

History of Germany

History 314
East Building 122, 12:00-1:15 TR
Fall 2023

Prof. Samuel Huneke (he/him/his)
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Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment



Course Description

In 1919, Germany boasted one of the world's most progressive democratic constitutions, was one of the first countries to grant women's suffrage, was ruled by one of the world's oldest and largest socialist parties, and was a global haven for gay men and lesbians. Less than fifteen years later, it had become a fascist state that would murder millions of Jews, alongside queer people, the handicapped, leftists, and the Roma people. At the core of modern Germany's history is the question of the place of outsiders: was Germany a country that welcomed them, or was it one that sought to expel and even exterminate them?

This course looks at these questions from the mid-nineteenth century, when many of them began to bubble up from the democratic movements that swept Europe in 1848, until the present. We will explore Germany through the so-called Second Empire of Bismarck, the first and Second World Wars, the Nazi dictatorship, and its divided legacy in the Cold War.

Course Learning Outcomes + Expectations

Each session will blend lecture and discussion of readings. Through weekly discussions and your written assignments each week, this course aims not only to introduce you to the German past, but also to hone your analytical skills, your writing abilities, and your rhetorical faculties. The

course's focus on everyday life and on marginalized groups should equip you to think and engage critically with the world around you.

The reading load each week is substantial, but manageable. We will read dense, significant, but usually shorter texts to stimulate discussion. Please read all texts before the first class on Tuesday. We will discuss the texts during class on Tuesday and/or Thursday of each week. The class will go on a field trip mid-semester to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Required Texts

The required books and movie can be purchased/rented for around \$24. All other readings are available online or on Blackboard. *A Concise History of Germany* is an optional textbook. All information you need to complete the course will be available in lecture and in the required readings, but you may find it helpful to also have a narrative summary of German history. Please note that reading *A Concise History of Germany* without attending lecture **will not** be sufficient to ensure a passing grade in this course.

1. Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (used from \$7.50)
2. *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Days in a Conquered City* (used from \$2.99)
3. Hans Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness* (used from \$6.48)
4. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (used from \$3.92)
5. *Westfront 1918* (film available to rent on Amazon or iTunes for \$3.99)

Optional: Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 3rd Edition (used from \$21)

Schedule

Week 1: German Origins

August 22: Before Germany

August 24: Socialism and the Revolutions of 1848

Readings:

Karl Marx, [The Communist Manifesto](#), 14-34

Optional: Fulbrook, p. 69-122

Week 2: German Unification

August 29: The Wars of German Unification

August 31: How Bismarck Governed Germany

Readings:

The [Pulpit Law](#)

"[Women's Right to Vote](#)"

The [Anti-Socialist Law](#)

[Description](#) of Working-Class Life in Berlin and Dresden

"[Effects of Social Democratic Activities](#)"

Optional: Fulbrook, 122-137

Week 3: The German Empire

September 5: Imperialism at Home and Abroad

September 7: Social and Cultural Change in Imperial Germany

Readings:

August Bebel, [Against Colonial Policy in German East Africa](#)

[German Conservatives' Antisemitism](#)

[Peter Moor Goes to Southwest Africa](#)

Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlin's Third Sex*, excerpts [Blackboard]

[German Expressionism](#), MoMA (Read 'Early Influences, Brücke, and Der Blaue Reiter)

Optional: Fulbrook, 137-148

Week 4: World War I

September 12: The Spirit of 1914

September 14: Total War

Readings:

Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 11-82

[The Socialists Support the War](#)

Friedrich Meinecke, [The German Catastrophe](#)

[Weekly Rations](#)

Westfront 1918 [available for rent on [Amazon](#) or [iTunes](#)]

Optional: Fulbrook, 148-155

Assignment #1 due by 11:59 PM, September 14

Week 5: Postwar Revolutions

September 19: Revolution and Civil War, Pt. I

September 21: Revolution and Civil War, Pt. II

Readings:

Rosa Luxemburg, [Order Prevails in Berlin](#)

[The Stab in the Back Myth](#)

Ernst Toller, *I was a German*, chapters 6 + 7 [Blackboard]

["Revolution in Berlin"](#)

[Letter about the "Black Shame"](#)

Optional: Fulbrook, 155-167

Week 6: The Weimar Republic

September 26: Weimar Culture

September 28: The Dark Side of Weimar

Readings:

Christopher Isherwood, "A Berlin Diary" [Blackboard]

[On the Kapp Putsch](#)

