

HISTORY 364-01  
MODERN GERMANY: BISMARCK TO THE PRESENT

Prof. Weisensel  
307 Old Main  
1:00-2:20 MWF, and by appointment  
tel. x6570

SYLLABUS

This course will present a survey of the history and the interpretations of the history of modern Germany from the time of the unification of the German states in 1871 to the reunification in October 1990. The course starts with the German unification in the 19th century, but we will emphasize political and social history of the 20th century. The course has a motor, or “problematic,” which sets its direction: We will seek an answer to the question, did the dramatic events of German history, Bismarck’s “blood and iron” politics, Kaiser Wilhelm II’s confrontational foreign policy before WWI, Hitler and the rise of the Nazis, World War II, and the Holocaust, all occur because the Germans are uniquely aggressive and racist? Or, conversely, is Germany essentially like other European countries, differing only in the “unfortunate accidents” (e.g., defeat in WWI, or, the extraordinary depth of the Great Depression in Germany) she lived through? Did Hitler, the Nazis and the Holocaust then occur for accidental reasons? Do events since 1945 support one or the other interpretation?

Each student will write two essays (4-6 pp. each), and a research paper (including submission of a first draft) on a topic of their own choosing (12-15 pp.). The final grade will be computed as follows: 2 essays= 40%; research paper= 40%; and class attendance and contributions to the discussions= 20%. Class attendance and contributions to the discussions will be important in calculating your final grade. As you see, it will not help you to cut class, or to come to class unprepared to contribute.

Readings (Available at The Macalester Bookstore (Lampert Building) and, in many cases, on reserve at the Macalester Library):

Volker Berghahn, Modern Germany. Society, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century;

Peter Gay, Weimar Culture;

Ian Kershaw, The Hitler Myth;

Omer Bartov, Hitler’s Army;

Funder, Stasiland;

Konrad Jarausch, The Rush to German Unity.

Occasionally I will hand out hard copies of articles or chapters from other books.

Week 1. Jan. 28-Feb.1.

Introduction. What is the Sonderweg Theory? Bismarck and the Unification of Germany. What forces/considerations were honored and omitted when the legal structure of the German empire was built?

Readings:

Jan. 28. Introduction. No readings.

Jan. 30. Hans Kohn, "The Course of Modern German History," in Kohn, The Mind of Germany (1960), 3-21 (hand-out).

Feb. 1. a. Berghahn, Ch. 17 (hand-out);

b. Gooch, "Divorce of Morality From Politics" in Hamerow, ed., Otto von Bismarck, 97-99 (hand-out).

Week 2. Feb. 4-8.

Overview of Politics and Society in the German Empire. Women and Men. Socialization and Change.

Readings:

Feb. 4. Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 1.

Feb. 6. Berghahn, Imperial Germany, Ch. 6 (hand-out).

Feb. 8. Berghahn, Imperial Germany, Ch. 7 (hand-out).

Week 3. Feb. 11-15.

Wilhelm II and the Political-Social System. Minorities in the Empire. Were There Alternative Centers of Non-Military, Non-authoritarian Power? Culture and Empire.

Readings:

Feb. 11. McClelland, "Republics within the Empire," in Dukes and Remak, eds., Another Germany (1988) (hand-out);

Feb. 13. Langewiesche, "German Liberalism in the Second Empire," in Jaraus and Jones, eds., In Search of a Liberal Germany (1990) (hand-out).

Feb. 15. Berghahn, Imperial Germany, Chs. 8-9 (hand-out);  
FIRST TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE IN CLASS.

Week 4. Feb. 18-22.

Germany and the Great War: The Role of Individuals and the Role of "Forces."

Readings:

Feb. 18. Showalter, "Army State and Society in Germany, 1871-1914," in Dukes and Remak, eds., Another Germany (1988) (hand-out).

Feb. 20. Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 2.

Feb. 22. Berghahn, Ch. 2 (continued).

Week 5. Feb. 25-29.

The German Revolution of 1918-19. The Weimar Republic. Did the German past have a role in the formation of the political culture of the Weimar Republic?

Readings:

Feb. 25. Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 3.

Feb. 27.

Feb. 29. Berghahn, Ch. 3 (continued).

Week 6. Mar. 3-7.

The Weimar Republic. Failures and Achievements: Intellectuals; and Women in Weimar Germany.

Readings:

Mar. 3. a. Gay, Weimar Culture;

b. Bridenthal and Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche and Kirche," in When Biology Became Destiny. Bridenthal, Grossmann and Kaplan, eds. (hand-out).

Mar. 5. a. Gay, Weimar Culture;

b. Grossmann, "Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218," in When Biology Became Destiny (hand-out).

Mar. 7. a. Gay, Weimar Culture;

b. Phelan, "Weimar Culture: The Birth of Modernism," in Burns, ed., German Cultural Studies, 53-96 (hand-out).

Week 7. Mar. 10-14.

Democratic Culture and Its Enemies: Völkish Origins of Nazism. Mythmaking and the Nazi Regime.

Readings:

Mar, 10. a. Review last parts of Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 3;

b. Kershaw, The Hitler Myth, Introduction, Ch. 1.

Mar. 12. van der Will, "Culture and the Organization of National Socialist Ideology, 1933 to 1945," in Burns, ed., German Cultural Studies, 101-143 (hand-out).

Mar. 14. Berghahn, Ch. 4.  
SECOND TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

Week 8. Mar. 15-23. Spring Break.

Week 9. Mar. 24-28.

The Nazis and German Tradition. Tradition and the Structure of the Nazi State. Nazis and Women. Nazis as Revolutionaries. Nazis as Capitalists. Nazis as Socialists. Hitler and the Nazis as sui generis.

Readings:

Mar. 24. Kershaw, Ch. 2.

Mar. 26. Kershaw, Ch. 3.

Mar. 28. Kershaw, Ch. 4.

Week 10. Mar. 31-Apr. 4.

Nazis and World War II. Hitler Myth in WWII. Some Issues in German Society During WWII.

Readings:

Mar. 31. Kershaw, Ch. 5.

Apr. 2 a. von Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," in Crew, ed., Nazism and German Society, pp. 141-165 (hand-out);

b. Kershaw, Ch. 6.

Apr. 4. Kershaw, Ch. 7.

Week 11. Apr. 7-11.

Nazis, the Wehrmacht, and World War II.

Readings:

Apr. 7. Bartov, Hitler's Army, Chs. 1-2.

Apr. 9. Bartov, Ch. 3-4.

Apr. 11. a. Bartov, Conclusion;

b. Kershaw, Chs. 8-9.

FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS.

Week 12. Apr. 14-18.

GDR and DDR, Especially DDR. The Sonderweg and German Life after WWII.

Readings:

Apr. 14. Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 5.

Apr. 16. Funder, Stasiland, Chs. 1-6.

Apr. 18. Funder, Chs. 7-13.

Week 13. Apr. 21-25.

GDR and DDR: Sonderweg and German Life after WWII, Part II.

Readings:

Apr. 21. a. Berghahn, Modern Germany, Ch. 6;

b. Funder, Chs. 14-20.

Apr. 23. Funder, Chs. 21-28.

Apr. 25. Jaraus, The Rush to German Unity, Part I

Week 14. Apr. 28-May 2.

The Reunification of the Germanies.

Readings:

Apr. 28. Jaraus, Part II.

Apr. 30. Jaraus, Part III.

May 2. Jaraus, Conclusion.

May 5.

Reunification of the Germanies and the Future.