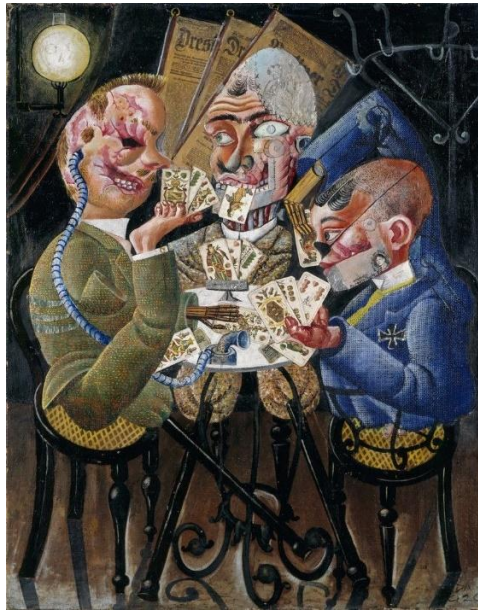




WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

HISTORY 201 (001): THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT: THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC AND THE RISE OF NAZISM



Otto Dix, "The Scat Players – Card Playing War Invalids" (1920)

Course Information

Instructor:	Prof. Brandon Bloch (bjbloch@wisc.edu)
Office Hours:	Tues. 1:30-4:30 p.m. or by appointment (Humanities 5118 or online)
TAs:	Marcus Kelly (mfkelly3@wisc.edu) John Tobin (jptobin@wisc.edu)
TA Office Hours:	Marcus Kelly: Wed. 1-3 p.m. (Humanities 4271 or online) John Tobin: Thurs. 10 a.m.-noon (Humanities 4271)
Semester:	Fall 2025
Lecture:	Mon./Wed. 9:55-10:45 a.m. (Humanities 1111)
Sections:	Wed. 11:00-11:50 a.m. (Humanities 2125) [John Tobin] Wed. 12:05-12:55 p.m. (Humanities 2659) [John Tobin] Wed. 1:20-2:10 p.m. (Humanities 2115) [Prof. Bloch; Honors section]

Wed. 3:30-4:20 p.m. (Humanities 2111) [Marcus Kelly]

Thurs. 12:05-12:55 p.m. (Social Sciences 6125) [John Tobin]

Thurs. 2:25-3:15 p.m. (Social Sciences 6105) [Marcus Kelly]

Thurs. 4:35-5:25 p.m. (Humanities 2125) [Marcus Kelly]

Modality: In-person

Credits: 3 (section registration is required)

Requisites: Satisfied Communications A requirement

Course Designations: Gen Ed – Communication Part B

Breadth – Humanities

Level – Intermediate

L&S Credit – Counts as Liberal Arts and Sciences credit in L&S

Canvas Site: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/476086>

Course Description

Germany's Weimar Republic (1918-1933) is perhaps the most notorious case of democratic failure in modern history. Its collapse remains a reference point in discussions about challenges to democracy today. But is it fair to evaluate the Weimar Republic only in light of its disastrous end? Why did the Nazis come to power in 1933, and could the Nazi rise have been prevented? This course dives deep into the culture, society, and politics of this short-lived but momentous period in modern European history. We will explore not only the seedbeds of fascism and authoritarianism in 1920s Germany, but also reform movements that sought democratic transformations in the arts, gender, sexuality, and the built environment. Our sources will range widely across the Republic's vibrant cultural landscape, including literature, film, journalism, fashion, painting, architecture, and propaganda. One key theme will be the contingency of the Weimar Republic's rise and fall. We will aim to understand how the Republic's history was shaped by individuals who could not anticipate consequences that appear evident to us in hindsight. By exploring a wide range of perspectives on this complex period, you will sharpen your skills in historical thinking and writing.

Learning Outcomes

As a “Historian’s Craft” seminar, this course focuses as much on historical content as on skills of research, analysis, writing, and speaking. These skills are not only foundational to studying history, but applicable to your other courses and a wide range of careers. Writing assignments will build in complexity over the semester, beginning with short analyses of assigned readings

and culminating in a research paper. You will also give a presentation on your original research. A significant portion of our class time will be devoted to practicing the skills critical to success in the writing and speaking assignments.

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

- Articulate your own definition of historical thinking that accounts for the importance of research, analysis, and interpretation
- Assess the authorship, perspective, audience, context, and reliability of primary and secondary sources
- Apply the tools of primary source analysis to a range of media, including political speeches, propaganda, images, film, and memoir
- Identify the attributes of an effective historical research question, and develop a research question that connects to both recent scholarship and a problem you care about
- Conduct historical research by navigating library resources and online databases; assessing the reliability and relevance of sources; and properly using citations
- Present, both in writing and verbally, an original, persuasive, and evidence-based historical argument

For a complete description of learning goals in the “Historian’s Craft” courses, see the “Goals for HIST 201” appended at the end of the syllabus.

