History 71600 – Modern Germany and the World

Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30
Professor Steven Remy
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Office hour (in person and/or Zoom): Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30

This course offers an intensive introduction to the history and current historiography of modern Germany. We will focus on how historians are now assessing the continuities, breaks, catastrophes, influence, and innovations in Germany from the late 19th Century to the present.

The course is designed for students intending to specialize in this field and for those who wish to round out their engagement with modern European histories. Adding “and the world” to the course title is more than window dressing. While much of the class will be devoted to nation-centered historiography, we will also pay close attention to recent scholarship on Germany in broader contexts. So we will consider – among other topics - Imperial Germany and globalization, the imperial presence in Africa and its legacies, Weimar as history and legend, the global dimensions of Nazi ideology, warmaking, and empire building, the Holocaust in comparative perspective and an important recent challenge to the concept of genocide, and the post-World War II radical left and right in global contexts.

See the three appendixes at the end of the syllabus for more information.

Texts:


Class meeting & assignment schedule

February 2  
Course introduction

Stelzel, *History after Hitler*


February 9  
New approaches to the history of Imperial Germany

Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp, eds., *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives*, introduction & part IV

Beachy, introduction & chps. 1-5

Bradley Naranch, “Introduction: German Colonialism Made Simple” and Klaus Mühlhahn, “A New Imperial Vision? The Limits of German Colonialism in China,” in Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age*


February 16  
The 20th Century’s First Genocide

Reinhart Kössler, “From Genocide to Holocaust? Structural Parallels and Discursive Continuities,” *Africa Spectrum* 40 (2005), no. 2


**February 23**  
**The First World War and its aftermath**

Shelley Baranowski, from *Nazi Empire*, chp. 2

Roger Chickering, “Imperial Germany’s Peculiar War, 1914-1918” *Journal of Modern History* 88 (2016), no. 4


Hew Strachan, “The First World War as a global war” *First World War Studies* 1 (2010), no. 1


Alan Kramer, “German War Crimes 1914 and 1941: The Question of Continuity” from Müller and Torp, eds., *Imperial Germany Revisited*

**March 2**  
**The Weimar Complex**

Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, preface to the Weimar centennial edition and chps. 7 and 10

Jochen Hung, "Bad" Politics and "Good" Culture: New Approaches to the History of the Weimar Republic *Central European History* 49 (2016), nos. 3-4

Beachy, chps. 6-8 & epilogue

Brett M. Van Hoesen, “The Rhineland Controversy and Weimar Postcolonialism,” in Naranch and Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age*

Julia Sneeringer, “Glitter and Post-Punk Doom: *Babylon Berlin* through the Lens of 1980s West Berlin”

**March 9**  
**National Socialism, war, & genocide, part 1**


Dupes? Emotion and Race in Historiographical Debates about Women in the Third Reich” all in Devin O. Pendas and Mark Roseman, eds., _Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany_

Dan Stone, from _Fascism, Nazism, and the Holocaust: Challenging Histories_, introduction, chps. 1, 5


**March 16**

**National Socialism, war, & genocide, part 2**

Shelly Baranowski, from _Nazi Empire_ chps. 5-6


Edward P. Westermann, from _Hitler’s Ostkrieg and the Indian Wars: Comparing Genocide and Conquest_, introduction, chps. 1, 5, and conclusion

Dan Stone, from _Fascism, Nazism, and the Holocaust_, chp. 11

Birthe Kundrus, “Colonialism, Imperialism, National Socialism: How Imperial Was the Third Reich?” in Naranch and Eley, eds., _German Colonialism in a Global Age_


**March 23**

**A new challenge to the concept of genocide**

Moses, _The Problems of Genocide_

**March 30**

**The postwar Germanys: West Germany, part 1**

Frank Biess, Mark Roseman, and Hanna Schissler, eds., *Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History*, part IV

Frank Biess and Astrid Eckert, "Why do we need new narratives for the History of the Federal Republic?" *Central European History* 52 (2019), no. 1

Joachim Haeberlen, "(Not) Narrating the History of the Federal Republic: Reflections on the Place of the New Left in West German History and Historiography," *Central European History* 52 (2019), no. 1

