Modern Germany, 1870-1990
From Unification to Re-Unification

This course will trace the history of Germany from the foundation of Bismarck’s empire in 1871 to the sudden unification of the two Germanys in 1990. It surveys the major political, social and cultural developments, focusing on two themes: democracy and authoritarianism; and the construction of ethnic, subcultural, social and gender identities. Course materials will include primary sources in translation and state-of-the-art scholarship on German history, as well as literary works and films.

Course Requirements.
As a summer school course, the class is, quite naturally, more intensive than regular semester-long courses. Thus, while I have tried to keep the required reading at a minimum, it is still a considerable load. I expect you to read the texts assigned as required readings and strongly encourage you to read as many as possible of the recommended additional texts. These texts should adequately prepare you for the final exam, which has been scheduled for Thursday, August 12, at 9:00 am.

You will also have to write several papers: three short essays on topics listed in the class schedule below, and one long research paper explained in greater detail at the end of this syllabus. Since this is a writing-intensive course, all written assignments can and should be revised over the course of the summer session. You must resubmit all assignments, together with your major research paper, in a course portfolio by August 13, 2004, 3:00 pm. Your overall course grade will be based to a significant extent on this portfolio, taking into account both the quality of the final product and the improvement you have made in your writing over the duration of the course.

In order to pass the course, you need to attend class regularly, participate actively in class discussions, submit all writing assignments on time (there will be no extensions, unless in extraordinary circumstances, and late submissions will incur a deduction by two thirds of a grade per day), and take the final exam. The final grade will reflect all of these aspects of your performance, weighted according to the following scheme:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing assignments 1-3</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Course portfolio</td>
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Students must comply with rules of academic integrity as outlined in section 3 of the Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.†

If you are student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. Please bear in mind that accommodations are not made retroactively.

* Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on the course home page on WebCT. Readings marked with a book icon (**) are on reserve in the Main Library and can be purchased from the Brandeis University Bookstore.
† Available online at http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdje/rr/
Class Schedule.

WEEK 1

Monday, July 12
Course Introduction

Tuesday, July 13
Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890

Readings:

Supplementary readings:

Thursday, July 15
Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1918

Readings:

Supplementary readings:

WEEK 2

Monday, July 19
Revolution, Inflation, and Quasi-Civil War, 1918-1923

Readings:

Film:
*Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1920)
The plot of this dark classic of expressionist film is rather simple: A young man is murdered and a young woman abducted while a strange hypnotist and his somnambulist patient are in town with a traveling show. The girl's fiancé suspects foul play and follows the mysterious team to a mental asylum, only to uncover a gruesome conspiracy... While the storyline may sound like a low-budget slasher
movie, the film’s aesthetic captures the atmosphere of post-World War I Germany like almost no other contemporary document.

**Tuesday, July 20**  
**The “Golden Twenties,” 1924-1929**

**Reading:**

**Film:**
*Berlin—Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927)
Walter Ruttmann’s documentary gives an impressionistic glimpse of one day in the German capital during the “Golden Twenties.” Perhaps more than portraying the various aspects of life in the metropolis, the film conveys the pulse and atmosphere of the more prosperous years of Germany’s first democracy.

**Thursday, July 22**  
**The Great Depression and the Fall of the Republic, 1929-1933**

**Readings:**
- Fulbrook, *History of Germany*, ch. 3.

**Supplementary reading:**

**Film:**
*M—Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (1931)
Perhaps Fritz Lang’s best movie, and his last German film, *M* tells the story of a child murderer (based on the then famous case of the “beast of Düsseldorf,” Peter Kürten) harassing a major German city to such an extent that both police and organized crime set out on the hunt for the man that spreads fear among parents and children and turns ordinary citizens into an angry, lynching mob.

