

The University of Toronto

POETS AND POWER: ART UNDER THE NAZIS

CCR 199Y L0251 / 2018-19

Instructor: **JOHN ZILCOSKY**

Departments: German / Comparative Literature

Office: Northrop Frye Hall #214

Office Hours: Mon. 2-3 PM (& by app't) (fall)

Class meets on **Mondays, 11:00 – 1:00 in NF 332**

DESCRIPTION

Did you know that Hitler was a failed artist? Goebbels a poet? Göring a collector of art? That there was an orchestra in Auschwitz? Why did art have this peculiar prominence under Nazism? In this course we will examine how politics and aesthetics interlace in various ways: the fascist cult of beauty; the theatrics of political propaganda; anti-Semitic “entertainment” film; and the eroticization of the Führer-figure. We will investigate this marriage between beauty and violence, and ask ourselves: what made Nazism so attractive to so many? We will begin by examining the great aesthetic movements from the pre-Nazi era through to Hitler’s 1937 ban on “degenerate,” modern art—in favor of returning to Greek and Roman images of beauty. Throughout the course, we will consider some of the high points of German culture—in philosophy, music, and literature—and ask: How did a society that produced such works of genius also create Nazism and the Holocaust? Are there any similar mixtures of art and politics in our world today?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND WEEKLY SCHEDULE: TBA