**April 6**

The postwar Germanys: West Germany, part 2

Werner Sollors, from *The Temptation of Despair*, introduction and chps. 1-4

Laura Jockusch and Gabriel Finder, “Introduction: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation,” from *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust*

Biess, *German Angst: Fear and Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany*, introduction, chps. 1, 5, and 9

Jay Howard Geller and Michael Meng, eds., *Rebuilding Jewish Life in Germany*, introduction, chps. 1-2

From Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, eds., *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, introduction, chps. 1 and 9, and conclusion

**April 13**

The postwar Germanys: East Germany

Andrew Port, “Introduction,” in Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port, eds., *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler*

Richardson-Little, *The Human Rights Dictatorship*

**April 27**


Frédéric Bozo, Andreas Rödder, and Mary Elise Sarotte, eds., *German Reunification*, editor's introduction and part 1


Harrison, *After the Berlin Wall*

**May 4**

1989/1990 and after, part 2:
Joyce Marie Mushaben, *Becoming Madam Chancellor*

**May 11 1989/1990 and after, part 3: The radical right after 1989**

Esther Adaire, “‘This Other Germany, the Dark One:’ Post-Wall Memory Politics Surrounding the Neo-Nazi Riots in Rostock and Hoyerswerda” *German Politics and Society* 37 (2019), no. 4

Michelle Kahn, “The American Influence on German Neo-Nazism: An Entangled History of Hate, 1970s–1990s” *Journal of Holocaust Research* 35 (2021), no. 2


**Final papers due by May 22**
Appendix 1: Assignments

There will be a strong emphasis on informed, regular in-class engagement with the week’s topic and reading assignments.

Weekly assignments: Each week you’ll write a 900-1200 word response to that week’s reading assignments. In advance of each class you’ll send me a copy and post it to the relevant discussion group on Blackboard.

On a practical level, I hope these assignments will hone your critical reading and writing skills and, not least, prepare you to contribute to productive and lively class discussions.

As the reading assignments vary – some weeks will be heavily historiographical, others will emphasize one or more thesis-driven, primary source-based monographs - I want you to consider the questions below and write your paper in response to one or more of them as you see fit.

Remember that not every one of these questions will be relevant in equal measure to each reading assignment. If you find yourself delving into one or two in particular, that’s fine.

1. What are the broader interpretive problems at stake? This is particularly important to think about when engaging with highly focused monographs.

2. What are the authors’ arguments? Be able to summarize arguments concisely and in your own words.

3. Historiographical context: what are the historiographies being engaged with in the week’s assignments?

4. What claims for significance are the authors making? Note that a claim for significance is not the same as a thesis and it is more than a historiographical justification.

   To put it bluntly, a claim for significance addresses the “so what?” question. To be more precise, it is the response to the question “why would scholars want to engage with this analysis?”

   There are multiple kinds of claims for significance. In our first class meeting I’ll present a taxonomy taken from Wendy Laura Belcher’s indispensable Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success (University of Chicago Press, 2019).

5. What is the evidentiary basis for the author’s analysis? How are the sources being used (or misused)?
6. What methodological frameworks and/or theoretical frameworks do the authors deploy, and how well have they done it?

7. To what extent to present political, social, or cultural concerns seem to have influenced the authors? What contexts – time period, place, institutional, generational, from particular “schools” of interpretation – to the authors seem to be working within or in response to?

8. Are the readings in dialogue with each other in any significant way?

9. You may, of course, come up with substantive and/or methodological or historiographical questions that fall outside the parameters listed above. If so, state and justify those concerns concisely.

Final paper: I will be flexible based on your needs: written and/or oral exam preparation or the substantial development of a research paper, journal article, or a thesis proposal are all options. We’ll discuss this in detail in class and one-on-one.

