

## **From Antigone to 9/11: Representations of Political Violence and Terror**

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Time: Wednesday, Periods 9-11 (4:05PM-7:00PM), Location: Little Hall 219

Office Hrs: Mon 4th Period, Wed 7th period or by appointment

By probing some of the core traumas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century--colonialism, totalitarianism, the Holocaust, Vietnam and terrorism--this interdisciplinary course seeks to examine representations of historical violence through shifting philosophical, theoretical and aesthetic frames. This comparative study of political violence and terrorism will enable us to analyze what Habermas calls the "unfinished project of modernity," where the contemporary events of terrorism are themselves derivative of some of the key components of modernity. How does the political promise of the Enlightenment (reason in history) collapse into the pathologies of modernity? The course is divided into six parts:

### **Antigone**

The first section functions as the foundation to the seminar and sets the trajectory of the course. We begin with an analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone*--the iconic figure of the individual rebelling against the state--and examine the impact the tragedy has had on political theory, philosophy and psychoanalysis. The themes central to *Antigone* haunt the other texts throughout the semester: the individual versus the state, law, political violence, gender, discourse of modernity, art's relation to violence and concepts of spectatorship.

### **Colonialism**

We turn in the second section to issues regarding colonialism and imperialism as seen in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*. Our study of these texts will be conjoined to readings from Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Foucault's study *Discipline and Punishment*.

### **National Socialism and anti-Semitism**

The third and fourth sections explore the period of National Socialism and its after effects in postwar German memory. The primary text is Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. We conclude this section by turning to representations of resistance against the Third Reich as seen in Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*.

### **The German Autumn: The Red Army Faction**

The fourth section of the seminar focuses on German terrorism of the 1970s and the legacy of the Baader-Meinhof Gang. Why has this period of German history had such a profound impact on the collective imagination of the country and how does it continue to disturb German memory? The RAF is portrayed as fighting against not only the government of the Federal Republic but also against Germany's Nazi past. Our readings of Adorno and Arendt will help us frame our understanding of the "Red Decade" and our viewing of Von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*.

## **The Vietnam War**

Our analysis of the Vietnam War will be tangentially approached through the lens of two documentaries on The Rolling Stones: the Maysles' *Gimme Shelter*. Our discussion of spectatorship, media, visual pleasure, eroticized and wounded bodies will be mediated through the Mark Selzer's concept of "Wound Culture".

## **September 11<sup>th</sup>**

The seminar concludes by probing the political and philosophical significance of 9/11 in relation to questions of post modernity. We will explore how such critics as Habermas and Derrida read modernity's failure through the violence of 9/11.

## **Schedule (subject to change)**

**Weeks 1 and 2: Introduction:** Tracing *Antigone* in German Intellectual Thought.

**Make sure to read Sophocles' *Antigone* for the first day of class (1/8).**

**1/8 and 1/15**

Sophocles' *Antigone*

**Weeks 3, 4 and 5:**

**1/22, 1/29 and 2/5**

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Prefaces, "The Concept of Enlightenment" and parts of "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment").

**Weeks 6 and 7:**

**2/12 and 2/19**

Kafka, *In der Strafkolonie (In the Penal Colony)*

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Part One: Torture)

**Weeks 8, 9 and 10:**

**2/26, 3/4 (spring break) and 3/11**

Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: *Report on the Banality of Evil*

**Week 11:**

**3/18 and 3/25**

Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (**screening**)

**Weeks 12 and 13:**

**4/1**

Alter's "Framing Terrorism: Beyond the Borders";

Von Trotta, *Mariane and Julianne (Die Bleierne Zeit screening)*

**Weeks 14:**  
**4/8 and 4/15**

Albert and David Maysles's *Gimme Shelter* (**screening**)  
Seltzer, *Wound Culture*

**Weeks 15:**  
**4/22**

Habermas and Derrida, sections from *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*  
Don DeLillo, "Ruins of the Future"

**Required Texts:**

Sophocles *Antigone*

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Report on the Banality of Evil*

**Class Requirements:**

**Class Participation:** you are expected to come to class prepared with readings and/or screenings for that particular week. It is essential that students partake each week in seminar discussions. 15%

**Class Presentation:** each student will be expected to give a 20-minute presentation and help lead class discussion on one text (seminar topic) during the semester. 10%

**Final Paper:** 15-page research paper on topic of your choice. 75%