

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: HIST 395: From Victory to Defeat: Italy and the Two World Wars
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: Dr. Stephen Balzarini



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From Victory to Defeat: Italy and the Two World Wars

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will cover the period from Italy's victorious, but unfulfilled participation in World War I to its ignominious defeat in World War II. It is impossible to understand twentieth century Italy without addressing the major issues of geographic diversity, the disparity between the north and the south, nationalism and unification. As a consequence, the course will include a discussion of Italian unification in the late nineteenth century and its influence on the nation's development. The focus of the course will begin with Italy's participation in World War I and the disillusionment with the Paris Peace Conference. Other main topics will include: the rise of Benito Mussolini and Fascism as a new direction for Italy, the victory of Fascism and its influence on the lives of the Italian people, the origins of World War II and Mussolini's relationship with Adolf Hitler, Italy's participation in World War II, and its defeat and occupation. Central to the course is the issue of Fascism. Fascism is the only original twentieth century political philosophy to be created in the West. It is important to discuss its origins, rise, development, personalities, influence, impact and its residual effect.

TOPICS AND CALENDAR

The following schedule is based on a six-week course, with class four times a week for an hour and a half per class period. Each of the following topics is designed as roughly a class period with lecture and discussion.

Week 1:

I. Italian Unification

1. Introduction
2. Geography and Chronology of Italy: Diversity of Place and Time
3. Italian Unification and the Perils of a Modern State

II. Italy and World War I

4. European Imperialism and Italian Colonialism

Week 2:

5. Europe's Road to War
6. Italy Enters the War (May 1915): War with Austria in the Alps
7. Defeat, but Victory

8. The “Mutilated Peace”: Italy and the Paris Peace Conference

Week 3:

III. Mussolini and Fascism

9. Rise of Mussolini
10. Fascism Ideology
11. The “Seizure” of Power

IV. Life and Politics Under Mussolini’s Regime

12. Politics

Week 4:

13. Society
14. Church
15. Fascism
16. Economy

Week 5:

V. Mussolini, Hitler and the Coming of the Second World War

17. International Relations in the 1930s
18. Italian Expansionism: The Invasion of Ethiopia and its Ramifications
19. Appeasement and War

Week 6:

VI. Italy and World War II

20. General overview of the War and Italy’s role
21. Italian Defeat in Africa
22. Allied Invasion of Sicily and Italy
23. Italian Surrender—Mussolini Fights On
24. The Final Defeat and Its Consequences

COURSE ASSAIGNMENTS AND TESTS

Tentatively there will be two essay exams (possibly take-home in order to preserve the classroom time), daily discussions questions based on the readings, and some form of project. The project will be dependent upon the number of the students in the class. If possible, the project will be geared to a lecture topic which could then be presented by the student to the entire class.

Class participation (i.e., discussion and readings questions)	25%
Each exam will be worth 25%	50%
Project	25%

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

At present I am considering the following four books. Duggan's book will provide a brief overview of the period. Hibbert's book will provide the information on Mussolini. There are a number of better books, but they are much longer and I intend to use Bosworth (who has written arguably the best biography of Mussolini) for the discussion of life under Fascist Italy. This is a long book (over 600 pages), but a remarkable discussion of life and culture in Mussolini's Italy. De Grande's book on Fascism is recognized as a solid, and long-lived treatment of the subject. His interpretation differs somewhat from the most recent scholarship, but he defends his position and presents the new views in the current 3rd edition.

Christopher Duggan

A Concise History of Italy (Cambridge Concise Histories) (Paperback)

Cambridge University Press (May 27, 1994)

ISBN-13: 978-0521408486

This is a short history of Italy. It begins with the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and has a brief discussion of the medieval and Renaissance period. The focus (approximately two thirds) of the work is on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The book offers an excellent overview of the difficulties of unification and the integration of the various cultural and geographic differences within the Italian community.

Christopher Hibbert

Mussolini: The Rise and Fall of Il Duce

Palgrave Macmillan

ISBN-13: 978 0230606050

Although not the single best biography of Mussolini, Hibbert is an excellent narrative historian who provides a complete, compelling and readable discussion of the life of Benito Mussolini.

R. J. B. Bosworth,

Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945 (Paperback)

Penguin (Non-Classics)

ISBN-13: 978-0143038566

A remarkable volume on the daily lives of Italians living under the fascist dictatorship written by arguably the best scholar writing on Italy in English.

Alexander J. De Grande

Italian Fascism: Its Origins and Development (3rd ed.)

University of Nebraska Press

ISBN-13: 978-0803266223

An excellent, brief discussion of the ideology, development and practice of Fascism.