

GLOBAL ANTIFA

ENGL 86000-01 (53901)
Fridays 11:45am – 1:45pm

Professor Ashley Dawson

Office hours: ~~Friday~~ – 11:00am

csi.cuny.edu

Course Description:

Authoritarian populist regimes have taken power in many countries around the world in recent years, including not just wealthy nations like the US and Italy but also formerly colonized countries like India, the Philippines, and El Salvador. How can these repressive regimes be resisted and how can futures of collective liberation be won?

This seminar begins from the premise that racialized and colonized peoples have been at the forefront of theorizing, challenging, and dismantling fascism, white supremacy, and other modes of authoritarian rule over the last century. The seminar surveys and draws on these antifascist traditions, linking them to a deep engagement with racial justice, anti-imperialist movements, intersectional feminism, and an analysis of the changing character and contradictions of capitalism.

Readings for the seminar will include contemporary theorists of fascism like Enzo Traverso, predecessors like Aimé Césaire and Hannah Arendt, analysts of colonial fascism like George Padmore and Maaza Mengiste, feminist and queer critics of racial capitalism like Angela Davis and Roderick Ferguson, and writers on global authoritarian populism such as Roberto Bolaño and Arundhati Roy.

Given the topic of the seminar, the class will be explicitly interdisciplinary. It will also be oriented towards militant co-research, and students will be encouraged to develop research projects that contribute to the work of global movements fighting fascism.



Course Learning Goals:

- Familiarize students with contemporary theories of fascism and antifascism, as well as related critical theories concerning racial capitalism, gender & sexuality, imperialism, etcetera.
- Explore the ways in which the realm of aesthetics in general, and, more specifically, particular domains such as literature and visual culture, relate to fascism and antifascism;
- Discuss various research methodologies, with a focus on histories and examples of militant co-research research.

Course Requirements:

The focus of this course is interdisciplinary, or even post-disciplinary. It is not just that we will study texts written within a variety of disciplinary fields. In addition, the methodologies that we will study and experiment with cross silos and borders. Many of the collaborative practices we will examine challenge narrow academic disciplines and propose other ways of doing things.

Course requirements are oriented by this impetus. I want to give space to alternative forms of research, including collaborative/collective work, militant research, and methodologies that combine analysis and imagination. I invite you to produce discursive forms aimed at diverse audiences, and to think about the most efficacious ways to mobilize and disseminate knowledge around the crises of contemporary capitalism, liberal democracy, authoritarian populism, sexism, homophobia, trans-phobia, and eco-fascism, among other issues.

At the same time, I recognize that students need to hone their writing skills, develop or expand ongoing research projects, and get feedback on this work. To that end, I propose the following projects as requirements for the class:

- **Short paper:** a 3- to 4-page conference-style paper on fascist aesthetics. This paper should discuss assigned texts for Week 2, including Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. It should also speculate on how fascist spectacle has changed given the current character of the mass media. You may, if you'd like, discuss a contemporary text by way of contrast with Riefenstahl's film.

Due date: Friday, February 7th at noon

- **Class discussion presentation:** Each student will pick a text or texts to present to the class during one of our seminars. Presentations should last no more than 15 minutes and should include an overview/summary of the text's major interventions, a description of the critical/political landscape in which the text intervenes, & questions/prompts for discussion.

- **Militant co-research:** Using the *Militant Research Handbook* & publications by CrimethInc. as a guide, students will work in groups of 3-4 people to develop knowledge useful to antifa campaigns on topics such as immigrant defense, disaster communism, anti-imperialism, etcetera. This work should result in a 5-7 page pamphlet that introduces the topic, surveys key terms and developments, and provides a brief annotated bibliography.

Due date: Friday, March 28th at noon

- **Seminar paper/project:** an article-length research paper, series of papers, or equivalent creative project (e.g. mapping work, podcast, performance, digital analysis, etc.).

Due date: Friday, May 23rd at noon

- **Project presentation:** During the final two seminar meetings, students will present an overview of their proposed final project. Presentations should include information about how the project was developed, what directions were considered, and what questions remain. Presentations should last approximately 15 minutes.

CLASS POLICIES

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance at every class is mandatory. Arrive on-time, prepared to be fully present and to participate, and then stay until the end of the class. Please do not leave class during the session, except during our regular mid-class break for checking phones, bathroom break, etc.

Absences, departures, and late arrivals *will* reduce your grade.

