



Fashioning fascism: A Cultural History of Interwar European Right-Wing Regimes. Fall Semester, 2026

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Duration:	15 Weeks
Credit Hours:	4 Credits
Class Meetings:	TBD
Type:	JSLH cross listed elective.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor (Dr.) Zaheer Abbas
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Power cannot subsist without being represented. Power acquires much of its emotive appeal through its performative nature. Power seeks to gain acceptance by employing symbols, myths and rituals. The fascist leaders, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, were exceptional exponents of exploiting power's performativity, its theatricality and tapping into its affective allure. Convinced in their belief that fascism was a 'total conception of life,' geared not simply toward the fulfilment of its political goals, but to crafting and fashioning a unique *weltanschauung*, they actively sought to create a new 'fascist man' and, as an afterthought, a 'fascist woman.'

This course is designed as an introduction to studying the cultural aspects of Mussolini and Hitler's fascist systems. Among the themes it will explore are the role of intellectuals and artists and the question of their collaboration or otherwise with fascist regimes; the crafting and use of a distinctive fascist language; the place of sports in fascist society; fascist aesthetics and how it informed the construction of buildings, shaped physical bodies and curated fashion and clothing and fascism's view on gender. The course will attempt to demonstrate how fascist regimes were made 'respectable' and 'attractive' and of how they were carefully 'staged' and represented not merely to the world at large, but to their immediate audience and constituency.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- I. A broad familiarity with scholarly interventions and literature on the importance and need to study the cultural history and aesthetic elements of fascist movements, beyond their merely ‘political’ nature.
- II. An awareness of the ideological content of fascist regimes which viewed it not only as a political movement but as ‘a total conception of life.’
- III. Articulate an in-depth understanding of processes by which fascism was made attractive and appealed to the masses by focusing on its understanding and approach to social life and practices.

Learning resources:

The required readings for each session will be made available a week in advance. Other recommended readings will also be shared with students.

Course structure:

The course has been divided into six modules, each devoted to one overarching theme. The modules have been titled as under:

- I. Politics and Arts or Politics as art? fascist aesthetics and politics and the “aestheticization of politics.”
- II. Apolitical Professors, ‘Architects of Annihilation’ or ‘opportunistic fellow-travelers?’ Academia and fascism.
- III. Molding the fascist Self: Youth under fascism.
- IV. Making the fascist Self: Fascist notions of Masculinity and Femininity.
- V. Fashioning fascism: Dress, Style and Body under fascism.
- VI. All in a day’s play: The use and abuse of Sports under fascism.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- I. Participation and In-Class Activities: 10%
- II. In class presentation midway through Module III: 30%
- III. Mid-Term Assignment 30%
- IV. Final Essay: 30%

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Punctuality and Conduct

The classroom space is an opportunity to cultivate discipline, punctuality and professional conduct among peers. You are required to be present in class and seated within five minutes of the class start time and will be self-reporting the time you arrive in the worksheet every day. You

will be marked absent if you arrive over ten minutes late but can still come in and participate in class discussion.

Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements

JGU endeavours to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee. Our email address for appointments is "Disability Support Committee"

dsc@jgu.edu.in.

The Committee provides a range of accommodations to the conditions identified by the *The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016* and the Mental Health Care Act 2017 and beyond. We provide support to students with a wide-range of health and learning related conditions. These conditions include physical and mobility-related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties, e.g. dyslexia; dyscalculia, mental health conditions such as anxiety and panic attacks. The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality in its discussions. We respect the privacy of the students. The registrations for the DSC are open throughout the year. However, the students with long-standing conditions should register with the Committee at the beginning of the academic year. The DSC will take at least 14 business days to make arrangements with the respective departments'.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In line with JGU and UGC policy, JSLH operates a zero-tolerance approach to Plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others within your work is a violation of academic integrity and all reported cases will be investigated before potential disciplinary action.

Plagiarism includes:

- direct copying from a book article, web site, or another student's assignment
- paraphrasing another person's work with minor changes, but keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole
- submitting an assignment that has already been submitted for assessment in another subject
- presenting an assignment as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor.
- The use of AI (like ChatGPT or similar tools).

SESSION PLAN AND READING LIST.

Session 1: Introduction to the course.

Module I Politics and Arts or Politics as art? fascist “aestheticization of politics.”

Session 2

Required reading:

Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*.

Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*.

Session 3

Required reading:

George Mosse, *Nazi Culture, Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (?)

Module II Apolitical Professors, ‘Architects of Annihilation’ or ‘opportunistic fellow-travelers’? Academia and fascism.

Session 4

Required reading:

Wolfgang Bialas and Anson Rabinbach ed., *Nazi Germany and the Humanities. How German Academics Embraced Nazism*.

Session 5

Required reading:

Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors. The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People*.

Alan Steinweis, *Studying the Jew. Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany*

Module III

Molding the fascist Self: Youth under fascism.

Session 6

Required reading:

George Mosse, *Nazi Culture, Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*.

Session 7

Required reading:

Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man. Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*.

Module IV

Making the fascist Self: Fascist notions of Masculinity and Femininity.

Session 8

Required Reading:

Lisa Pine, *Hitler's 'National Community.' Society and Culture in Nazi Germany*.

George Mosse, *Nazi Culture, Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*.

Session 9

Required Reading:

Robin Pickering-Iazzi ed., *Mothers of Invention. Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*.

Module V

Fashioning fascism: Dress, Style and Body under fascism.

Session 10

Required Reading:

Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion Under Fascism. Beyond the Black Shirt*.

Session 11

Required Reading:

Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*.

Module V

All in a day's play: The use and abuse of Sports under fascism.

Session 12

Required reading:

Simon Martin, *Football and Fascism. The National Game under Mussolini.*

Session 13

Required reading:

Paul Baxa, *Motorsport and Fascism. Living Dangerously.*

Anton Rippon, *Hitler's Olympics. The Story of the 1936 Nazi Games.*

FINAL EXAM – in class, closed book – 30% of your grade

GRADE DEFINITION

O (80% and Above) [8.0]	Outstanding	Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability
A+ (75%-79%) [7.5]	Excellent	Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability
A (70%-74%) [7.0]	Very Good	Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing materials and originality in thinking and presentation
A- (65%-69%) [6.0]	Good	Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills
B+ (60%-64%) [5.0]	Fair	Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills. Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills
B (55%-59%) [4.0]	Acceptable	Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of study and reasonable critical and analytical skills

B- (50%-54%) [3.0]	Marginal	Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials and, poor critical and analytical skills
F (50% or Below)	Fail	Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course