

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century German History

History 297.15
Phillips Hall 111
Wednesday, 2-3:50 PM
Office Hours: Monday 2-4 and by appointment.

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to some of the most important texts and problems of nineteenth- and twentieth century German historiography. We will begin by considering what a number of writers have either explicitly or implicitly identified as “the German question” or the “German problem.” We will then go on to look at how various writers have responded to, and modified, these classic statements of the German question. As we read each week, we will focus especially on these theoretical arguments (rather than on the details of what happened). The most important questions that we will ask are:

- 1) What is the author’s argument? What is the author arguing against?
- 2) What kinds of evidence does the author use? What kinds of evidence does the author not use?
- 3) What interpretive methods does the author use to approach this evidence.
- 4) How do the answers to questions 1-3 relate to each other?
- 5) How do the various works we read compare, contrast, build on, and undermine each other?

Course Requirements and Grading

Active class participation (includes attendance).....	30%
Weekly critical essays (see below)	30%
Final historiographical essay.....	40%

Assigned Texts

There are four main sources for our readings:

1. Books ordered for the course at the GWU bookstore.
2. Articles you should download and print from JSTOR (available through the GWU library website, aladin). These have JSTOR in parentheses after them.
3. Articles on reserve in the history department. These are marked with an asterisk (*). You should borrow these and photocopy them at the library (the department photocopier is not available for this purpose).
4. Articles that are posted on the web. These have the web address in parentheses after them.

Reading Recommendations:

1. Always print up on-line readings and make many underlines and margin notes.
2. Always bring all the reading for the day assigned.
3. Do not get bogged down in details of the reading. We are reading for argument, methods, big themes. For advice on reading for graduate school, read this on-line essay:
Timothy Burke, “How to Read a Book for a College Course”
<<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/tburke1/index.html>>. Choose “Professor Burke explains it all to you” from the sidebar and find the essay there (below “Should I go to Graduate School?”).

E-mail List

Make sure I always have your current e-mail and that you check your e-mail regularly.

Critical Essays

Every week you should bring with you to class a 2-3 pp. critical essay on the reading. The essay should answer the following questions:

- 1) What were the major themes, questions, and problems posed by the reading for the week?
- 2) What were the main answers given to these themes?
- 3) What are the authors for? What are they against?
- 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the authors?

These are short essays. Therefore you should focus only on the most important aspects, not on the details or minor aspects.

These essays will be the basis for our class discussion. I will likely call on you to share insights from your essay with the rest of the class.

I will not make many comments on the essays after the first few weeks, but I still do enjoy reading them. I grade them as pass or fail (I sometimes ask people to rewrite them).

You may miss one essay with no penalty.

Undergraduate German History

I am also teaching an undergraduate German history course this semester (H132). You should feel free to come to any of the lectures for that course, where I will lecture and lead discussions on primary sources. You should also feel free (even encouraged) to come to the German film series associated with that course. I will give you details later.

Course Outline and Readings

Session 1 (1/15): Introduction

Session 2 (1/22): Classic statements of the German problem 1: Germany's historical mission

James J. Sheehan, "What is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History," The Journal of Modern History 53 (1981): 1-23. (JSTOR)

*Georg G. Iggers, "Introduction" and "The High Point of Historical Optimism – the 'Prussian School,'" chs. 1 and 5 in The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present, rev. ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

*Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation (1808) (excerpts)

*Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "World History," sections 341-360 from Philosophy of Right (1821), in Introduction to the Philosophy of History with an Appendix from the Philosophy of Right, Leo Rauch, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988).

Session 3 (1/29): Classic statements of the German problem 2: Germany as a problem of social science

Frederick Engels, "The State of Germany," Letters to The Northern Star (1845), Marx-Engels Collected Works, vol. 6. Available at:
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1846/02/20.htm>

*Thorstein Veblen, "Imperial Germany," ch. 5 in Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution (1915; New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1964).

*Max Weber, "Capitalism and Rural Society in Germany" (1906), in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 363-85.

*Max Weber, "National Character and the Junkers" (1921), in Gerth and Mills, pp. 386-95.

*Alexander Gerschenkron, Bread and Democracy in Germany (1943; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. vii-xxxviii, 3-88, 91-104; 145-184.

*Alexander Gerschenkron, "Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective," in Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

*Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany (1965; New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 3-60, 348-426.

