Week 4	<p>Individual Resistance to the Holocaust: The Rescuers</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Berenbaum / Abraham J. Peck (ed.), The Holocaust and History. The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined, Bloomington / Indianapolis 1998, Introduction to Part 10 „The Rescuers,“ pp. 649–650 • Nechama Tec, „Reflections on Rescuers“, in: Berenbaum / Peck, op. cit., pp. 651–662 • Eva Fogelman, “The Rescuer Self”, op. cit., pp. 663–677 • Samuel P. Oliner, „Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust. A Portrait of Moral Courage,“ op. cit., pp. 678–690 <p>Pre-Recorded Lecture: The Dual State. The Political System of National Socialism</p>
Week 5	<p>Individual Resistance to the Holocaust: The Rescued</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beate Kosmala, “Facing Deportation in Germany, 1941–1945: Jewish and Non-Jewish Responses,” in: Beate Kosmala / Feliks Tych (ed.), Facing the Nazi Genocide: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe, Berlin 2004

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inge Deutschkron, We survived. Berlin Jews Underground, German Resistance Memorial 2008 <p>Pre-Recorded Lecture: Measures, Regulations, and Laws of the German state against the German Jews 1933–39</p>
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>The Quest for Order: Soviet Union and Nazi German compared</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jörg Baberowski, Doering-Manteuffel, Anselm, The Quest for Order and the Pursuit of Terror. National Socialist Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union as Multiethnic Empires, in: Geyer/Fritzpatrick 2009, pp. 180–230 The novel “Darkness at Noon” by Arthur Koestler <p>Pre-Recorded Lecture: Perpetuated Violence. Leninism and Stalinism from Revolution to the Great Terror</p>
<p>Week 7</p>	<p>The Classical Concept of the “Authoritarian Personality”</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, The Authoritarian Personality, New York / Evanston / London 1950, pp. IX–XII, 1–17, 255–257, 971–976
<p>Week 8</p>	<p>Totalitarian Situations in Free Societies: The My Lai massacre</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seymour M. Hersh, My Lai 4. A Report on the Massacre and its Aftermath, New York 1970, pp. XI–XII, 3–89 Edward M. Opton, „It Never Happened and Besides They Deserved It”, in: N. Sanford and C. Cromston, Sanctions for Evil, San Francisco 1971, pp. 49–70 <p>Pre-Recorded lecture: On the American-Vietnamese War. Origin, Causes, and the American “Way of Warfare”</p>
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>Totalitarian Situations: The Milgram Experiment</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley Milgram, Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View, New York 1974, pp. 1–31, 165–168, 179–189

<p>Week 10</p>	<p>More Totalitarian Situations: Behaviour towards socially excluded individuals</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craig Haney, Curtis Banks and Philip Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison,” in: International Journal of Criminology and Penology 1973, pp. 69–97 • Erving Goffman, Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, London 1963, pp. 4–36
<p>Week 11</p>	<p>Psychoanalysis as an Antidote against Totalitarianism? Psychological Roots of Submission</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruno Bettelheim, The Informed Heart. Autonomy in a Mass Age, Glencoe 1963, pp. 3–41 • Detlef Oesterreich, “Flight into Security,” (paper) Berlin 1998 <p>Pre-Recorded lecture: The Authoritarian Personality and its “Flight into Security”. Comparing Adorno’s and Oesterreichs Approaches</p>
<p>Week 12</p>	<p>Individual Freedom and the Longing for Submission. Enlightenment as an Antidote against Totalitarianism?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, New York / Chicago / San Francisco 1964, pp. 3–39, 240–276 • Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”, in: Peter Gay (ed.), Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, New York 1954, I, pp. 1071–76 (reproduced in: Peter Gay, ed., The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology, 1973, pp. 383–390) <p>Pre-Recorded lecture: On the Janus-Face of Enlightenment</p>
<p>Week 13</p>	<p>Final Exam</p>