

The Origins of Totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt
Spring 2024 | Class #: 29853
IDH2930 | Honors, (Un)Common Reads

Time and Location

Wednesday, Period 4 (10:40 am - 11:30 am)
Little Hall, 0119

Instructor

Prof. Nathan Pinkoski
nathanpinkoski@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-430 pm, or by appointment.
Location: Computer Science and Engineering Building (CSE/E) 508.

Description

Written after the Second World War, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is possibly the century's most brilliant account of what totalitarianism is and how it reached its apogee under two regimes: the USSR under Joseph Stalin and Germany under Adolf Hitler. Hannah Arendt's evaluation of these regimes certainly is one of the most penetrating ever written. But *Origins* is also an argument against seeing totalitarianism as a historical set-piece. Rather, it remains a persistent temptation in modern times. The book tells how European nations fell apart in the 19th and 20th centuries, precisely at the moment when they became more developed and democratic. This movement uprooted human beings from prior constraints, making it easier for totalitarian ideologies to take hold. So Arendt's historical narrative is a disquieting account of the inherent weaknesses of mass democracy. Moreover, Arendt is attentive to the disturbing plasticity of the human condition. She describes how totalitarianism transforms human beings and provides incisive psychological accounts into the nature of isolation, loneliness, and evil.

Our reading of *Origins* will be multidisciplinary in method and scope as we draw insights from history, political science, philosophy, and sociology to understand Arendt's arguments. We'll also examine how her arguments have been used in more contemporary settings, assessing the extent to which they are faithful to her concerns.

Required Text

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Press, 1976)
Paperback ISBN: 978-0156701532

The focus for each week will come from *Origins*, as noted in our course schedule below. However, all students are encouraged to read the whole book as soon as possible.

There is an enormous philosophical and historical literature on the period covered by *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, as well as on Hannah Arendt herself. If a particular theme, question, or idea interests you, please write to the instructor and I'll be happy to suggest some relevant further reading.

Course Schedule

Jan. 10	Introduction
Jan. 17	Prefaces
Jan. 24	Ch. 1
Jan. 31	Ch. 2
Feb. 7	Ch. 3
Feb. 14	Ch. 4

Feb. 21	Ch. 5-6
Feb. 28	Ch. 7-8
Mar. 6	[<i>In-class midterm</i>]
Mar. 20	Ch. 9
Mar. 27	Ch. 10
Apr. 3	Ch. 11
Apr. 10	Ch. 12
Apr. 17	Ch. 13
Apr. 24	[<i>In-class final</i>]

Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Value
Participation	All term	40%
Midterm Exam	Sep. 20th	30%
Final Exam	Dec. 6th	30%

I. Attendance and Participation (40%)

This is a text-focused, discussion-based seminar. You should come to class on time and fully prepared to discuss the assigned reading for the week. Your participation grade comprises both active class participation and the submission of written discussion questions:

1. 20% of your grade is based on class participation. An exemplary participant shows evidence of having completed the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens respectfully to other students and the instructor. Half of your participation grade each week depends on being present and respectful in class, and half of it depends on your coming to class having carefully read the assigned text.
2. 20% of your grade depends on the submission, once a week, of either a discussion question or reading reflection. Submissions should be 150-250 words in length and demonstrate close engagement with the text. Submissions should not include lengthy quotes from the text; you may paraphrase as needed (citing page numbers appropriately), but the content of your submission should be your own original work. Submissions should be posted to our Canvas discussion board by the night before class each week (so, Tuesday before midnight); no credit will be given for late submissions. Students should be prepared to discuss their submissions during class time. Submissions are only due in weeks when there is new/assigned reading.

Class participation involves regular and timely attendance. Students are allowed one free unexcused absence during the semester; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point deduction from your *overall course grade*. Please see the Attendance Policy below for further details on excused absences. Students are expected to be present, engaged, and respectful towards the instructor and fellow students. Please avoid cell phone use, and please do not eat in class.

II. Midterm Exam (30%)

The midterm exam will be an in-class, closed-book written exam comprised of short answer and textual identification and analysis questions.

III. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be an in-class, closed-book written exam comprised of responses to essay questions.

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

A Note on Technology

To avoid distractions, please silence your phone and put it away during class. Unapproved/inappropriate phone use in class will affect your participation grade for the day.

In the interest both of a productive and engaged discussion, and of protecting your own focus, I strongly encourage you to take notes by hand and keep all technology use to a minimum. However, I understand that some students may need to use a laptop to take notes. If you plan to use a laptop in class, please avoid Internet use, and use your laptop only for note-taking. Inappropriate laptop or tablet use will affect your participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation are expected, and are an important part of your final grade. One free unexcused absence per semester is allowed; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point reduction in your overall final grade. Excused absences are permitted consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Students requesting an excused absence should email the instructor as soon as possible and may be asked to provide supporting documentation of the reason for their absence.

Make-up dates for in-class exams will only be allowed in the event of a documented illness or emergency. Students should contact the instructor as early as possible to make arrangements.

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this

code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Honors Program

Contact: Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>