



Totalitarian Regimes in Central European Countries in the 20th Century

(Thematic Seminar)

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30 hours / 6 ECTS

Introductory description

The primary aim of the course is to show the 20th century as the most dramatic period in the history of the European continent. The unimaginable barbarianism of the last century affected particularly the nations of Central Europe. Today, the birth, rise and consequences of totalitarian systems are the subject of many historical, sociological or political studies.

The totalitarian systems have yet to be thoroughly analyzed in philosophical terms. In-depth philosophical analysis can help to reveal the real story behind the rise and functioning of Communism, Fascism and National Socialism. It appears that in the philosophical studies on totalitarianism, a particularly important role may be played by the category of nihilism. As we ask questions about the understanding of good and evil after Auschwitz and the Gulag, we may find that nihilism as the truth about the disintegration of the permanent foundations of morality and culture leads us to a more profound understanding of the dark mysteries of the last century.

During the classes the totalitarian systems will be presented in the wider context of the history of ideas and the ethical concepts.

Course content

- The history of Central Europe in the 20th century
- The philosophical roots of totalitarian systems
- Birth and development of Communism
- Specificity of the fascist state
- Ideology of National Socialism
- A vision of new morality in totalitarian systems



- The concept of revolutionary morality
- Nihilism and totalitarianism
- Totalitarian forms of crimes and slavery
- Ethical evaluation of totalitarian regimes
- Good and evil after Auschwitz and the Gulag
- Solidarity Movement and the fall of the Berlin Wall
- Philosophical analysis of Post-communism
- From Post-communism to liberal democracy
- European memory of totalitarianism

Requirements of credits – Assessment criteria

- Attending classes
- Reading texts and taking part in the discussions
- Submitting one essay on a chosen topic concerning Totalitarian Regimes in Central European Countries in the 20th Century (7-8 pages)

References / Literature / Reading list

1. Hannah Arendt, *The origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York 1951.
2. Alain Besançon, *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Wilmington 2007.
3. Stéphane Courtois (ed.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1999.
4. Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction*, Duke University Press, Durham 1997.
5. Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2003.
6. Andrzej Kobyliński, *From Nihilism to Communism. In Search of the Philosophical Roots of Totalitarian Regimes*, *Acta Moralia Tyrnaviensia VI*, University of Trnava, Trnava 2015, p. 151-160.



7. Marta Rabikowska, *The Everyday of Memory. Between Communism and Post-Communism*, Peter Lang Verlag, Bern 2013.
8. Georg Weigel, *The Final Revolution. The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1992.