Fascism & Film: Propaganda, Resistance, and Memory

The Nazis were perhaps most successful among fascist movements in using mass media to turn politics and even war into a form of aesthetic spectacle. In this course we will use films from a variety of cultural contexts and key theoretical texts to illuminate the relationship between film/photography and violence, power and mass manipulation. In the case of entertainment and popular cinema, we will analyze the images the Nazis created for themselves as well as the entertainment cinema they created to replace Hollywood, and the persistence of these constructs in post-war popular culture. The course will also place an emphasis on films that resisted Nazism or "resist the duplication of fascist aesthetics," both in aesthetic form and in content, and on films that attempt to preserve the memory of the victims of the Nazis -- predominantly the Jews of Europe, but also other ethnic minorities, foreign nationalities, gays and lesbians and the organized political left. Finally, segments of the semester will be set aside for case studies of recent films and the issues they raise.

This course is taught in English and has no prerequisites. Taught by Professor Barton Byg on Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:15 p.m., there will also be screenings on Mondays from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. This fulfills an AT and G gen-ed, and can count for Honors credit if the student adds an independent study.

Image from Harun Farocki's Images of the World and Inscription of War.