

S&TS 1126: Science and Nazism

Spring 2008

Tuesday & Thursday, 1:25-2:40

RF 189

Instructor: Robert Schombs

rws33@cornell.edu

Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:00

Tuesday: 12:00-1:00

or by appointment

Required Texts: (Available in Cornell Store)

Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer*

Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*

Joseph Williams, *Style: Basics of Clarity and Grace*

Please bring the books to class when we are reading/discussing them.

Course Description:

From eugenics and human experimentation to conventional and atomic weapons development, many scholars argue that the National Socialists manipulated science for their own ends. Did the Nazis “corrupt” science, or is the notion of pure, disinterested science a myth? In this seminar, we will explore the relationships between science and politics in Weimar Germany and under Hitler, as well as in the United States and the Soviet Union. Texts will include papers by Albert Einstein, histories of the “hidden” German atom bomb project, debates over the roots of modern genetics in Dr. Josef Mengele’s twin studies at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Michael Frayn’s play *Copenhagen*. Writing assignments will help students construct well-supported, nuanced arguments and will foster critical thinking skills.

This course is not meant to be an introduction in S&TS or the history of science. Our primary goal is to learn about the nature of argument and the resources used to construct these arguments. This class will be an exercise in **reflexivity** – studying another in order to understand oneself. By studying how scientists around World War II constructed their world, and by studying how contemporary scholars construct arguments around these scientists’ activities, we can better understand how we construct our own worlds and construct our own arguments. Central to this process is the notion of **resources** – a resource is anything used to construct an argument, whether it is a scientific fact or theory, an ideology, an appeal to authority, etc. Throughout the semester, we will develop this concept of the resource – it will help you to analyze what we read as well as help you to produce your own writing and arguments.

Assignments:

There will be approximately 6 essays assigned during the semester. Three of these essays will go through extensive revision, peer review, drafts, etc. All essays should be typed in standard 12 point font, double spaced, with 1 inch margins. Essays should be stapled or paper-clipped. Essays should have your name, assignment number, date, and essay title at the top of the first page. Proofread and spell check your work. All writing is in the 'public domain' and may be shared with and read by other students in the class. Late work will lower the grade.

Reading Responses: Reading responses addressing each week's readings will be crucial for deeper engagement with the course material. Each week you should e-mail me by **8:00 PM** on the **Wednesday before class** a ~1 page reading response. If you go over one page, that's fine, but certainly no more than two pages (double spaced). In your reading response you should attempt to synthesize and critically evaluate **one or more** of the week's readings. By "critically" I don't necessarily mean that you *must* disagree or find fault with the positions of the authors, though of course that certainly is an option. Try to avoid simple summarizing. There is no strict format for what a RR should look like; examples of RR ideas include (**but are not limited to**):

- Criticizing an author's argument with your own well-constructed argument, grounded in solid evidence;
- Highlighting an argument/position/idea that you found interesting or puzzling;
- Uncovering "themes" that run through the week's readings;
- Connecting this week's readings to previous week's readings;
- Connecting the reading to outside sources (newspaper/magazine articles, other books, other courses, etc.)¹;
- Connecting the readings to your own experiences (do avoid triviality, however);
- Some combination of the above.

You are responsible for 8 reading responses (out of a possible 12). Reading responses are graded check minus, check, or check plus.

Conferences: We will meet at least twice during the year for scheduled one-on-one conferences in order to assess your progress and discuss any difficulties you may be having.. I encourage you to make use of my office hours as well.

Attendance: Attendance at all classes is required. Any more than two absences will damage your final grade. Please let me know in advance (if possible) if there are any health/family emergency/religious conflicts.

¹ Please cite your sources!

Grading:

10% Participation (includes attendance and participation in in-class activities and discussion)

15% Reading Responses

20% Assignment IV

25% Assignment V

30% Assignment VI

All papers/reading responses can be revised and turned in as many times as you wish.

Legal Stuff: This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances, so that arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Academic Integrity: Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted for academic credit must be the student's own work. Full citations are expected for all quoted and paraphrased material, regardless of source. All sources of ideas must be properly cited. Make yourself familiar with Cornell's Academic Integrity Code here: <http://www.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>. This code, together with a guide to *Acknowledging the Work of Others*, can be downloaded from <http://web.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/docs/main.html>. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an "F" for the term.

