GERMANY & THE WORLD WARS, 1870-1990

This course examines Germany's tumultuous history from the Second Empire through the end of the Cold War. During this time, Germany ushered in five regimes and two world wars, seesawing between material ruin and economic prosperity on the frontline of Europe’s military and ideological rifts. We will explore the economic and political crises underlying each of Germany’s transformations, investigating the relationship between social upheaval and political change, as well as their far-reaching ramifications for the rest of the globe. Beginning with Bismarck’s wars of unification, the class spans World War One, the Weimar Republic, the rise of Nazism, World War Two, the Holocaust, the division of communist East and capitalist West Germany, and the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Students will gain a close and critical understanding of different actors in history. We will view war and society through multiple lenses: personal accounts (diaries, letters, memoirs), government documents, newspaper reports, contemporary literature, popular images, jokes, songs, films, newsreels, and television. Course assignments will highlight Germany’s changing conditions and perspectives, emphasizing the unforeseen effects of war on society.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Books

All books are available for purchase, and copies are also on reserve at Green Library.

Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town*
Joseph Roth, *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin, 1920-1933*
Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*
Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City – A Diary*
Peter Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*
Document Reader

The Document Reader contains primary source excerpts from a variety of sources, and can be bought from Field Copy on the lower level of this building during the first two weeks of the quarter.

Articles and Chapters

Selections of recent scholarship will be made available and placed on reserve at Green Library.

FILM SCREENINGS

I will schedule evening screenings for the three films required for the course. Students who miss the screenings can watch the films at the Media Microtext Center in the Lower Level of Green Library.

All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)
Sky Without Stars (1955)

Film clips shown in lecture are on reserve in the Media Center as well; students are encouraged to view these, and may cite them as sources in class assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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Identities project

The first week of class, each student will be assigned an identity at random, and you will keep this identity throughout the course. All “avatars” will be born in 1900, and your family’s socio-economic status, religion, and region will be given. Each week, you will make life choices for your persona based on the lectures and readings, and will discuss these in class. You are free to determine your life’s path, though the instructor may have events intervene (i.e., war injury, unemployment), and the project will be evaluated on the thoughtfulness and historical authenticity of your choices.

Weekly updates

Each week, students will write short response (~250 words) to the readings based on their personas, and post these in a weekly Discussion Forum on Coursework; in each discussion thread, students are also required to write at least one reply to another students’ posting.

In addition, students will maintain a “homepage” dedicated to their persona on Coursework. You will update it each week with a brief summary of life events and a copy of that week’s response paper. Each identity has a wiki page on Coursework, where you can simply click on the name and edit the information. Feel free to individualize these pages as you wish, attaching images, links, and additional information that relates to your persona. To attach files, first upload them to your folder in the Materials section, and add them to the wiki from there.

Presentation

A formal 5-10 minute presentation on your persona during lecture time. Presentations will be spread out over the course, so that there is roughly one presentation each lecture that should relate to the chronological period discussed that day. Sign-ups begin the second meeting of class.

Participation

Students are expected to attend all lectures and section meetings, complete weekly reading assignments, and engage in active debate and discussion. More than two section absences will severely affect a student’s participation grade, and insufficient lecture and section attendance will result in failure of the course. If a student has a prolonged illness, varsity athletic competitions, or a personal situation that might lead to more than two absences, the student should contact the instructor in advance, and may be provided an opportunity to make up the work missed in section.

Midterm

A 1 hour, 15 minute in-class exam that will include term identification, document discussion, and a thematic essay.
Paper

One short paper (~1,200 words) of primary document analysis; questions will be provided and posted on Coursework. Students can pursue their own topics with prior approval from the instructor.

Final

Exam will include term identification, document discussion, and thematic essays based on the lectures, readings, films, and identities project.

COURSE POLICIES

Advance Accommodations

Please contact me directly if you have a disability or scheduling conflict for which you require advance accommodation. Students who have a disability that requires the use of auxiliary aids and services in class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education’s Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the DRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

The Honor Code

Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code and adhere to Stanford's guidelines on plagiarism. You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity.
http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm
http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm

Extensions and Penalties

Students may request short-term extensions on assignments up to 48 hours before the due date, which will be decided on a case by case basis. Late assignments may be penalized as much as a full letter grade for each day it is late. Missed exams cannot be made up without prior authorization from the instructor, at least 48 hours in advance.
COURSE SCHEDULE

I. IMPERIAL GERMANY

September 22 – Introduction: History of Perspectives
September 24 – State Unification, Social Disunity

- Reader, Documents #1-24
- Orlow, Chapter 1, 1-38: “The Founder’s Generation, 1871-1890”

II. TENSIONS, HOME AND ABROAD

September 29 – Culture Wars
October 1 – The Origins of World War One

- Helmut Walser Smith, The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town
- Orlow, Chapter 2, 39-71: “Wilhelminian Germany, 1890-1914”

III. WAR AND UNREST, 1914-23

October 6 – Great War, Total War
October 8 – Revolution, Inflation, and Near Civil War

Film: All Quiet on the Western Front, 1930

- Reader, Documents #25-51
- Selection from Isabel Hull, Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany, 320-333, and book review

IV. THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

October 13 – Stabilization and its Discontents
October 15 – Weimar’s Vulnerability

- Joseph Roth, What I Saw: Reports from Berlin, 1920-1933
V. THE RISE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

October 20 – The Nazi Seizure of Power
October 22 – Midterm

- Selection from Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*; “January 1933” and “May 1933,” 137-235, and book review

VI. THE THIRD REICH, 1933-38

October 27 The Racial State
October 29 Mobilizing for War

- Reader, Documents #52-59
- Orlow, Chapter 6, 146-174: “From Authoritarianism to Totalitarianism, 1930-1938”

VII. THE THIRD REICH AT WAR, 1938-45

November 3 WWII: Home and Battlefront
November 5 The Holocaust

- Reader, Documents #60-73
- Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*
- Orlow, Chapter 7, 175-202: “Conquest, Death, and Defeat, 1938-1945”

VIII. DEFEAT AND DIVISION

November 10 Zero Hour and Military Occupation
November 12 Constructing East and West

Film: *Sky Without Stars*, 1955

- Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City – A Diary*
IX. COLD WAR GERMANY

November 17  The “Iron” Curtain
November 19  Inside the Two Germanys

Film: The Lives of Others, 2006

- Peter Schneider, The Wall Jumper

Paper due in class – November 17

Thanksgiving recess

November 24 & 26

X. UNITY?

December 1  1989 and the Collapse of Communism
December 3  Reunification and Memory

- Reader, Documents #74-82
- Selections from Daphne Berdahl, Where the World Ended: Reunification and Identity in the German Borderland, 114-141; 155-183
- Orlow, Chapter 11, 299-320: “Germany since Reunification: Euphoria and Disillusionment, 1990-Present”