Optional: Max Weber, "Parliament and Democracy in Germany under a New Political Order" (1918) in Max Weber, Political Writings, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 130-271.

Session 4 (2/5): Hans-Ulrich Wehler and the Bielefeld School

Hans-Ulrich Wehler, The German Empire 1871-1918, trans. Kim Traynor (Dover, NH: Berg, 1985).

*Roger Fletcher, "Recent Developments in West German Historiography: The Bielefeld School and its Critics," German Studies Review 7 (1984): 451-480.

*James N. Retallack, "Social History with a Vengeance? Some Reactions to H.-U. Wehler's Das Deutsche Kaiserreich," German Studies Review 7 (1984): 423-450.

Session 5 (2/12): The Critique of the Sonderweg

David Blackbourne and Geoff Eley, The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Session 6 (2/19): Wilhelm II

John C.G. Röhl, The Kaiser and his Court: Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Translation of: Kaiser, Hof und Staat: Wilhelm II. und die deutsche Politik (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987).

Session 7 (2/26): The First World War

*Eckart Kehr, "The German Fleet in the Eighteen Nineties and the Politico-Military Dualism in the Empire" (1927) and "Class Struggle and Armament Policy in Imperial Germany," in Eckart Kehr, Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 1-21, 50-75.

*Gordon Craig, Editor's Introduction to Kehr, Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy, pp. vii-xxi.

*Selections from: Hans W. Gatzke, Germany's Drive to the West (1950); Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (1961); Gerhard Ritter, "The Political Role of Bethmann Hollweg during the First World War" (1965); Reply by Fritz Fischer (1965); Comment by Fritz Fellner (Salzburg); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "The Debate on German War Aims" (1966). All in: Gerald D. Feldman, ed., German Imperialism, 1914-1918: The Development of an Historical Debate (New York: John Wiley, 1972), pp. 141-218.

*Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Domestic Factors in German Foreign Policy before 1914" (1971), in James J. Sheehan, ed., Imperial Germany (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), pp. 223-268.

George L. Mosse, "Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience," Journal of Contemporary History 21 (1986): 491-513. (JSTOR)

*Belinda Davis, "Food Scarcity and the Empowerment of the Female Consumer in World War I Berlin," in Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 287-310.

J.M. Winter, "Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War," Journal of Modern History 64 (1992): 525-32. (JSTOR)

Session 8 (3/5): The Weimar Republic: Modernity in Crisis

Detlev Peukert, The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity (1987; New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

Session 9 (3/12): The Fall of the Weimar Republic: The Abraham controversy

David Abraham, The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis, rev. ed. (1981; New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986).

*David Abraham, Gerald Feldman, and Douglas Unfug, "Debate: David Abraham's The Collapse of the Weimar Republic," Central European History 17 (1984).

*Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "The Legend of Capitalist Support." Excerpt from German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). In Alan Mitchell, ed., The Nazi Revolution (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), pp. 110-117.

*S. Jonathan Wiesen, Introduction, Conclusion, and Table of Contents, West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past, 1945-1955 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Session 10 (3/19): Spring break (no class today)

Session 11 (3/26): Class cancelled today. Start reading for double session next week

Session 12 (4/2): The Third Reich: Totalitarianism, fascism, or what?

*Franz Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944 (1942; New York: Harper Torchbook, 1966), table of contents, preface, pp. 37-82, 221-234.

Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951; San Diego: Harcourt, 1985), prefaces (pp. xvii-xl), chs. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, part III. (pp. 3-53, 123-157, 185-221, 267-479).

Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?," The American Historical Review 73 (1967): 404-424. (JSTOR)

Deklev J.K. Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life, trans. Richard Deveson (1982; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

Crew, Bartov, Lüdtke, Bock, Saldern, Mallmann and Paul, and Kershaw (Introduction and chs. 1-6) in David F. Crew, ed., Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945 (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Session 13 (4/9): The Holocaust and Second World War

Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (1963; New York: Penguin, 1977), chs. 1-3, 8, 15.

Herbert, Peukert, and Browning, in Crew (chs. 7-9).

*Christopher Browning, "Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941," in The Path to Genocide (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 3-27.

Omer Bartov, Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Session 14 (4/16): East Germany

Norman M. Naimark, The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-49 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Session 15 (4/23): Remembering the Holocaust

Harold Marcuse, Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Session 16 (4/30): Designated Monday (no class today)