

## ***Fascism in History***

Professor Matthew Specter  
OLLI UC Berkeley

Thursdays 2:30-4:00 pm  
**Sept. 22 and 29, October 6 and 13**  
Fall 2022

### Course Description:

This course examines fascism's paradoxical trajectory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from revolutionary political experiment to established tradition. Nearly every European country in the interwar period had a fascist movement, but in only a few countries did a fascist party actually assume power. Those that did were responsible for World War II, the Holocaust and indelibly shaped politics worldwide since 1945. Frequently pronounced dead, fascism refuses a proper burial. What is it about fascism, that zombie-like, continues to haunt our politics? Throughout this four-lecture course, we treat fascism's dual characteristics as history and theory: not only as a defining phenomenon of 20<sup>th</sup> century mass politics but also as a living tradition of political thought that continues to mutate in unpredictable ways.

### Course Outline:

Sept. 22: In Lecture 1 we examine the personalities of Mussolini and Hitler; how the German and Italian fascist political parties evolved from a fringe movements of radicals and outsiders to coopt established conservative elites; subverted democracy from within and created dictatorships; identify the social, economic and cultural goals of the two regimes before the outbreak of World War II; and a discussion of why both intellectual and social origins of European fascist movements matter.

Sept. 29 (pre-recorded): In Lecture 2, we introduce American admirers of Mussolini and Hitler and the little known American fascist fringe in the 1930s and '40s; summarize leading contemporary observers' debates about the character of fascism, including their anxieties and misunderstandings of it; and trace the formation of an antifascist tradition in the US and Europe.

Oct. 6: In Lecture 3, we turn to Spain, analyzing the political goals of the Spanish fascist party (the Falange); the relationship of the Falange to Franco's regime; the place of the Catholic Church in Franco's Spain; the imperialist dimension of fascism as expressed in the war aims of Spain, Germany and Italy in World War II; Romania's unusual religious fascism and collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Oct. 13: In Lecture 4, we turn to the period in world history since 1945 when a discredited and militarily defeated fascism was (at least partially) resurrected in the guise of "neofascism," neo-Nazism, and the radical right in France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Level, format and reading expectations:

The course has no prerequisites and presumes no background or formal education in 20<sup>th</sup> century European history or political theory. There is only one recommended book for the course, but students may read it at their own pace, and need not read specific chapters before each lecture. The text is: Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Vintage Books, 2004.

About 2/3 of our 90 minute sessions will be taken up with formal lecture with slides for images and maps. The remaining 30 minutes will be used for discussion of one brief primary source text per class (5-10 pages), as well as Q&A about the preceding lecture, orally, or using the chat function.