Thomas Mann, "[On the German Republic](#)"

Election Posters: DVP ([1924](#)), KPD ([1924](#)), Center ([1930](#)), DNVP ([1928](#)), SPD ([1932](#))

Peter Fritzsche, *Germans in Nazis*, 83-132

Optional: Fulbrook, 167-172

Week 7: Nazism

October 3: The Rise of National Socialism

October 5: Life under Nazism

Readings:

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, excerpts [Blackboard]

Hans Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany*

Optional: Fulbrook, 172-187

Assignment #2 due by 11:59 PM, October 5

Week 8: The Holocaust, Pt. I

October 10: No Classes (Fall Break)

October 12: The Holocaust's Early Victims

Readings:

Pierre Seel, *Liberation was for Others: Memoirs of a Gay survivor of the Nazi Holocaust*,
excerpts [Blackboard]

Optional: Fulbrook: 187-205

Week 9: The Holocaust, Pt. II

October 17: The Final Solution

October 19: Field Trip to US Holocaust Memorial Museum [Tentative]

Readings:

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

NB: This book depicts genocide.

Week 10: World War II and its Aftermath

October 24: Total War and Total Destruction

October 26: Occupied Germany

Readings:

A Woman in Berlin: Eight Days in a Conquered City

NB: This book contains depictions of rape.

Optional: Fulbrook, 205-212

Assignment #3 due by 11:59 PM, October 26

Week 11: Creating East and West Germany

October 31: West Germany's New Conservatism

November 2: Creating East German Socialism

Readings:

Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*, 328-347 [Blackboard]

Hilde Benjamin, "[Who has a say in the Family?](#)"

[Holidays in the GDR](#)

Franz-Josef Wuermling, [Motherhood Speech](#)

West Germany's [Basic Law](#)

Optional: Fulbrook, 212-250

Week 12: Social Change in both Germanies

November 7: Sexual Revolution in the two Germanies

November 9: Social Upheaval and Immigration

Readings:

Ozdamar, *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*, excerpts [Blackboard]

Leo Maxim, *Red Love*, excerpts [Blackboard]

[Rudi Dutschke and the Springer Press](#)

Week 13: Détente + The Close of Communism

November 14: Cold War Detente

November 16: East Germany's Alternative Movements

Readings:

Willy Brandt, [Speech to the Bundestag](#)

Erich Honecker, "[Unity of Social and Economic Policy](#)"

Adrian Daub, "[The Forever Chancellor](#)"

[Coming Out](#) [Watch on Kanopy]

Assignment #4 due by 11:59 PM, November 16

Week 14: After the Cold War

November 21: The Fall of the Wall and the Two Germanies

Readings:

We Were the People: Voices from East Germany's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989, 35-96
+ 140-194 [Blackboard]

Samuel Huneke, "[Does Germany Hold the Key to Defeating Populism?](#)"

George Packer, "[The Quiet German](#)"

Week 15: No Classes

****Final Exam due by 11:59PM, December 11****

Course Information

Grading

- Participation in Weekly Discussion – 15%
- Assignment #1 – 5%
- Assignment #2 – 20%
- Assignment #3 – 10%
- Assignment #4 – 20%
- Final Exam – 30%

Participation in Weekly Discussion

Each session will consist of both lecture and discussion. Participation in discussion will be worth 15% of your final grade. Attendance, which will be taken at the start of class, will account for 20% of your participation grade and performance in discussion will account for the remaining 80%. In other words, participation is a significant component of your course performance. More than two absences will severely affect your participation grade, and insufficient attendance will result in failure of the course. If you have a prolonged illness or a personal situation that might lead to more than two absences, you should contact me in advance.

It is critical that you actively engage in the discussion of readings. Come to class prepared to make comments, express opinions, and ask questions that will move discussion forward. Actions that will adversely affect your participation grade include absences from class, coming to class unprepared, and displaying a lack of respect for your classmates.

Please do not hesitate to check in with me throughout the semester to discuss your in-class participation should you have any questions or concerns.

Tests + Assignments

Assignment #1: Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is the bedrock of historical analysis. In a thesis statement, the historian says what they intend to argue in an essay. For this assignment, you will choose a topic from German history between 1871 and 1920, and you will write a thesis statement of no more than 3 sentences. The thesis statement must advance a coherent and defensible argument about your chosen topic. Due 11:59 PM, September 14. 5% of your final grade.

