

HISTORY 410: HISTORY OF MODERN GERMANY, 1871 TO THE PRESENT



Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, 1930



Potsdamer Platz, 1973, showing the Berlin Wall

Course Information

Instructor: Prof. Brandon Bloch

Semester: Spring 2021

Meeting Times: Tues. & Thurs. 1-2:15 p.m. (Zoom)

E-Mail: bjbloch@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Wed. 1-3 p.m. or by appointment (Zoom)

Credits: 3

Instructional Modality: remote/online

Requisites: none

Course Designations: honors optional (contact me for more details)

Canvas Site: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/233354>

Course Description

This course surveys the turbulent history of modern Germany, Europe's dominant political power and the fourth largest economy in the world today. Beginning with the formation of the

German nation-state in 1871, we will examine Germany in its many guises: the empire whose global ambitions helped spark World War I; the fledgling democracy of the interwar Weimar Republic; the Nazi dictatorship that laid ruin to Europe; the divided nation of the Cold War; and the bedrock of today's European Union. Throughout the course, we will consider what made Germans' experience of modernity distinct, but also how German history reflects political, social, and economic forces that have transformed the modern world.

Three core themes will guide our exploration. First, we will situate Germany in the wider world, asking how Germans shaped global patterns of trade, immigration, and warfare, and how German society has in turn been shaped by immigration from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Second, we will pay special attention to the experiences of women, Catholics, Jews, workers, immigrants, and Black Germans, exploring what histories of diverse and marginalized groups reveal about the transformations of dictatorship and democracy. Finally, we will ask what German history can tell us about the sources of solidarity, reconciliation, and political responsibility, questions that remain relevant in our own time. How did a country that orchestrated the murder of six million Jews and millions of other victims during the Second World War attempt to come to terms with its past and make restitution for its crimes?

This course does not presume any prior knowledge of the subject matter or experience in history courses. (History majors are, of course, welcome!) The premise is that history is not simply a static collection of facts but an evolving process of debate and interpretation. You will be introduced to the skills of historical analysis: reading critically, interpreting primary sources, evaluating competing arguments, and presenting your ideas in clear and compelling prose. Writing assignments build in complexity over the semester, and we will devote class time to practicing the skills you will need to succeed in these assignments. The purpose of the course is as much to introduce you to central themes of modern German history as to help you become a better reader, writer, communicator, and thinker.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Evaluate primary sources to answer questions about authorship, perspective, audience, context, and credibility
- Identify the major turning points in German history since 1871, as well as continuities across these ruptures
- Advance historical arguments that assess the significance of technological transformation, colonialism, immigration, war, economic crisis, and foreign occupation as agents of change in modern German history

- Develop an original historical argument based on primary source research in online databases
- Create a public-facing digital timeline and webpage presenting your analysis of a historical theme in a format that is accessible and compelling to a broad audience

Course Requirements

*Further details on the assignments, including expectations, guidelines, and rubrics, are available on Canvas.

1. Class Participation (25%)

Discussion Participation [20%]: This class will include lecture, discussion, and small group work, and your attendance and active participation are expected in all components of the course. The most productive discussions happen when classmates engage respectfully and constructively with one another's ideas. I will structure discussions and small group activities to facilitate this dialogue. Remember that the quality of your contributions to discussions is as important as the quantity, and that asking a well-informed question counts as participation. I recognize that participation may come more easily to some than others, and I am happy to meet if you would like to discuss strategies for speaking up in class. Short in-class writing exercises will also count toward your participation grade.

Discussion Board Posts [5%]: Over the semester, you will be asked to post **three** one-paragraph responses to the course readings. Posts are due by 9 a.m. the day of class, and should deal with one or more of the readings we will be discussing that day. Within the constraints of a short post, you should aim to offer an argument or opinion addressing a specific question, rather than a general summary of the readings. Reading questions will be available in advance of each class.

You will also be asked to post three short replies to a group member's response. You do not necessarily have to post your replies on the same days that you post your own responses. Replies are due by the start of class.

We will break into groups during the first week of class, and you will submit your posts to your group's discussion board. The first response and reply are due by Feb. 4; the second by March 18; and the third by April 22.