**Monday, July 26**  
**The Nazi Consolidation of Power, 1933-1934**

**Reading:**

**Student Presentations and Discussion:**  
**German History through the Lens of Gender**

**Writing Assignment #1:**
*Due date for this assignment: July 23, 2004, noon (submit by e-mail).*
Write a book review (c. 2-3 pages) of one of the following books. You should give a brief outline of the author’s main theses and critically evaluate these. What are the author’s theoretical and methodological presuppositions? On what kind of sources does s/he base her/his arguments? Are these sources sufficient to substantiate the
author's claims? Is her/his argument developed in a logically coherent fashion? Finally, you should address the issue if, and if so, how the book contributes to and widens our understanding of German history.

The following books are suggested for review. Other books can be chosen upon consultation with the instructor:

- Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, 2002).

**Tuesday, July 27**

**The “Good Years” of the Third Reich, 1934-1939**

**Discussion:**

**Nazism and Modernity**

**Readings:**


**Film:**

*Triumph des Willens* (1935)

In its time, *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the will) was hailed both as the greatest example of a propaganda film and as an art film that won numerous national and international film awards. It is an uncommented documentary feature film of the sixth Nazi *Reichsparteitag* (national party convention) in Nuremberg in 1934. It is also one of the best examples of Nazi aesthetics and symbolism, of the way Hitler and his entourage liked to stage themselves and their “New Germany.”

**Thursday, July 29**

**The Second World War, 1939-1945**

**Readings:**

- Fulbrook, *History of Germany*, ch. 5.

**Supplementary readings:**

- Bartov, *Germany’s War and the Holocaust*, chs. 3, 4, 6, 8.

**Student Presentations and Discussion**

**Research Papers**

Please bring your outlines for your research paper to class today and prepare to present and discuss your work.
WEEK 4

Monday, August 2  The Legacy of National Socialism

Readings:

Film:
Die Mörder sind unter uns (1946)
Die Mörder sind unter uns (The murderers are among us) was one of the first films produced in post-war Germany. Shot and set before the emerging Cold War cemented the ideological and political division of the country, it carries the message of a strikingly politically innocent antifascism. The main characters, a concentration camp survivor and a former army physician devastated by the atrocities he has witnessed, find themselves sharing an apartment in bombed-out Berlin and set out to bring to justice the doctor’s army commander, who bears responsibility for the killing of at least 1,000 people in Poland but shows no remorse.

Student Presentations and Discussion:
The Nazis’ Place in German History

Writing Assignment #2:
Due date for this assignment: August 1, 2004, noon (submit by e-mail).
In a short essay (c. 4-5 pages), compare and contrast the major arguments of one of the historical debates mentioned in greater detail below. Your paper should outline the basic presuppositions (explicit and implicit) of the major contenders, their main lines of argument, and the points of agreement and disagreement between them. Finally, you should evaluate these in light of more recent historical and historiographical developments in German history.

The debates in question are:
− the debate about a German “Sonderweg” (special path), a thesis which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in West Germany, and claimed in its most vulgar version that the Third Reich was the result of the failure of the nineteenth-century German middle class to bring about a successful bourgeois revolution, following a British or French example.
  Texts:

You may also find it helpful to read one or several of the following:
▪ Jürgen Kocka, “German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg,” Journal of Contemporary History 23 (1988), pp. 3-16. *
− the exchange between historians Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer in the 1980s about a “historicization” of National Socialism, which revolves mainly around the problem of scholarly detachment in the face of the crimes of utmost
immorality committed by the Nazis, but in extension also touches on the broader issue of interpreting the Third Reich as simply another epoch in German history or as a special case that demands a different conceptual apparatus for interpretation.

Texts:
- Martin Broszat, “A Plea for the Historization of National Socialism” in Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historians’ Debate, ed. Peter Baldwin (Boston, 1990), pp. 77-87.

The “historians’ controversy” of the 1980s, a rather polemical exchange of more than a dozen of Germany’s leading historians about the uniqueness and comparability of the Holocaust and the brutalization of warfare in the Second World War.

Texts:

Tuesday, August 3  
Cold-War Politics and the Division of Germany, 1945-1961

Reading:
- Fulbrook, History of Germany, chs. 6, 7.

Supplementary reading:
- Michael Geyer, “Cold War Angst: The Case of West German Opposition to Rearmament and Nuclear Weapons,” in The Miracle Years, pp. 376-408.