LAPTOP, TABLET AND CELL PHONE POLICY:

Please refrain from checking email or using social media in class. Keep your cell phone turned off and out of sight for the duration of class. If this is a struggle for you, you are not alone! It is a collective goal of this class to stay present with each other, to give each other our full and respectful attention, and to learn more effectively as a result!

COLLABORATION AND ACADEMIC HONESTY:

I encourage you to share ideas with each other, and to help your classmates. Nevertheless, all work submitted must be your own, and the ideas, words, images, and any other work-product of others must be properly credited using footnotes AND a bibliography.

AI:

Presenting the ideas, words, images, or any other work product of another person (or of AI) without proper credit is plagiarism. AI programs are not an acceptable replacement for your human creativity, originality, and critical thinking. Yet, tools that use AI to proofread your written work (such as spellcheck or Grammarly) are acceptable. However, tools that rely on generative AI (such as GPT-3, ChatGPT, Bard, etc.) that actually “write” text from a prompt are not to be used to generate drafts or written work for any assignment in this course. If you use AI to proofread individual or group work this semester, you will be expected to include proper attribution (i.e. citation or footnote required). Failure to acknowledge and attribute AI analyzed (proofread) materials in your written work, or *any* use of generative AI will be considered to be plagiarism.

NO CONSENT TO RECORD:

You do not have permission to record the instructor or any classmates during class time. Our classroom is a space in which we experiment with new ideas, disagree with one another respectfully, share personal stories etc. Privacy and mutual respect are paramount for this learning environment. If the no-recording policy poses a difficulty for you in relation to approved accommodations, please see me.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One (Jan 31):

Introduction: Global Fascisms / Global Antifa

Week Two (Feb 7):

1: Fascist Aesthetics (no class meeting)

Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*

Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression* (excerpts)

Jessica Benjamin & Anson Rabinbach, “Foreword” to *Male Fantasies*

2: Definitions & Debates

Week Three (Feb 14):

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (excerpts)

Geoff Eley, “What is Fascism & Where Does It Come From?”

Todd Gordon & Jeffery Webber, “The Return of Fascism?”

Alyosha Goldstein & Simón Ventura Trujillo, “Fascism Now?”

Week Four (Feb 21):

Enzo Traverso, “Antifascism between Collective Memory [...]”

Ewa Majewska, *Feminist Antifascism* (excerpt)

Roderick Ferguson, “Authoritarism & the Planetary Mission [...]”

Alyoxsa Tudor, “Decolonizing Trans/Gender Studies”

3: Colonial Fascisms

Week Five (Feb 28):

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

W.E.B. DuBois, “The African Roots of War”

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

Week Six (Mar 7):

Maaza Mengiste, *The Shadow King*

Vaughn Raspberry, *Race and the Totalitarian Century* (excerpts)

4: Black Marxist Antifascism

Week Seven (Mar 14):

George Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa*

Cedric Robinson, “Fascism and the Intersections [...]”

Alberto Toscano, “The Long Shadow of Racial Fascism”

Week Eight (Mar 21):

Langston Hughes, “Love Letter to Spain”

James Yates, from *Mississippi to Madrid* (excerpt)

Robin Kelley, “This Ain’t Ethiopia But It’ll Do”

5: Fascism & Antifa in the Americas

Week Nine (Mar 28):

Roberto Bolaño, *Nazi Literature in the Americas*

Verónica Gago, foreword to *Global Authoritarianism*

Ailynn Torres Santiago, “Anti-Feminist Meeting Points in Latin America” in *Global Authoritarianism*

6: Fascism & Antifa in South Asia

Week Ten (Apr 4):

Arundhati Roy, *Azadi* (excerpts)

Aijaz Ahmad, "India: Liberal Democracy & the Extreme Right"

Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism* (excerpts)

7: Queer & Anarchist Antifa

Week Eleven (Apr 11):

Angela Davis, *If They Come in the Morning* (excerpts)

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* (excerpts)

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, *Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle* (excerpts)

Spring Break: April 12 – 20

8: Abolitionist Antifa

Week Twelve (Apr 25):

Patrisse Kahn Cullors, *When They Call You a Terrorist* (excerpt)

We Charge Genocide, *Police Violence Against Chicago's Youth of Color*

Critical Resistance National Anti-Policing Working Group, "What is Fascism? What is Neoliberalism? Definitions"

9: Eco-Fascism & Border Abolition

Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*

Andreas Malm & Zetkin Collective, *White Skin, Black Fuel* (excerpts)

Red Nation, *The Red Deal* (excerpts)

10: Student Presentations

Student project presentations & discussion