Course Books

Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Picador, 2002) [1939]. ISBN: 9780312421137.

Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl*, trans. Kathie von Ankum (New York: Other Press, 2011) [1932]. ISBN: 9781590514542.

Thomas Mullaney and Christopher Rey, *Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project That Matters to You (and the World)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

The books by Haffner and Keun are available for purchase at the University Book Store, and are placed on reserve at College Library. The book by Mullaney and Rey is available as an e-book through the library catalog. Keun is also available as an e-book, but can only be accessed by three users at a time.

Course Requirements

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

1. Top Hat (10%)

We will use the platform Top Hat (integrated into the course Canvas site) to facilitate an interactive classroom during lectures. Your Top Hat grade will be based on in-class polling and discussion questions. Top Hat questions will be graded complete/incomplete, and will serve as a record of your attendance at lecture. You will be permitted two excused absences from lecture (no need to provide a reason). If you need to miss lecture more than twice due to religious observance, illness, or family emergency, please fill out the Absence Notification form available on Canvas.

2. Section Participation (20%)

Weekly section discussions are crucial to your learning in this course. You will have a free pass to miss one section meeting, for any reason. Additional absences will be excused due to illness, religious observance, or personal or family emergency; please notify us using the Absence Notification form on Canvas. In some cases, you may be asked to submit makeup work in order to receive credit for additional missed sections.

Please keep in mind that the quality of your contributions to section discussions is as important as the quantity, and that asking a well-informed question counts as participation. Participation during in-class peer review and debate exercises will also count toward this portion of your grade. We recognize that participation may come more easily to some than others. If you would like to discuss strategies for speaking in class, feel free to set up a meeting with Prof. Bloch or your TA.

Section participation will be evaluated holistically at the end of the semester according to the rubric on p. 15. You will also receive a provisional participation grade midway through the semester, and will have the opportunity to request feedback from your section instructor on how to improve in this area.

3. Four Source Analyses (15%)

During the first part of the course, you will complete four brief essays of approximately 2 double-spaced pages each (min. 600, max. 750 words). These papers are due on Mondays in weeks 3, 4, 5, and 6, and will address the primary and/or secondary sources discussed in the previous week's section. Prompts for each paper will be available on Canvas. These papers are meant to build your skills in close reading and analysis, which you will apply in the research paper. The lowest score of the four papers will be dropped; however, you must still submit all four papers to receive credit.

4. Preliminary Research Assignments (15%)

Beginning in week 7, you will complete a series of exploratory exercises and intermediate assignments designed to prepare you for the final research paper. We will discuss expectations in class. Assignments marked with an asterisk (*) will be graded complete/incomplete.

- *"Search Yourself" in Mullaney and Rey, *Where Research Begins*, pp. 27-33 (due Oct. 16 at 11:59 p.m.)
- *"Diagnostic Test" in Mullaney and Rey, *Where Research Begins*, pp. 47-51 (due Oct. 22-23 in section)
- *Research proposal & annotated bibliography (due Oct. 30 at 11:59 p.m.)
- Revised research proposal & annotated bibliography (due Nov. 6 at 11:59 p.m.)
- In-class presentation, 5 mins. (in section on Nov. 12-13 or Nov. 19-20)
- *Paper draft, at least 6 pp. (due Nov. 25 at 11:59 p.m.)

5. Research Paper (40%)

The capstone assignment for this course is a research paper of approximately 10-12 double-spaced pages (3,000-3,600 words, excluding the bibliography) that draws on at least five primary and three secondary sources. (One of the primary sources may be an assigned reading.) We will spend significant time in class discussing how to define a research question, locate sources, and craft a historical argument. I will provide a bibliography of English-language primary and secondary sources to get you started. The final paper will be due on Dec. 14 at 11:59 p.m.

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, individual consultations with the instructors, and other student work as described in the syllabus. Since each 50-minute meeting counts for 1 class hour (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.

Honors Credit

Students taking this course for honors credit (enrolled in DIS 307 with Prof. Bloch) will be asked to complete two enrichment activities related to the course themes. Enrichment activities could include attending a lecture, exhibit, or performance on campus; visiting the Wisconsin Historical Society; or completing additional readings on relevant current events in Germany and Europe. After completing each activity, you will be asked to contribute a one-paragraph post to a Canvas discussion board.

Late Work

If you are unable to meet an assignment deadline, please inform your section instructor as soon as possible and we can work out a plan for you to get caught up. We understand that life can be unpredictable, and that you may require an extension due to illness, religious observance, or personal or family emergency. In cases of unexcused late work, we reserve the right to apply a deduction to late assignments out of fairness to other members of the class. Assignments will not be accepted more than one week after the deadline except under extenuating circumstances.

