Contemporary theories of Fascism and Counter-Fascism

Did Fascism end with the Allied victory over the Axis power in 1945, or has it been lying dormant and is now reawakening? Contemporary fascism, in Europe and other locations, has developed cultural and political expressions in right wing nationalist parties that openly revive the populist appeal first carried out in the early 20th century.

Historically, fascist politics involved organized mass movements, armed militias and paramilitary groups who assaulted political opponents, violently suppressed critical speech, and impeded the right to assemble. Fascists scapegoated minorities, burned trade union and leftist headquarters, assassinated their leaders and beat their members. Programmatically, they attacked pacifists and defended overseas wars and empires in the name of 'living space'.

But fascism also permeated areas of creative endeavor such as literature (poetry), architecture, visual arts and philosophy. Futurism, steered by Filippo Marinetti's incendiary pronouncements, would be an expression of fascism in Mussolini's commanded Italy. Traditions of ultra-conservatism, the ideas of Nietzsche, Wagner and other artists and intellectuals, helped to make racist doctrines respectable.

Presently, the increasing political success of the far right in Western Europe and the explosion of ultra-nationalisms in Eastern Europe beg for an assessment of the current state of debate. To deconstruct contemporary theories of fascism requires a semiology that exposes the signs and manifestations of fascist literature, fascist art, fascist political theory, and fascist regimes. The study of signs and symbols helps to disclose the structural and ideological links between fascism, capitalism and modernity (globalism).

Counter-fascist theorists and activists have developed a thematic and intellectual analysis of fascism. This course is intended as a critical discussion of the origins and present manifestations of fascist ideology. Contemporary fascism is challenged by mass electoral upheavals, general strikes, and armed resistance in some locations. Popular movements in France, Spain, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil, have called for popular revolutions. Each participant in this course is invited to analyze and aspect of fascism and its counter-fascist response.

(The participants in this seminar will receive a detailed, week-by-week syllabus, including theorists and/or texts to be studied, plus information about marks and assignments)
Primary bibliography


Fascinating (British) Fascism: David Britton’s Lord Horror Benjamin Noys, RETHINKING HISTORY 6:3 (2002), pp. 305–318


Italian Fascism and utopia, CHARLES BURDETT, HISTORY OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES Vol. 16 No. 1, 2003 pp. 93–108


Santiáñez-Tió, Nil. TOPOGRAPHIES OF FASCISM [ELECTRONIC RESOURCE]: HABITUS, SPACE, AND WRITING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SPAIN. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013


Virno, Paolo and Alessia Ricciardi Theses on the New European Fascism, GREY ROOM, No. 21 (fall, 2005), pp. 21-25
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