2. In-Class Debates (10%)

We will hold debates in class on Feb. 11 and March 11 (the first dealing with German colonialism, the second with the Great Depression). In each debate, you will be assigned to work in a group representing a particular political party or lobby. Each group will be responsible for crafting an opening statement that you will present at the beginning of the debate; each group member should speak for about one minute (~120-150 words). Your group's position will be based on short pre-assigned readings.

3. Primary source essay, due March 2 (15%)

At the end of the first unit ("The Rise and Fall of the German Empire, 1871-1918"), you will be asked to submit an essay of 4-5 (double-spaced) pages addressing a selection of our primary source readings on this period. Possible questions will be distributed one week in advance. No additional research beyond the course readings and lectures is expected. You may choose to submit a complete draft for feedback by Feb. 25, before submitting the final version by March 2.

4. German history timeline, due April 8 (15%)

By March 9 (week 7), you will select a theme in modern German history during the period from 1918-50 (the Weimar Republic, National Socialism and World War II, and the early postwar period) that will serve as the basis for your final project. The first part of this project is to contribute to a shared digital timeline of modern German history, which we will construct as a class. You will be asked to contribute **five** entries to the timeline, each dealing with a primary source related to your topic. (Many of these sources will come from the database [German History in Documents and Images](#).) Each timeline entry should include a link to the primary source, a one-paragraph analysis, an accompanying image, and an appropriate citation.

We will discuss expectations for the timeline at length in class. You should contribute at least three timeline entries by March 30, and all five by April 8. The technology is straightforward; I will share a Google Sheet with the class that you will use to upload the data for each entry.

5. Final project (webpage), due May 5 (35%)

For the final project, you will be asked to build a webpage on our class Google Site related to your chosen theme (see above). The webpage should take the form of a research essay—that is, it should make an argument about your topic rather than simply

conveying information—but you should also aim to present the material in an accessible and appealing way for a broad readership. Your webpage should consist of a text of approximately 1,800 words (equivalent to 6 double-spaced pages in Word) along with accompanying visual images and links. For your research, you will draw on the primary sources you selected for the course timeline, as well as 2-3 secondary sources (scholarly articles or book chapters).

We will discuss expectations for this project at length in class. For now, keep in mind the following intermediate deadlines. The preliminary assignments will count for 5% of your course grade, and the final webpage for 30%.

- One-paragraph topic description: March 9
- Annotated bibliography: March 18
- Outline and introductory paragraph: April 15
- Draft (optional): April 27
- Final webpage: May 5 at 4 p.m.

*Graduate students should see me to discuss alternative expectations, which will include a final paper worth 50% of the course grade in lieu of the timeline and webpage assignments.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100	AB: 88-92	B: 83-87	BC: 78-82
C: 70-77	D: 60-69	F: Below 60	

Credit Hours

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit, or 9 hours per week). This includes regularly scheduled meeting times, reading, writing, group work, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus. Since each 75-minute meeting counts for 1.5 class hours (for a total of **3 hours of direct instruction per week**), you should plan to allot an average of 6 hours per week outside of class for course-related activities. Assignment deadlines are designed to help you balance the work over the course of the semester.

Attendance

Given the extraordinary circumstances of this semester, I understand the importance of a flexible attendance policy. There will be no penalty for missing class due to illness or a family emergency; but do let me know in advance if you won't be present. Every effort will be made to accommodate absences due to religious observance. If you need to miss a class, I will work with you to find alternative ways for you to fulfill the course learning goals (for instance, uploading PowerPoint slides and lecture notes to Canvas, meeting during alternative times, or using the Discussion Board to complete in-class exercises). I will not require additional "make-up" work, beyond the regular assignments, for excused absences. If you find that the stresses of COVID-19 are making it difficult for you to engage fully in the course, please let me know as soon as possible and we can arrange a time to talk. I am committed to ensuring a continuity of learning during these challenging times.

Late Work

The pandemic also requires a more flexible approach to late work. If you are unable to meet an assigned deadline due to illness, family obligations, or because pandemic-related circumstances have put you behind in this or other courses, please let me know as soon as possible and we can work out a plan for you to get caught up. In cases of repeated, unexcused late work, I reserve the right to apply a deduction to late assignments out of fairness to other class members. Typically this deduction will be 3 points (out of 100) per day late.

