



**Course: “The Origins of Totalitarianism and its Revival Today”
8-session course for political, civic and church leaders**

Course description:

If we think that we have left totalitarianism behind in the 20th Century and that we are now in the 21st Century progressing unimpeded towards a new era of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, we are blind to reality. In spite of remarkable advances in this area, we also see a worrying and steady rise in totalitarian regimes, movements and ideologies around the world. The great political philosopher and Holocaust survivor Hannah Arendt writes: **“Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member.”** We see this demand made by well-known hard totalitarian regimes such as for example those of North Korea and China; but do we not also see this demand, albeit packaged in different wording and gestures, in many of the movements and ideologies that are now claiming prioritization in most of our societies? Censorship, de-platforming and the social and professional isolation of those that do not profess the latest proclaimed orthodoxy is now a daily occurrence, enhanced by the unchecked power of global economic interests, big technology companies and non-governmental organizations pressuring governments and international institutions into ideological compliance. **This course will explore how both soft and hard totalitarian movements are brought about and function, whilst also studying what history can teach us about bringing them to an end.**

Course structure:

Eight sessions of 50 minutes each, taught online in English and through the seminar method, allowing for active participation of the attendees (the recording can also be viewed later).

Course outline:

- Session 1: What is totalitarianism?
- Session 2: The road towards a totalitarian society I
- Session 3: The road towards a totalitarian society II
- Session 4: The road towards a totalitarian society III
- Session 5: Why Nazi totalitarianism was defeated
- Session 6: Why Soviet Communism self-destructed
- Session 7: The way out of a totalitarian system I
- Session 8: The way out of a totalitarian system II

Course outcomes:

1. Having identified the core elements of totalitarianism and how it is brought about
2. Understanding the distinction between hard and soft totalitarianism and how to address these ideologies effectively in our time.

Course work:

- Preparatory readings as assigned by the instructor (selections from the texts below)
- In-class seminar-style discussion
- A concluding 3-page essay (only if the participant wishes to count the course towards the ICLN Academy official “*Certificate in Public Leadership Studies*”).

Course texts:

- Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (first published 1950)
- Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy – Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies* (first published 2016)

Instructor:

Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau, J.D., LL.M holds law degrees from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and the University of Heidelberg (Germany) whilst also having studied law, philosophy and theology courses at Franciscan University of Steubenville, the University of Notre Dame (USA) and at the Ecole Saint-Jean in Saint Jodard (France). He obtained with distinction his doctorate in philosophy of law from the University of Vienna (Austria), writing a dissertation on “*Human Dignity and the Law in post-War Europe*”, which was published internationally in 2013. Dr. von Geusau practiced law at international law firms Houthoff and AKD in Amsterdam and Brussels from 1997 until 2004 and currently serves as President and Rector of *ITI Catholic University* in Austria, where he is also a Professor for Philosophy of Law and Christian Education. Von Geusau presides over the *International Catholic Legislators Network (ICLN)*, which he founded in 2010 to help political and church leaders grow through faith, formation and fellowship. He works closely with political, civic and church leaders throughout the world. You may access some of his lectures, interviews and presentations [here](#).

Practical details:

Please register [here](#). The course fee is €250, - per person (advance payment, non-refundable – *ICLN is a non-profit organization and fees go directly towards covering operational costs.*

At the end of the course and having completed all 8 sessions and the concluding essay, an ICLN Academy course participation certificate with full course details will be provided. The completed course counts towards the official ICLN Academy “*Certificate in Public Leadership Studies*”, which requires the completion of 12 core-curriculum courses.

Contact: office@icln.at - www.icln.at

Faith. Formation. Fellowship.