



HISTORY 1404E (570)
Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini: The Totalitarian Age
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Dr. Nicolas Virtue
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Course Information

Mode of instruction: in-person

Calendar Description:

An introduction to the theory and practice of totalitarianism through a comparative study of regimes established by Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. Topics include the seizure of power, personality cults, culture, education and propaganda, bio-politics, terror, war, the Holocaust, resistance movements.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s): [History 2147A/B](#).

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: History

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

HISTORY 1404E (570)

HITLER, STALIN AND MUSSOLINI: THE TOTALITARIAN AGE

Instructor: **Nicolas Virtue** (nvirtue2@uwo.ca)

In today's political atmosphere of resurgent extremism, authoritarianism, democratic crisis, and culture war, the study of "totalitarianism" and the history of the "Totalitarian Age" are more relevant than ever. Indeed, political pundits, activists, and journalists have increasingly drawn parallels between current events and the totalitarian past. But comparisons to and warnings from the past cannot be evaluated accurately without a deep understanding of historical context. This course delves into the dynamics of political crisis, radicalism, mass mobilization, dictatorship, and genocidal violence that defined Europe's Totalitarian Age in the first half of the twentieth century.

Students will examine the regimes of Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler through a narrative and thematic framework, taking into consideration the underlying precursors and immediate circumstances that facilitated their rise to power, as well as the differences and similarities in how they wielded that power. In the process, students will gain a broader understanding of the major social, political, cultural, and intellectual developments of the twentieth century — developments whose effects are still felt today.

As a 1000-level History course, class material and assessments are designed to introduce students to the historical method, including historiography, essay writing, and the critical analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Mode of instruction: in person.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- identify and explain the historical and present-day significance of key facts, ideas, events, and people related to the Totalitarian Age
- apply theories of totalitarianism to interpret the past
- analyze primary sources (documents, images, and artifacts) in their historical context
- read and understand scholarly secondary sources, with an awareness of the varying interpretations, approaches, and perspectives within the historiography of a topic
- use library resources and online databases for academic research
- follow the standards of university-level essay writing, including formulating a thesis statement, organizing an evidence-based argument, and citing sources properly
- communicate and express their ideas clearly in writing and in small groups

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

COURSE TEXT (REQUIRED)

Bruce F. Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini: Totalitarianism in the Twentieth Century*, 4th ed. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

- Physical (\$50.95) and electronic (\$40.00) copies are available for purchase from the [Western Bookstore](#)
- Also available as an e-text through [Western Libraries](#) (limited to three concurrent users)

Note: Additional reading and exercise material will be provided through OWL Brightspace.

COURSE EVALUATION

Tutorial Participation	20%	weekly
Annotated Bibliography	10%	due October 9
Article Analysis	10%	due November 6
Midyear Assessment	10%	December exam period
Primary Source Essay	20%	due March 19
Final Exam	30%	April exam period

Tutorial Participation (20%)

Weekly tutorial sessions will involve small-group discussions on course content as well as practical workshops on research and writing. Tutorial materials and discussion questions will be made available on OWL. Students will be graded out of 5 for each tutorial, according to the following rubric:

- 0/5 — student failed to attend tutorial session
- 2/5 — student attended tutorial but did not participate or contribute
- 3/5 — limited participation in tutorial
- 4/5 — actively participated in discussion or group work, making thoughtful contributions
- 5/5 — active, thoughtful, and respectful contributor, taking leadership in group sessions

Note: Participation during class lectures will also contribute to overall participation grades.

Midyear Assessment (10%)

The Midyear Assessment quizzes students on material and concepts discussed in the first term. The Assessment will be made up of short-essay questions. A study guide will be provided.