Please note that we are not able to accept any written work for this course after Thursday, Dec. 18, the last day of the exam period. Incomplete grades can only be granted to students who are unable to complete the final paper 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 encouraged to discuss the course material with your classmates. However, all work that you submit for a grade should reflect your own thinking and writing. Passing off another person's words or ideas as your own is not only unfair to your peers; it is also theft of the original author's 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. The course is designed to mitigate both factors. We will discuss how to cite your sources for each assignment; if you're unsure about a particular case, don't hesitate to ask. If you are worried about not finishing an assignment as a deadline approaches, please email Prof. Bloch or your TA! We can always work out solutions to help improve your organization, and it's much better to accept a late penalty (or turn in less than perfect work) than to cheat. If you plagiarize, then we have to address the case as a disciplinary infraction rather than a learning opportunity. Serious academic misconduct may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

Generative AI Policy

In History 201 you will sharpen your skills as a researcher and writer, in particular by learning to pose compelling research questions and locate high-quality, reliable sources. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot is frequently contrary to the spirit of these learning goals. By relying on AI tools too early in the research process, you short-circuit your ability to think creatively and expansively about which problems really interest you. At best AI presents you with an amalgam of existing knowledge about a topic, but this cannot replace the original thought and discovery that drives the most exciting research. In addition, information provided by AI may be unreliable, and is frequently sourced from Internet sites rather than peer-reviewed scholarship.

For these reasons, this course will adopt the following policy on generative AI. You are asked to refrain from using AI programs for the source analysis and preliminary research assignments. The goal of these assignments is to build up your toolkit of research and analytical strategies, not to produce polished essays. Substituting AI for your own thinking would make these assignments superfluous. For the research paper, you are permitted to use AI tools such as Grammarly to polish your language after writing a draft. In this case, please add a "Submission Comment" on Canvas noting how you used AI and whether you found it helpful. Please be

aware that we will not deduct points for spelling or grammatical errors. Using AI to revise your prose is not necessary for receiving a high grade and may detract from your original voice.

I am not “against” generative AI in principle. I understand that these tools are changing how we access information and are increasingly becoming integrated into the workplace. My purpose in setting these restrictions is to allow you the time and space to develop your own independent voice as a writer, making you a more discerning user of AI in the future.

Technology

Please come prepared to lecture with a laptop or other device in order to participate in the Top Hat exercises. Laptops are permitted (but not required) in section for taking notes and referencing readings. Of course, we ask that you refrain from checking email or social media during class. If you face challenges accessing the technology necessary to succeed in this course, please reach out to Prof. Bloch as soon as possible.

Accessibility

We are 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 Prof. Bloch know as soon as possible. We are 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 Classroom Environment

Studying history involves discussion of complex themes including race, 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, each section will establish a Group Agreement setting out classroom discussion norms for 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 Prof. Bloch or your TA if you have any concerns.

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:

University Writing Center

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

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 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.

McBurney Disability Resource Center

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

Contact the McBurney Center if you have or think you may have a disability to discuss a range of possible accommodations.

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 Office of Student Assistance and Support has compiled a comprehensive guide to resources on and off campus, including both confidential resources and options for reporting: <https://osas.wisc.edu/report-an-issue/sexual-assault-dating-and-domestic-violence/>.

Course Schedule

Readings are due by the beginning of section; assignment deadlines are specified below.

Guidelines and rubrics for assignments are posted on Canvas. All readings except the course books are available through Canvas. See the Modules tab for week-by-week links.

Week 1

Sept. 3: Course Introduction

*First section meetings (Sept. 3)

UNIT I: CREATING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Week 2

Sept. 8: Germany and the Great War

Sept. 10: November 1918: The German Revolution

Reading:

- “Spartacus Manifesto” (1918)
- Heinrich Mann, “The Meaning and Idea of the Revolution” (1918)
- Rosa Luxemburg, “Founding Manifesto of the Communist Party of Germany” (1918)

Week 3

Sept. 15: Forging Weimar Democracy

Sept. 17: Political Violence from Right and Left

Reading:

- Excerpts from Weimar party platforms (1919-22)
- Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (2013), pp. 81-103
- Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (2002), chap. 1

Assignment:

- Source analysis #1 due Sept. 15 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 4

Sept. 22: The Nazi Party in the Early Weimar Republic

Sept. 24: Economic Crisis and Stabilization [**Rosh Hashanah; lecture online & prerecorded*]

Reading:

- “Program of the German Workers’ Party” (1920)
- Adolf Hitler, “Reestablishing the National Socialist German Workers’ Party” (1925)
- Dirk Schumann, “Political Violence, Contested Public Space, and Reasserted Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects*, eds. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (2010)

Assignment:

- Source analysis #2 due Sept. 22 at 11:59 p.m.

