

**Dr. Christoph Gassenschmidt**

## **Modern European Antisemitism and the Holocaust**

### **DESCRIPTION OF COURSE**

Antisemitism has a history of more than 2,000 years. It went through very distinct stages, from the Ancient World through the Middle Ages, the Early Modern History and it is still very much around in the Christian and Islamic worlds. This course focuses on Modern Antisemitism starting with the French Revolution and bridging all the way to the climax of the Holocaust. The course is focused on Hitler's Antisemitism and the path to the Holocaust. Hitler was influenced by various Antisemitic thinkers, social and political movements as well as by the political events such as the First World War and the Versailles Peace Treaty. So, the course shows how of these components played together to form a Racial Antisemitism which almost led to the complete destruction of the European Jews.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

The course aims to make the students understand, first and foremost, the basic principles of Antisemitism. The ideas of people such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Madame Blawatzky, Friedrich Eckart as well as Charles Darwin and the core idea of the Voelkische Movement will be covered. The experience of World War I combined with the reading he did, Hitler constructed his own form of Antisemitism that eventually led to the biggest organized mass murder in Modern History. The student will learn how all these components mentioned above led to Hitler's ideology and the decision to come up with the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. The course teaches the students how the Holocaust unfolded. It will show how the Holocaust was planned and executed. Finally, the course elaborates on the role of the perpetrators, the victims and the collaborators. The students will learn that the Holocaust does not only have a German but a European dimension.

### **REQUIRED READING**

Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2009

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

Hanna Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Classics 2006

Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland

Daniel Goldhagen, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, 1996

Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews ...

Ian Kershaw, Hitler, the Germans and the Final Solution, Yale University Press 2008

Primo Levy, Survival in Auschwitz, Reprint Touchstone 1996

Bea Lewkowicz, Jewish Community of Salonika: History, Memory, Identity, Valentine Mitchell 2006

### **HANDOUTS (excerpts from) – in-class and homework**

Elena Blavatzky  
Houston Steward Chamberlain  
Alfred Rosenberg  
Voelkischer Beobachter  
Der Stuermer  
Eyewitness statements (Yad Vashem)  
Memoirs

### **VISUAL AIDS**

Nazi propaganda posters  
Documentary: The Nazis: A Warning from History (BBC)  
Documentary: Shoah (Claude Lancelmann)  
Schindler's List  
The Boy in the Striped Pajama

**COURSE TYPE** - Seminar

**COURSE LEVEL** - 3000

**NUMBER OF WEEKS** - 14

### **EVALUATION**

Final exam (2 hours) and a research paper (between 2,000 and 3,000 words)

## INDICATIVE COURSE CONTENT

### Modern Antisemitism and the Holocaust

#### 1. History of Antisemitism until the French Revolution

- Origins
- Antisemitism in the Middle Ages
- Antisemitism in Early Modern History

#### 2. Modern Antisemitism

- Gobineau
- Charles Darwin
- Houston Steward Chamberlain
- Alfred Rosenberg
- Richard Wagner
- Voelkische Bewegung
- Eugenics
- The Thule Society
- Ariosophy

#### 3. Wilhelmine Germany

- Bismarckian Germany
- The rise of political parties
- Foreign policy and colonial ambitions

#### 4. Hitler's racial Antisemitism

- Ideas expressed in Mein Kampf
- The Press (Der Stuermer, Voelkischer Beobachter)

#### 5. Weimar Germany

- The Versailles Peace Treaty
- Birth of the Nazi Party
- The Wall Street Crash
- The Great Depression unfolds
- The Nazis' take over

## 6. Nazi-Germany

- Germany brought into Line (Gleichschaltung)
- The Totalitarian State
- The Nuremberg Laws
- Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass)

## 7. World War II

- Invasion of Poland
- Germany occupies vast parts of Europe

## 8. The Wannsee Conference

- Organizing the Conference
- The participants
- The decisions

## 9. The Holocaust unfolded

- Setting up of the camps
- Concentration vs. extermination camps
- Life in the camps

## 10. The Holocaust executed

- Perpetrators
- Victims
- Collaborators

## 11. Jewish Resistance

- Jewish partisans – the Bielski partisans
- Resistance in the camps

## 12. Impact and repercussions of the Holocaust

- The destruction of European Jews
- The Jewish diaspora
- The foundation of the state of Israel

## 13. The Holocaust debate