**Your final grade will be calculated as follows:**
Weekly assignments 50%
Regular informed participation in class meetings: 20%
Final paper: 30%

**NOTE: I will not grant “incompletes” (INC’s) for this course.**

The grading scale for ALL course grades is as follows:
90-100% = A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
below 60% = F
Appendix 2: General information regarding the study of modern German history:

While the question of “grand narratives” in trans-Atlantic context will occupy us in the first week of class, I will not ask you to digest all the major examples of this genre in this course. That doesn’t mean, however, that you should not be familiar with them, particularly if you plan to specialize in the history of modern Germany. Key authors include Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Thomas Nipperdey, James J. Sheehan, Reinhard Ruerup, and Helmut Walser Smith.

You should also familiarize yourselves with the historiography of the major “Historikerstreiten,” or historian’s controversies, since the 1960s, most notably the “Fischer affair,” the challenge to the “Sonderweg” thesis, the Historikerstreit of the 1980s, debates about German history in the wake of the linguistic turn, the controversy surrounding Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, and the debates over the “Crimes of the Wehrmacht” exhibit in the 1990s.

Students with a long-term intellectual and professional interest in the history of modern Germans speaking Europe should get into the habit of keeping up with the following journals:

*Central European History*
*First World War Studies*
*German History*
*German Studies Review*
*New German Critique*
*German Politics and Society*
*Holocaust and Genocide Studies*
*Journal of Modern History*
*Journal of Contemporary History*
*Journal of Genocide Research*
*Journal of Holocaust Research*
*Shofar*
*Yad Vashem Studies*
*Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*
*Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte Geschichte und Gesellschaft*
*Historische Zeitschrift*
*Vierteljahresshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte*
*Tel Aviver Jahrbuch fuer Zeitgeschichte*
*Zeitschrift fuer Geschichtswissenschaft*

Other resources:

The Bulletin of the German Historical Institute in Washington ([www.ghi-dc.org](http://www.ghi-dc.org)) is a particularly valuable source for tracking new research and summaries of recent conferences and workshops.
In addition, students should join one or more relevant listserves, the main one being H-German via www.h-net.msu.edu.

Also very important for keeping up with current research, conference and fellowship announcements, and links to other important networks is H-Soz-Kult platform (https://www.hsozkult.de)

It is also worth acquainting yourself with the activities and publications of major institutions devoted in whole or significant part to the study of modern Germany, among them:

The German Historical Institute (https://www.ghi-dc.org)
The German Studies Association (https://thegsa.org)
The Center for Jewish History (https://www.mjnnyc.org)
The Leo Baeck Institute (www.lbi.org)
The Hamburger Institut fuer Sozialforschung (https://www.his-online.de)
Institut fuer Zeitgeschichte (Munich) (https://www.ifz-muenchen.de)
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin fuer Sozialforschung (https://www.wzb.eu)
Berlin Zentrum fuer Wissenschaftsgeschichte (https://zwg.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de)
Jena Center 20th Century History (https://www.uni-jena.de)
The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (http://www.ushmm.org/research/center)
The Wiener Holocaust Library in London (https://www.wienerholocaustlibrary.org)
Yad Vashem (https://www.yadvashem.org)
The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (www.aicgs.org)
The American Academy in Berlin (https://www.americanacademy.de)
The Wilson Center/Cold War International History Project (Washington, DC) (https://www.wilsoncenter.org)

For tracking funding and fellowship opportunities, these sources are essential:

DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) (https://www.daad.org)
The H-German listserv
The German Historical Institute in Washington
Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (https://www.dfg.de)
Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (https://www.humboldt-foundation.de)
Appendix 3: course policies and other information

We will adhere to all state, city, CUNY, and Graduate Center regulations related to COVID-19.

Class begins promptly at 6:30. Please do not be habitually late.

Do not miss a class meeting without an acceptable explanation. If you miss as much as one class meeting without explanation, I reserve the right to ask you to withdraw from the seminar or accept a failing grade.

The University’s policy on academic integrity:

The faculty and administration of CUNY support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity policy can be found at http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/

If I have determined that you have committed plagiarism, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

Counseling Services:

The Wellness Center Student Counseling Services offers short-term individual and group counseling and psychotherapy, couples counseling, consultation and referral services, and a variety of programs and workshops relevant to graduate student life. These services are confidential and available free of charge to matriculated students registered at the GC. For more information: https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Student-Life/Health-Wellness/Counseling-Services