Final Exam (30%)

The three-hour cumulative final exam will be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar and held during the April exam period. Students can expect a combination of short-answer and essay-response questions. A study guide will be provided in advance of the exam.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: THE 'CLEAN WEHRMACHT'

The three written assignments in this course (the Annotated Bibliography; the Article Analysis; and, the Primary Source Essay) are connected. Through these assignments, students will delve into the confrontation between the Nazi and Soviet regimes on the eastern front of the Second World War, arguably the culminating point of the Totalitarian Age. Specifically, the assignments examine the behaviour of the German armed forces (the *Wehrmacht*) and their role in the Holocaust and other aspects of Nazi criminality in occupied Soviet territories. Each assignment builds upon the other, simulating the methods that historians use to conduct research.

All written assignments will be due on the dates and times indicated in the course schedule. Assignments will be submitted digitally and graded on OWL. Because this is an Essay (E) course, **all written work must be submitted in order to pass the course** (even if late penalties would reduce an essay grade to zero).

Note: Detailed instructions and materials for each assignment will be made available on OWL. The assignment descriptions below are for informational purposes only.

Annotated Bibliography (10%)

The first assignment introduces students to the fundamentals of finding, evaluating, and documenting sources in history. Students will use library databases to gather reliable sources (including books, academic articles, and primary sources) for research into the topic of the German army's role on the eastern front. They must cite the sources according to the Chicago Manual of Style in an annotated bibliography.

Article Analysis (10%)

The second assignment introduces students to scholarly writing and historiography. It will focus on reading comprehension. Students will be assigned an academic journal article or book chapter and will be asked to identify its thesis, main arguments, source base, conclusions, and historiographical significance.

Primary Source Essay (20%)

The third assignment tests students on their ability to comprehend and analyze historical documents, and asks them to weigh in on the debates examined through the first two assignments. The class will be given a large selection of primary sources related to the German invasion and occupation of parts of the Soviet Union in 1941 and 1942. Drawing upon this wide range of sources, students will develop their own interpretations or arguments that describe and account for the behaviour of the German army on the eastern front during the Second World War. In the process, students will evaluate other interpretations of the topic. Thus, students will not merely summarize the contents of the sources, but will place them into their historical context, demonstrating how they relate to one another, to various themes, and to historiography. The essay should be **1,750–2,250 words** in length.

CLASS POLICIES

Students should familiarize themselves with the College-wide and Departmental policies outlined in the pages appended to this syllabus. These appendices include useful information and links about late penalties, academic offenses, student absences, support services at King's, etc. In addition to these general policies, please note the following class-specific policies.

Essay Course Requirement

Because this is an Essay (E) course, **all written work must be submitted** in order to pass the course (even if late penalties would reduce an essay grade to zero). This policy applies to the Annotated Bibliography, Article Analysis, and Primary Source Essay.

Late Essays

This course adheres to the History Department's policy regarding written work submitted after the deadlines indicated in the course schedule: **late essays receive a 5 percent penalty for the first day after the deadline; 1 percent for each subsequent day**, including weekends; essays submitted after the seventh day following the deadline will receive a grade of 0.

Attendance and Absences

Tutorial participation makes up a significant proportion of the final course grade and the exams will be based on lecture and tutorial material, so regular attendance is essential to succeed in this course. **Attendance records are kept for tutorials.** Students who fail to attend at least three tutorial sessions per term may be debarred from writing the Final Exam. Students who miss a tutorial for medical or other compelling reasons may be given the opportunity to complete an **alternative written make-up assignment** on the tutorial material, after consulting the course instructor, to receive credit for the missed tutorial.

Attendance is not taken for lectures, but students who miss class are responsible for securing lecture notes from a colleague. The instructor will post lecture slideshows on OWL, but not detailed notes. **Academic consideration for the Midyear Assessment requires submission of formal supporting documentation.**

AI/ChatGPT

Within this course, **use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as Chat GPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, etc.) is not permitted** for written work submitted for evaluation. This course introduces students to basic skills that they will need in order to use AI tools effectively in future courses, when permitted. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

Turnitin Analysis

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

SCHEDULE

Note: a detailed schedule of lecture and tutorial readings will be provided on OWL Brightspace.