UNIT II: WEIMAR MODERNISMS

Week 5

Sept. 29: The Golden Years? Weimar Politics and Culture, 1924-1928

Oct. 1: Modernism in Film

Reading:

- Fritz Lang, “The Future of the Feature Film in Germany” (1926)
- FILM: *Metropolis*, dir. Fritz Lang (1927)

Assignment:

- Source analysis #3 due Sept. 29 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 6

Oct. 6: The Historian’s Toolkit (I): Library Research Skills (Guest: Julianne Haahr, Research Librarian at Memorial Library)

Oct. 8: The “New Objectivity”: Introduction to the Chazen Museum exhibit

*Sections on Oct. 8-9 meet at the Chazen Museum of Art

Reading:

HISTORY 201 (001) Fall 2025—Syllabus

- Carl Einstein, “Otto Dix” (1923)
- Gustav Hartlaub, “Introduction to ‘New Objectivity’: German Painting since Expressionism” (1925)
- Begin reading Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl*

Assignment:

- Source analysis #4 due Oct. 6 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 7

Oct. 13: Sex Reform and Homosexual Emancipation

Oct. 15: The “New Woman”

Reading:

- Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (all)

Assignment:

- “Search Yourself” in Mullaney and Rey, *Where Research Begins*, pp. 27-33, due Oct. 16 at 11:59 p.m.

UNIT III: REVOLUTION FROM THE RIGHT

Week 8

Oct. 20: The Historian’s Toolkit (II): Research Questions and Problems

Oct. 22: The Depression and the Rise of the Nazis

*Sections on Oct. 22-23 meet at Memorial Library

*Set up 20-minute conference with section instructor in Week 8 or 9

Assignment:

- “Diagnostic Test” in Mullaney and Rey, *Where Research Begins*, pp. 47-51, due Oct. 22-23 in section

Week 9

Oct. 27: The Historian’s Toolkit (III): Envisioning Primary Sources

Oct. 29: Ordinary Germans and the Fall of the Weimar Republic

HISTORY 201 (001) Fall 2025—Syllabus

Reading:

- Haffner, *Defying Hitler*, pp. 3-94

Assignment

- Draft research proposal and annotated bibliography, due Oct. 30 at 11:59 p.m.

Week 10

Nov. 3: The Historian's Toolkit (IV): Crafting a Strong Research Proposal

Nov. 5: Debate: (Why) Did Weimar Fail?

Reading

- Karl-Dietrich Bracher, "Stages of the Seizure of Power" (1955)
- Hans Mommsen, "The National Socialist Seizure of Power and German Society" (1984)
- Richard Bessel, "Why Did the Weimar Republic Collapse?" (1990)
- Detlev Peukert, "The Crisis of Classical Modernity" (1991)

Assignment:

- Revised research proposal and annotated bibliography, due Nov. 6 at 11:59 p.m.

UNIT IV: RESEARCH PAPERS

Week 11

Nov. 10: The Historian's Toolkit (V): Crafting an Introduction

Nov. 12: Creating Nazi Dictatorship

Reading:

- Haffner, *Defying Hitler*, pp. 105-135

Assignment:

- Research presentations in section (5 mins.)

Week 12

Nov. 17: The Historian's Toolkit (VI): Analyzing Sources

Nov. 19: The Nazi "People's Community"

Assignment:

- Research presentations in section (5 mins.)

Week 13

Nov. 24: Outsiders in the Nazi “Racial State”

Nov. 26: The Historian’s Toolkit (VII): Quotation, Paraphrase, Citation

Assignment:

- Draft of research paper due Nov. 25 at 11:59 p.m.
- Read partner’s draft by section on Dec. 3-4

**Thanksgiving break, no sections*

Week 14

Dec. 1: Toward the Second World War

Dec. 3: The Historian’s Toolkit (VIII): How to Revise

Week 15

Dec. 8: Weimar in Exile

Dec. 10: Conclusion: The Weimar Analogy, 1933 to the Present

**No sections this week*

***Research paper due Sun. Dec. 14 at 11:59 p.m.**

HISTORY 201 (001) Discussion Participation Rubric

A-range (90-100)	• Regular attendance • Consistent, insightful contributions to both small group and full class discussions, as well as in-class debates and peer review exercises • Discussion contributions engage with classmates' comments and move the conversation forward • Abides by the group agreement established by the section in the first week of class
B-range (80-89)	• Regular attendance • Participates actively in small-group discussions, with more limited contributions to full-class discussions and debates • Abides by the group agreement established by the section in the first week of class
C-range (70-79)	• Regular attendance • Limited contributions to both small-group and full-class discussions • Demonstrates gaps in knowledge of the readings; offers mainly facts rather than interpretation • Contributes when called upon but not actively engaged
D-range (60-69)	• