



HS 335 ITALIAN FASCISM: THE FIRST TOTALITARIAN POLITICAL RELIGION

IES Abroad Rome

DESCRIPTION: The course is an introduction to the history of Italian Fascism with particular emphasis on the sacralisation of politics. Under Fascism, the political arena became permeated with myths, rites, and symbols of a secular religion, imbued with fundamental values, and intended to mould the moral consciousness and meaning of the existence for all Italians. This was not a completely new concept. Since the American and French Revolutions, politics has often taken on the features of religion, claiming as its own the prerogative of defining the fundamental purpose and meaning of human life, asking faith, loyalty and reverence for secular political entities as the nation, building its temples, lamenting its martyrs. With Italian Fascism, however, the civic religion of the country (a religion open to every citizen) transformed itself into the intolerant, exclusive cult of the symbol of a single party, of its values, of its commandments, of its chief. In this way, Italian Fascism opened the way to many modern totalitarian political religions of the 20th Century, from Nazism, to Stalinism, from Europe to Asia.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures and class discussions
- Multimedia presentations
- Moodle

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation (10%)
- Midterm exam (30%)
- Book review paper (30%)
- Final exam (30%)

*Details of required work:

Class participation: Students will have to participate actively in class discussions, demonstrating the ability to make connections with the readings assigned for each session.

In Class Mid-term exam: Students will select from a list of essay prompts and write on the subject of their choice 2 short essays.

Book review paper: Students will read a book chosen with the instructor in a list; they will have to make a presentation in class and answer questions from classmates and instructor; then they will have to write a paper about it (12-15 pages).

In Class Final exam: Formatted as the Midterm, but will focus on the readings and topics analysed in the second half of the semester.

Grading Rubric for student participation:

A	Excellent participation The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates' opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were

	not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- recognize the importance of the symbolic dimension in politics;
- put in relation secularization, politics and religion in modern society and grasp in a better way the contours of the modern political experiment (up to today fundamentalism);
- understand the main features of Totalitarianism;
- identify the main aspects of the Fascist regime, its values, its institutions, its leaders;
- understand the historical significance of Fascism, and its dramatic danger as a wrong answer to the problems of mass society;
- identify the myths, rituals, symbols, monuments and other spectacles of Fascist Italy;
- discover the mechanism of deep fascination provoked by mass rituals.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is mandatory for all IES classes, including field studies. If a student misses more than two classes, 2 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical emergencies or family emergencies.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1		
Section 1	Overview of course	
Section 2	What is the "sacralisation of politics"?	
Week 2		(Reading: Gentile, <u>Politics as Religion</u>. Chapter II; Mosse, <u>The Nationalization of the Masses</u>. Chapters I and II)
Section 1	The American Revolution, the French Revolution and a new religion for the citizen	
Section 2	The religion of the nation in the 19th Century	
Week 3		
Section 1	A civil religion for Liberal Italy (1870-1914)	

Section 2	A civil religion for Liberal Italy (1870-1914). Part II	
Week 4		(Reading: Gentile, The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy. Chapter I)
Section 1	World War I and the sacralisation of politics: War cemeteries, war memorials, the cult of the unknown soldier	
Section 2	The origins of Fascist religion: Squadristo and the “sacred militia”	
Week 5		
Section 1	The “Fascist Doctrine”	
Section 2	Piazza Venezia and the Italian religion of the nation from Liberalism to Fascism	
Week 6		
Section 1	General Review	
Section 2	Mid-term exams	
Week 7		(Reading: Gentile, The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy. Chapter II)
Section 1	Fascism at the power: The conquest of the cult of the nation	
Section 2	Fascism at the power: The imposition of the symbols, rites and calendar of the Fascist revolution	
Week 8		
Section 1	“Collective harmony”: The mass rites of the Fascist regime	
Section 2	The “Foro Mussolini”: A place for the education of the Fascist youth élite	
Week 9		(Reading: Gentile, The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy. Chapter VI)
Section 1	Fascist religion and Catholic religion	
Section 2	The cult of the Duce	
Week 10		
Section 1	Totalitarianism and art: the Nazi, Soviet and Fascist cases	

Section 2	The temples of faith for the “new Italians”: The new Fascist model city in the EUR district	
Week 11		
Section 1	Books Review Presentations	
Section 2	Books Review Presentations	
Week 12		
Section 1	Books Review Presentations	
Section 2	General review	

REQUIRED READINGS:

- E. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, Princeton University Press, 2006 Reader

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Agulhon, Maurice. *Marianne au combat*, tr. ingl. *Marianne into battle. Republican imagery and symbolism in France, 1789-1880*, Cambridge [Eng.]-New York : Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London : Verso, 1983.
- Bellah, Robert N. *The Broken Covenant. American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, New York : Seabury Press, 1975.
- Ben Ghat, Ruth. *Fascist Modernities: Italy 1922-1945*. Berkeley, CA : University of California Press, 2001.
- Burleigh, Michael. *Sacred causes. Religion and politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda*. London: Harper Press, 2006.
- Cristi, Marcela. *From Civil to Political Religion. The Intersection of Culture, Religion and Politics*. Waterloo (Ontario) : Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001.
- De Felice, Renzo. *Interpretations of Fascism*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Edelman, Murray J. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1964.
- Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.
- Gentile, Emilio. *Politics as Religion*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2006.
- . *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Griffin, Roger (ed.). *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*. London : Routledge, 2005. Hobsbawm, Eric J. & Ranger T.O. (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, MA : Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Kertzer, David I. *Ritual, politics, and power*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1988.
- Lane, Christel. *The Rites of the Rulers. Rituals in Industrial Society. The Soviet Case*, New York/Cambridge [Eng.] : Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Liebman, Charles S. & Don-Yehiya, Eliezer. *Civil Religion in Israel. Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1983.
- Moro, Renato. “Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularization: The Sacralization of Politics and Politicisation of Religion”, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 6, 1, 2005, pp, 71-86.
- Mosse, George L. *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*. New York : Fertig, 1975. (assigned selections).
- Ozouf, Mona. *Festival and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, MA : Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Pois, Robert A. *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*. London : Croom Helm, 1986.
- Thrower, James. *Marxism-Leninism as the civil religion of Soviet society. God's commissar*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1992.



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