Please note that I am not able to accept any written work for this course after Friday, May 7, the final day of the exam period. Incomplete grades can only be granted to students who are unable to complete the coursework due to "illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond their control." For the university policy, see: <https://registrar.wisc.edu/incompletes/>.

Academic Integrity

The exchange of ideas is at the core of academic inquiry, and you are welcome to discuss the course material with your classmates. However, all work that you submit for a grade should reflect your own thinking and writing, and adhere to proper citation practices in the discipline of history. Passing off another person's words or ideas as your own is not only unfair to your peers; it is also theft of the author's intellectual work, shutting out their voice from the academic conversation.

In my experience, violations of academic integrity tend to have two causes: either a) lack of awareness about citation standards, or b) procrastination, followed by panic. I have designed

the course to mitigate against both of these factors. We will have ongoing discussions about appropriate citation practices; if you're unsure in a particular case, don't hesitate to ask. I have also implemented scaffolding in the assignment due dates and a flexible policy on late work. If you are worried about not finishing an assignment as a deadline approaches, please email me! We can always work out solutions to help improve your organization, and it's much better to turn in less than perfect work than to cheat. If you plagiarize (and be assured that I will catch it—it's really not difficult), then I have to deal with the case as a disciplinary infraction rather than a learning opportunity. Serious academic misconduct must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards.¹

Accessibility

I am committed to ensuring that all students receive equal access to the course materials and equitable opportunities to achieve the course learning goals. If you experience or anticipate any challenges related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I am happy to explore a range of options for removing barriers to your learning. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may also wish to work with the McBurney Disability Resource Center (<https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>) to discuss accessibility in this and other courses, including possibilities for official accommodations. All communications regarding accessibility will remain confidential.

A Note on Sources

Studying history involves discussion of complex themes including race, empire, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and national identity, among others. In class discussions, it is crucial that we remain respectful of one another's viewpoints and the wide range of backgrounds and experiences represented in the classroom. During the first week of class, we will establish collective discussion norms that will guide us over the semester. In general, if you disagree with a classmate (and debate and disagreement are encouraged!), then be sure to direct your comments at the idea, not the person. It is often helpful to summarize a peer's idea before disagreeing, to ensure you have really understood it. Please do not hesitate to meet with me if you have concerns about particular aspects of the course content.

¹ I have developed these thoughts on academic dishonesty with reference to Kevin Gannon, "How to Create a Syllabus: Advice Guide," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/advice-syllabus>.

Additional Resources

UW-Madison and the History Department make available a wide range of resources to foster your academic success and personal wellbeing. It's a good idea to familiarize (or re-familiarize) yourself with the following, especially in light of the uncertainties we face this semester:

Writing Center

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

Offers individual consultations, workshops, and online guides on all aspects of academic writing.

History Lab

<http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>

A resource center for undergraduates in history courses staffed by experienced graduate students, who are available to assist you with researching and writing history papers. You can sign up online for an individual consultation at any stage of the writing process.

Greater University Tutoring Services

<https://guts.wisc.edu/>

Study skills support and peer tutoring across academic subjects (now offered online).

McBurney Disability Resource Center

<https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>

The McBurney Center has also compiled a helpful FAQ on accessibility in response to COVID-19:

<https://mcburney.wisc.edu/resources/faq-for-virtual-learning-and-accessibility-covid-19/>

Mental Health Services

<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/>

Resources on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

UW-Madison is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment and offers a variety of resources for students impacted by sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. The Dean of Students Office has compiled a comprehensive guide to resources on and off campus, including both confidential resources and options for reporting: <https://doso.students.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/sexual-assault-dating-and-domestic-violence/>.

Course Schedule

Assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date listed, unless otherwise indicated. Guidelines and rubrics for all assignments are available on Canvas (under the Assignments tab, as well as in the relevant Modules). Assignments should be uploaded (as .doc, .docx, or .pdf files) to Canvas.

All readings and films are available as links or pdf documents on Canvas. See the Modules tab for week-by-week links to readings and assignments.

