LOOKING AT THE THREE POSTWAR GERMANIES
QUINN SLOBODIAN

Two republics emerged from the defeated Nazi Reich: the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The two nations had similar problems—destroyed cities and industries, decimated male populations, the shame and guilt of defeat, armed occupations—but developed differing solutions. The course follows challenges faced by both republics, comparing their responses directly whenever possible. We will compare the relative influence of the U.S. and Soviet “partners,” strategies for dealing with the Nazi past, and efforts to build consumer culture. We will also compare political dissent and youth revolt in both Germanies and the state response it elicited. We will explore the paradox of West Germany’s self-understanding as “not a country of immigration” even as hundreds of thousands of guest workers arrived in the 1960s, and the reconfiguration of ideas and practices of German citizenship after the absorption of the GDR in 1991. The course will conclude by looking at some of the central issues of contemporary united Germany, the third of the postwar republics. Most are related to the former East: the crisis of the welfare state model, nostalgia for the vanished socialist system, and a rise in racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

As indicated by the course title, we will remain conscious throughout of the different ways in which we look at the history of the three postwar Germanies. On the one hand, this means remaining cognizant of what historians call one’s subject position. To use an example, whether you look at the German past from the perspective of a German who lived through the war, a German who was born after the war or a non-German greatly affects the moral judgments you make about the responsibility of “ordinary” Germans under the Nazis. Alongside the question of subject position, there is also the literal question of looking: the way different historical and social evaluations emerge according to the optic used to make sense of a particular moment. We will see how economic plans, maps, photographs, anecdotal reportage, fiction and films provided diverse versions of the truth to historical actors since 1945, and to us now as observers of the recent German past.

Course Requirements

1. Complete the assigned readings, regularly attend class and participate in discussion.
2. Post a discussion question related to the assigned readings to FirstClass the day before each class.
3. Complete an in-class midterm composed of short identifications, primary source interpretations and an essay question on March 19.
4. Write a short paper (800-1000 words) due April 13 looking at an event or development in postwar German history through a source from the U.S. or your own country. Compare the way that your source—whether a film, newspaper, government plan, novel or something else—sees Germany with what we know from our readings and discussions. Attempt to explain the gap. What hidden assumptions and motives color our understanding of other societies and their pasts?
5. Present the findings from your short paper in a five-minute oral presentation in the week of April 13.
6. Complete a take-home final exam composed of short identifications, primary source interpretations and two essay questions due May 18.
Grading

Participation (including discussion questions twice weekly) 20%
Mid-Term 25%
Short Paper (including in-class presentation) 25%
Take-Home Final 30%

You are required to read all assigned works, attend all lectures, and complete all assignments in a timely fashion. No extensions will be granted for the seminar reports or the final paper. Late submissions will be penalized by one-third letter grade per day (i.e. B+ to B the first day, B to B- the second day, etc.). I will accommodate exceptions related to illness or any religious observations. Though I do not read paper drafts, I will happily address any and all questions related to the class in my office hours and by appointment.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities who are taking this course and who need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services (if you have a physical disability or are uncertain) to arrange these accommodations. His office is located in the Pforzheimer Learning & Teaching Center in Clapp Library.

Readings: The following books should be purchased from the Wellesley bookstore. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be distributed in class as hand-outs. All other readings will be posted to FirstClass. Films listed on the syllabus are recommended. Some will be available on E-Reserve and portions of others will be shown in class.

• Poiger, Uta G. Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
• Böll, Heinrich. The Lost Honor of Katarina Blum, Or How Violence Develops and Where it Can Lead, 1974.
• Schneider, Peter. The Wall-Jumper, 1983.

February 2. Course Introduction. 1945 as Victory

• FILM: The Fall of Berlin (dir. Yuli Raizman, 1945)
• FILM: Patton (dir. Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970)

February 5. 1945 as Catastrophe. The Disorienting End of the German “Thousand-Year Reich”

• *Yalta Agreement
• *Morgenthau Plan

February 9. The View from the Ruins

• Dagerman, Stig. German Autumn, 1947, 5-18.

February 12. What does Democracy Look Like?: Reeducation through Film

• FILM: Ninotchka (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1939).

February 16. Presidents’ Day. No class.

February 19. What to do with Germany?: Economic Strategies from the Soviet Perspective


February 23. What to do with Germany?: Economic Strategies from the U.S. Perspective


February 26. Blind Spots I: Jews and the Nazi Past in East Germany

• Herf, Jeffrey. Divided memory: the Nazi past in the two Germanys. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), Chs.4-5. 69-161.

March 2. Blind Spots II: Jews and the Nazi Past in West Germany

• Herf, Divided Memory, Ch. 7, 201-266.

March 5. Germany in the Cold War Globe

• Geyer, Michael. “Cold War Angst: The Case of West German Opposition to Rearmament and Nuclear Weapons,” in *The miracle years*, 376-408.

March 9. Youth Culture and U.S. Influence


March 12. The Politics of Consumption

• Start *The Wall-Jumper*

March 16. The View from Inside: What Contract between State and Citizen?

• Finish *The Wall-Jumper*.

March 19. Midterm Exam

March 23 & March 26. Spring Break

March 30. Changing Sexual Mores in East and West


April 2. 1968 in East and West

• *Germany in Transit*, 65-76.

April 6. Ultra-left Terrorism and the Social Response

• Varon, Jeremy. *Bringing the war home: the Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and revolutionary violence in the sixties and seventies.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Ch. 6 “‘Democratic Intolerance’: The Red Army Faction and the West German State,” 254-289.

• Finish *The Lost Honor of Katarina Blum*.


April 9. Labor Migration and the Emergence of Multicultural West Germany


• *Germany in Transit*, 21-64.


April 13. Student Presentations

April 16. Student Presentations

April 20. East German Dissent in the 1980s


April 23. The Wall and its Fall


April 27. Nostalgia for Communism


April 30. Uniting Divided Memory in the Berlin Republic


May 4. New Walls in Unified Germany


• *Germany in Transit*, 118-144.


May 7. Finding German Identity I: Ossi, Wessi, Indian?


• *Germany in Transit*, 388-413.

May 11. Finding German Identity II: European, Anti-American?


• *Germany in Transit*, 305-325.

• Text on German “variety of capitalism” and its future, TBD.

• **Take-Home Final handed out at the end of class**

May 18. **Final exams due either electronically or in my History Department mailbox**