Political Radicalism: Comparing Communism and Fascism
GVPT 459X

Tyd 1118
Th 2:00pm – 4:45pm
University of Maryland
Fall 2019

Professor Vladimir Tismaneanu
Office: 1135C, Tydings Hall
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursday: 12:30-1:30, or by appointment
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This course will examine the main similarities and distinctions between
communist and fascist radical ideologies, movements, and political systems.
The course will highlight the centrality of ideology in totalitarian
experiments and the relationship between ideology and terror as
underpinnings of the ideocratic despotisms. Class discussions will focus on
the main theories regarding the rise, structure, and functioning of the the
Stalinist and Nazi dictatorships. We will explore the contemporary
implications of totalitarianism. The main historical personalities (charismatic
leaders) examined in this course will be Lenin, Stalin, Hitler. We will also
discuss other cases such as Mussolini, Mao, Enver Hoxha, Ceausescu,
Castro.

Lectures and readings will focus the relationship between the Russian
revolutionary tradition and the Bolshevik political culture; the interpretation
of communism and fascism as political religions (secular messianisms). We
will explore the relationship between totalitarianism and evil.

Requirements

• Students are required to read the assigned readings before each class
  period. In addition, students are expected to read one newspaper on a
daily basis (either Washington Post or New York Times).
- Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. Grades will be based on an in class midterm exam, one unannounced quiz, a final take home exam and class participation.
- Extra credit can be earned by preparing a short class presentation on a relevant topic; the time and details must first be approved by the teaching assistant and the professor.

Readings

1. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Devil in History*, paperback
2. Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*
3. Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia*

Recommended:

2. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
4. Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*
5. Vassily Grossman, *Life and Fate*
6. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Demons*

Major Themes:

Weeks 1-3


Tismaneanu, Introduction
Claeys, Part 1

**Weeks 4-5**


Tismaneanu, Chapter 1
Claeys: Chapter 3
Gellatelly Part 1

Suggested

**Weeks 6-7**


Tismaneanu, Chapter 2
Claeys, Chapter 4
Gellatelly Part II
Week 8:


Tismaneanu, Chapter 3
Gellately Part III

Week 9:

E: Comparing utopian-exterrminist dictatorships. The ideological ingredient and the search for the perfect society. The racial versus the social „perfect” community.

Tismaneanu, Chapter 4
Gellately Part IV

Suggested:

Weeks 10-11

F: The role of the leader: comparing Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler. The role of the party: comparing the Bolshevik and the Nazi parties. The role of ideology: comparing Leninism and National Socialism. The role of the secret police. Totalitarian states and the economy: major distinctions between Stalinism and Nazism. Communism as heir to Enlightenment, Fascism as heir to counter-enlightenment. Radical evil versus the „banality of evil”. Hitler’s „willing executioners”, Stalin’s hangmen, and the mechanisms of complicity.

Tismaneanu Chapter 5
Claeys, Chapter 7
Gellately Part V
Suggested
Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*
Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*

**Weeks 12-13**


Tismaneanu, Chapter 6 and Conclusions
Claeys, Chapter 7 and Conclusions
Berman, Entire Book
Gellately Part VI and VII

Film presentation and discussion to be announced. Film: „What Our Fathers Did: A Nazi Legacy”