2026

UNIT 1. THEORY AND ORIGINS

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|---|--------------------------|
| Week 0 (September 9–11) | NO CLASS |
| • NO TUTORIAL | |
| Week 1 (September 14–18) | INTRODUCTION |
| • Tutorial 1. Meet and Greet | |
| Week 2 (September 21–25) | DEFINING TOTALITARIANISM |
| • Tutorial 2. Finding Sources (OWL) | |
| Week 3 (September 28–October 2) | CRISIS OF MODERNITY |
| • NO TUTORIAL (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation) | |
| Week 4 (October 5–9) | TOTAL WAR |
| • Tutorial 3. Citing Sources (OWL) | |
| • DUE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (via OWL by 11:59pm on Friday) | |

UNIT 2. THE SOVIET UNION

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| Week 5 (October 12–16) | READING WEEK |
| Week 6 (October 19–23) | TSARIST RUSSIA |
| • Tutorial 4. Historiography (OWL) | |
| Week 7 (October 26–30) | LENIN'S REVOLUTION |
| • Tutorial 5. Working with Primary Sources (OWL) | |
| Week 8 (November 2–6) | RISE OF STALIN |
| • NO TUTORIAL | |
| • DUE: ARTICLE ANALYSIS (via OWL by 11:59pm on Friday) | |
| Week 9 (November 9–13) | STALIN'S REVOLUTION |
| • Tutorial 6. Propaganda Posters (OWL) | |

Week 10 (November 16–20)	STALIN'S TERROR
• Tutorial 7. Article Discussion (OWL)	
Week 11 (November 23–27)	NO CLASS
Week 12 (November 30–December 4)	GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR
• Tutorial 8. Barbarossa through Soviet Eyes (OWL)	
Week 13 (December 7–9)	LATE STALINISM
• NO TUTORIAL	
Midyear Exam Period (December 11–22)	MIDYEAR ASSESSMENT
• MIDYEAR ASSESSMENT (Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar)	

2027

UNIT 3. FASCIST ITALY

Week 14 (January 4–8)	LIBERAL ITALY
• Tutorial 9. Italian Futurism (OWL)	
Week 15 (January 11–15)	RISE OF FASCISM
• Tutorial 10. Blackshirt Violence (OWL)	
Week 16 (January 18–22)	MUSSOLINI'S REVOLUTION
• Tutorial 11. Fascist Material Culture (OWL)	
Week 17 (January 25–29)	FASCIST TERROR
• Tutorial 12. Fascist Racism (OWL)	
Week 18 (February 1–5)	FASCIST ITALY AT WAR
• Tutorial 13. Military Propaganda (OWL)	
Week 19 (February 8–12)	MUSSOLINI'S DOWNFALL
• Tutorial 14. Writing Essays (OWL)	

UNIT 4. NAZI GERMANY

Week 20 (February 15–19)	READING WEEK
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- Week 21 (February 22–26) RISE OF THE NAZIS
- Tutorial 15. German Women Voters (OWL)
- Week 22 (March 1–5) THE HITLER STATE
- Tutorial 16. Hitler’s Worldview (OWL)
- Week 23 (March 8–12) HITLER’S REVOLUTION
- Tutorial 17. Essay Workshop
- Week 24 (March 15–19) HITLER’S WAR
- NO TUTORIAL
 - **DUE: PRIMARY SOURCE ESSAY** (via OWL by 11:59pm on Friday)
- Week 25 (March 22–25) HITLER’S EUROPE
- Tutorial 18. Holocaust Photography (OWL)
- Week 26 (March 29–April 2) HITLER’S DOWNFALL
- Tutorial 19. Assignment Debrief (OWL)
- Week 27 (April 5–9) OVERFLOW / EXAM REVIEW
- Tutorial 20. Totalitarianism Today (OWL)
- Final Exam Period (April 12–30)
- **FINAL EXAM** (Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar)

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic

Offence, is posted at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.