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Polsc. 710:

Political Theory

Spring 2019

I. Description:

Having just finished a book manuscript on *Regimes of Terror/Regimes of Memory: Beyond the Uniqueness of the Holocaust*, I want to pursue the question how societies that have produced regimes of terror or became victims of them have come to terms with the record of evil they left behind or experienced. Instead of using scholarly or literary texts, I want to focus on feature movies and documentaries to explore this processing of the past.

Beginning with the USA and its history of slavery and racism, I want to show and discuss the documentary on James Baldwin, *I'm not your Negro* (2016), and the feature movie *Hidden Figures* (2017). The Netflix documentary on mass incarceration, *The Thirteenth* (2017) will round off the American survey.

Moving to Europe, we start with Germany and the Nazi regime. Marcel Ophul's documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) surveys the impact of the German occupation of France from 1940 to 1944 by interviewing surviving occupiers and French citizens. The movie *Mephisto* (1985) portrays the collaboration of a great actor with the regime, providing a look at the roles other members of the German intellectual elite like Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt and the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, Wilhelm Furtwaengler, played. The *Sophie Scholl* (2005) movie shows the resistance of a courageous group of Munich university students. The Russian movie, *Attack on Leningrad* (2011), records the

German military attempt from 1941 to 1943 to starve the city of Leningrad (today's St. Petersburg) into deadly submission.

Masaki Kobayashi's documentary of the *International Military Tribunal for the Far East* (1983) provides a look at the issues a large number of the Japanese political elite are still considering unsettled. The somewhat blurred responsibility for the Pacific War and the occasionally apologetic posture about Japanese crimes against humanity, as narrated in the documentary, will be contrasted with Zhang Yimou's film, *The Flowers of War* (2012). This Chinese movie covers the terror and violence that the imperial Japanese army unleashed on the city of Nanjing in December of 1937. This imperial violence and its reluctant recognition in Japan became covered in the book *The Rape of Nanking* (1997) by the American-Chinese writer Iris Chang, who gave a talk on her book in November 1998 in the Campus Center Ballroom before an audience of 800.

From the imperial Japanese record of terror we will move to Cambodia where in the last trial in Phnom Penh against the surviving members of the so-called 'Brotherhood', 'Brother No. 2', Nuon Chea (92) and the head of state of the regime, Khieu Samphan (87) were sentenced on November 16, 2018 to life imprisonment for genocide and crimes against humanity, sentences they had received already in an earlier trial. The documentary by Rithy Panh, *S 21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) films the encounter between survivors and perpetrators at the detention center Tuol Sleng in Phnom Penh.

The last chapter of state sponsored terror in the course will be Indonesia where in 1965-66 between 500,000 and one million people were killed during a cleansing campaign against communists and left-leaning people during a military putsch against President Sukarno. The American Joshua Oppenheimer conducted interviews with survivors and perpetrators for the documentary *The Look of Silence* (2014). The historian Geoffrey B. Robinson just published a definitive book on this chapter in Indonesian history, *The Killing Season. A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66* (2018).

II. Requirements:

One research paper about a movie or documentary of the student's choice and using additional literature on the subject matter.

III. Selected Readings:

Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime. Race Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*. Yale University Press, 3d edition, 2008.

Michael Dyson, *What Truth Sounds Like. Robert F. Kennedy, James Baldwin, and Our Unfinished Conversation about Race in America*. St. Martin's Press 2018.

Ta-Nehesi Coates, *We were Eight Years in Power. An American Tragedy*. New York: One World Publishing 2017.

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin.

Bettina Stangneth, *Eichmann before Jerusalem. The Unexamined Life of a Mass-Murderer*. New York: Knopf.

Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*. Columbia/London: University of Missouri Press.

Geoffrey Robinson, *The Killing Season. A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66*. Princeton/London: Princeton University Press 2018.

Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books 2010.

IV. Calendar of the Class:

1/10

1/17

1/24

1/31

2/7

2/14

2/21

2/28

3/7

3/14

3/18-22 Spring Recess

3/28

4/4

4/11

4/18

4/25

5/2