Thursday, August 5  
From Division to Unification, 1961-1990

Reading:
- Fulbrook, History of Germany, chs. 8, 13.

Supplementary reading:
Film:

*Spur der Steine* (1966)
A classic GDR movie, surprisingly critical for its time, *Spur der Steine* (Traces of stones) portrays in sometimes grotesque, sometimes rather cynical scenes the daily experience of workers in the “workers’ and peasants’ state” toward the end of the Ulbricht era. The main plot revolves around an unorthodox construction foreman in constant conflict with the party bosses and the adulterous love affair of one of the party bureaucrats with an engineer. Not surprisingly, the movie was banned in the GDR only a fortnight after its release.

**Student Presentations and Discussion**

**Research Papers**
Please bring your first drafts for your research paper to class today and prepare to present and discuss your work.

**WEEK 5**

**Monday, August 9**

**German History, German Memories**

**Reading:**


**Tuesday, August 10**

**Course Review**

**Student Presentations and Discussion**

**German History in/as Literature**

**Writing Assignment #3:**

*Assignment due in class.*

In a short essay (c. 4-5 pages), analyze one of the following literary texts as a historical source. How do the authors situate their fictional stories within the historical context in which they are set? How accurate, representative, or biased is their account? How can we read the text as a document about the time it is set in and/or the time it was written?

Students can choose from one of the following (or propose another work of post-war German literature):

- Uwe Johnson, *Speculations about Jakob* (1959)

Particularly eager students are encouraged to tackle the most famous of all post-war German novels, even though it is long and a demanding read:

- Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (1959)

**Thursday, August 12**

**Final Exam**

*Note: The exam has been scheduled for 9:00 am-12:00 noon. If you have a conflict with another exam at this time, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.*

The major research paper (approximately 15 pages) should discuss an aspect of modern German history from one of the following perspectives:

1. **Continuities and discontinuities.** Within 120 years, Germany witnessed five different political regimes, two world wars (which it had unleashed), international successes and humiliation, economic boom and prosperity and total destruction. Is it possible to discern some kind of historical continuity through all these ruptures without reestablishing the now largely discredited *Sonderweg* thesis? Your paper need not span the entire time period between 1870 and 1990 but can focus on the continuities and discontinuities from, for example, the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich. You could discuss such problems as foreign policy, political ideologies, political and/or social institutions, high and popular culture, or the role of men and women in German society.

2. **German particularities in their European context.** Modern German history took, not surprisingly, a course different from that of other European countries. Yet at the same time, the German case illustrates certain phenomena that also appeared, if in different forms, in other parts of the continent. How can German history serve as an example for trends in European history in general? How did the German experience differ from similar experiences in other countries? Your paper could either compare the historical experience of a certain group of people, e.g. women or youth, in Germany and another European country in the same time period. Or you could discuss the German dimension of such European trends and phenomena as imperialism, nationalism, racism, eugenics, industrialization, etc. You could also try to situate certain German regimes within a wider context, for example the Nazi dictatorship within European fascism, or the GDR within the Soviet bloc.

3. **Myths and memories.** The development of historical myths almost always accompanies processes of nation-building. As German have built and rebuilt their nation since the founding of the “Second Empire,” they have appropriated and transformed, often more than once, certain historical figures and events, e.g. the battle of Teutoburg Forest (9 CE), the wars of liberation (1813-1815), or such personalities as Luther, Bismarck, Nietzsche, even Hitler. Your paper should focus on the ways such myths have been used for contemporary purposes, and how they have been transformed in the process. You could also address the sometimes contentious issue of competing memories of events not long past, for example the Holocaust, the student revolt of 1968, or the fall of the Berlin Wall, and discuss how these competing memories have shaped collective consciousness.

We will dedicate some class time to discuss your progress, especially concerning the definition of a suitable topic, research question, and thesis, the development of your argument, and the phrasing of certain points (see deadlines below). Please do not hesitate to address any questions or problems you might encounter in your research, either in these or in individual meetings with the instructor.

**Deadlines:**

- **August 5, 2004** First draft.
- **August 13, 2004** Final draft.