Collaborative work of the following kinds is authorized in this course: peer review and critique of students' essays by one another and, when approved by the instructor in particular cases, collaborative projects by pairs of students.

To get reading on E-journals: Go to library.cornell.edu. Click on 'e-journals.' Search for the title of the journal. Click the appropriate result and the appropriate date range. Search the journal website for the article. If you have any problems finding readings, let me know.

Reading is due the day listed.

@ = E-journals (Cornell library website)

Week 1 – Good Science, Pure Science, Nazi Science

January 20

First day of class – no reading.

January 22

Margit Szöllösi-Janze, "National Socialism and the Sciences: Reflections, Conclusions, and Historical Perspectives," in Margit Szöllösi-Janze (ed.), *Science in the Third Reich*, (New York: Berg, 2001), 1-17.

Robert Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1-13.

Week 2 – Galton, Darwin, and Eugenics

January 27

Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), Ch I, Ch IV

Eric Katz, "A Brief Historical Background," in *Death by Design: Science, Technology, and Engineering*, ed. by Eric Katz (New York: Pearson, 2006), xii-xix.

January 29

John Cornwell, *Hitler's Scientists: Science, War and the Devil's Pact* (New York: Penguin, 2003) 71-90.

Week 3 – Racial Hygiene

February 3

Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1-45.

February 5

Reading TBA

Week 4 – Racial Hygiene II

February 10

Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-26.

February 12

Reading TBA

Week 5 – Argument and Evidence

February 17

@Mark Walker, “National Socialism and German Physics,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1989, 24:63-89.

February 19

Library Visit

Week 6 – German Physics, Jewish Physics

February 24

Physics and National Socialism: An Anthology of Primary Sources, ed. by Klaus Hentschel (Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1996), 119-127.

Alan D. Beyerchen, *Scientists Under Hitler: Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 123-140

February 26

Alan D. Beyerchen, *Scientists Under Hitler: Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 199-210.

Week 7 – Copenhagen I

March 3

Mark Walker, “Hitler’s Bomb,” *Nazi Science: Myth, Truth, and the German Atomic Bomb* (New York: Plenum, 1995), 183-206.

March 5

Copenhagen + Postscript

Week 8 – Copenhagen II

March 10

Copenhagen + Postscript

March 12

@David C. Cassidy, “New Light on *Copenhagen* and the German Nuclear Project,” *Physics in Perspective*, 2002, 4:447-455.

Jeremy Bernstein, *Hitler’s Uranium Club: The Secret Recordings at Farm Hall* (Woodbury, NY: AIP Press, 1996), 117-144. [Do not read/print 145-163]

Week 9

March 17

SPRING BREAK

March 19

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 – Mengele and Nazi Medical Experimentation

March 24

@Robert Proctor, “Nazi Science and Nazi Medical Ethics: Some Myths and Misconceptions,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 2000, 43:335-346.

@William E. Seidelman, “Mengele Medicus: Medicine’s Nazi Heritage,” *The Milbank Quarterly*, 1988, 66:221-239.

@Ute Deichmann, “An unholy alliance,” *Nature*, 2000, 405:739.

Gerald L. Posner and John Ware, *Mengele: The Complete Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), 19-59.

March 26

Williams, Lesson 4

PEER REVIEW

Week 11 – “Good” Science? The Nazi War on Cancer

March 31

Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 173-247.

April 2

Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 248-278.

Week 12 – Comparative Perspectives

April 7

Jessica Wang, *American Science in an Age of Anxiety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pages TBA.

April 9

Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 121-134.

Williams, Lessons 5 & 7

Week 13 – What is Good Science?

April 14

Eric Katz, “On the Neutrality of Technology: The Holocaust Death Camps as a Counterexample,” in *Death by Design: Science, Technology, and Engineering*, ed. by Eric Katz (New York: Pearson, 2006), 289-305.

April 16

Robert Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 262-271.

Week 14

April 21

Reading TBA

April 23

Reading TBA

Week 15 – Wrap Up

April 28

No reading – Work on final paper

May 1

No reading – Work on final paper