DATE/THEME	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Jan. 26: Course Introduction		– Complete the Course Orientation Module
Jan. 28: Where was “Germany” before 1870?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ernst Moritz Arndt, “The German Fatherland” (1813) – Gustav von Struve, “Motion in the German Pre-Parliament” (1848) 	
UNIT I: RISE AND FALL OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE: 1871-1914		
Feb. 2: German Unification: The Paradoxes of Liberal Nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Otto von Bismarck, Excerpt from “Blood and Iron” Speech (1862) – National Liberal Party, Founding Program (1867) 	
Feb. 4: Making an Imperial Nation-State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social Democratic Workers’ Party, Eisenach Program (1869) – Association of German Catholics, Founding Manifesto (1872) – Hedwig Dohm, “Women’s Right to Vote” (1876) 	– Discussion board post #1 due by 9 a.m. and reply to a peer by 1 p.m.

Feb. 9: Origins of German Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primary source documents on German colonialism – Sebastian Conrad, “Pressure Groups, Motivations, and Attitudes,” in <i>German Colonialism: A Short History</i> (2012) 	
Feb. 11: Debate: Does Germany Need Colonies?		– Position statement for Debate #1
Feb. 16: The Rise of “Mass Politics”: Socialism, Antisemitism, Pan-Germanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eduard Bernstein, “The Immediate Task of Social Democracy” (1899) – Rosa Luxemburg, “Social Reform or Revolution” (1899) – “Nikolaus Osterroth, Clay Miner,” in <i>The German Worker: Working-Class Autobiographies from the Age of Industrialization</i> (1987) 	
Feb. 18: Germany and the Origins of the First World War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Admiral von Tirpitz, “The Fleet and Anglo-German Relations” (1896) – “An Appeal by the German Army League” (1912) – Rosa Luxemburg, “The State of World Politics” (1913) 	– Primary source essay questions distributed (choose one)
UNIT II: THE AGE OF EXTREMES: 1914-1945		
Feb. 23: The Great War: Trench Warfare, Occupations, and the Home Front		
Feb. 25: Defeat, Revolution, and the Birth of the Weimar Republic		– OPTIONAL: draft of primary source essay

March 2: Weimar Politics: Disorder and Stabilization		– Primary source essay due
March 4: Weimar Culture and the “New Woman”	– FILM: Josef von Sternberg, dir., <i>The Blue Angel</i> (1930)	
March 9: The Depression and the Crisis of the Weimar Republic	– Primary source documents on Weimar political parties	– Topic description for final project
March 11: Debate: German Parliament, 1930		– Position statement for Debate #2
March 16: The Rise of the Nazis		
March 18: Making the Nazi “Racial State”	– “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” (1933); “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring” (1933); “Nuremberg Laws” (1935)	– Discussion board post #2 due by 9 a.m. and reply to a peer by 1 p.m. – Annotated bibliography for final project
March 23: Consent, Coercion, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany		

March 25: Nazi Foreign Policy and the Origins of WWII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inge Deutschkron, <i>Outcast: A Jewish Girl in Wartime Berlin</i> (1978), pp. 5-43 	
March 30: The Nazi Empire: Collaboration, Puppet States, and Resistance		– At least three timeline entries due
April 1: Holocaust and Genocide in East and West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reports of Police Reserve Lieutenant Fischmann and Police Lieutenant Westermann (1942) – FILM: Claude Lanzmann, dir., <i>Shoah</i> (1985), First Era, Part One, selections (49:00-1:25:00) 	
UNIT III: FROM POSTWAR TO POST-WALL: 1945-Present		
April 6: German Defeat, Allied Occupation, Post-Nazi (In-)Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bishop Theophil Wurm, “To the Christians of England” (1945) 	
April 8: The Cold War and the Division of Germany		– Five timeline entries due
April 13: Stabilization in West Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Konrad Adenauer, “Christian Civilization at Stake” (1955) 	

April 15: Consent and Coercion in East Germany		– Outline and introductory paragraph for final project
April 20: Two Germanies and the Global “Sixties”		
April 22: Immigration and the Return of Race	– Helga Emde, “An ‘Occupation Baby’ in Postwar Germany,” in <i>Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out</i> (1986)	– Discussion board post #3 due by 9 a.m. and reply to a peer by 1 p.m.
April 27: The Fall of Communism and the Challenges of Reunification		– OPTIONAL: draft of final essay
April 29: Concluding Reflections		
FINAL PROJECT (WEBPAGE) DUE WED. MAY 5 at 4 p.m.		