Assignment #2: ChatGPT Essay

Using one of several prompts that I will distribute ahead of time, you will ask ChatGPT to write a 1,500-word essay. Your task in this assignment is to check the work of the AI and to find errors and omissions of fact and analysis. You will submit a dossier of 1,500-words that explains what the AI got right, what it got wrong, and what it overlooked. Your dossier should include a short introduction that offers a broad overview of how well you think the AI performed as well as a conclusion that thinks about potential uses and dangers of AI in historical research and writing. You must cite the sources you use to check the AI's factual argumentation (these can include lecture notes, primary sources, or the textbook). The main sections of the dossier analyzing the

AI's facts and analysis may be written as a traditional essay or may be written in a bullet point/paragraph format. Finally, you must submit ChatGPT's original essay as part of your dossier, and it must be annotated with your critiques (see example on Blackboard). Due 11:59 PM, October 5. 20% of your final grade.

Assignment #3: Constructing a Paragraph

Paragraphs are the building blocks of essays, and each paragraph should advance a sub-point that serves the overall argument of your paper. Oftentimes, historians will analyze one specific source in a single paragraph, before moving on to a new source in the next paragraph. In this assignment, you will choose one primary source from GHDI that we have not discussed in class. The source should be from the period 1920 – 1945. In a paragraph of no more than 500 words, you will analyze this source. Your paragraph should include a topic sentence, which introduces the reader to the subject of the paragraph; contextualized quotes from the source; analysis of those quotes; and a concluding sentence. Due 11:59 PM, October 26. 10% of your final grade.

Assignment #4: Op-ed Essay

Choose a topic within German history (outside of Nazism) that sheds light on some contemporary problem. You will write a 1,000-word op-ed arguing how and why this person, element, episode, or concept from the German past helps us understand something in our present day. These opinion pieces should be thoroughly cited and may require you to do some reading from beyond the syllabus. Due 11:59 PM, November 16. 20% of your final grade.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a series of short essay questions and will be open book and open note. It will cover materials from both lecture and readings over the entire semester. Due 11:59 PM, December 11. 30% of your final grade.

*****Extra Credit*****

On Wednesday, November 1, GMU will host a panel discussion between Professors Mikkell Dack and Alexandria Ruble on democratization and denazification in postwar Germany. If you attend this discussion and write a one-page response to it, you will receive 2% extra credit.

Writing Assessment

Your writing will be evaluated for its argumentation, style, and mechanical consistency. In each of your assignments you must advance and support clear interpretations of primary sources and demonstrate an understanding of how these interpretations relate to the arguments of secondary sources we read. You should endeavor to write in a clear, readable style. Your writing must be free of typographical and grammatical errors. I have posted a sheet of writing tips on Blackboard, which I encourage you to read. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns about your writing.

Citations

Please use Chicago-style footnote citations in your papers and in the final exam. Please also note that the required citations listed for each assignment indicate the minimum number of citations, not a maximum. Every piece of factual information you reference in a written work **must** be cited.

Office Hours

Please feel free to schedule a meeting with me to discuss any concerns, questions, or conundrums. I'm happy to discuss the course, writing, history, or academic work more generally.

Digital Communication

I will communicate with you using your Mason email address. Please check it regularly.

Submissions and Extensions

Failure to complete any one graded assignment will result in a failing grade for the semester. Late submissions will be penalized 1/3 grade per day. (An A- becomes a B+, for instance). You may request short-term extensions on assignments up to 24 hours before the due date, which I will evaluate on a case-by-case basis. Please stay in touch with me if you have any concerns about meeting deadlines—I understand that everyone's lives are in a state of upheaval due to COVID-19. If you think you will need an extension, please contact me **before** the deadline.

Privacy

Students must use their Mason email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or sent messages to a non-Mason email address.

Sharing Class Materials

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course sites are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Electronic Devices

The use of laptop computers is not allowed in class. All phones and other electronic devices must be set on silent and put away.

Artificial Intelligence

Except where explicitly allowed, the use of artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) to write all or part of any assignment is not allowed and will result in a failing grade for the course and possible referral to the Office for Academic Integrity.

Special Needs

Students with disabilities or other special needs will receive all appropriate accommodations. Please email me if you require any such accommodation.

Diversity + Inclusion

This course strives to promote a culture of inclusion and belonging where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard, and respected, consistent

with [Mason's Diversity Statement](#). I will use whatever name and pronoun/s by which you wish to be addressed.

Title IX

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Honor Code

All students are responsible for understanding and complying with the George Mason Honor Code. For details, see <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>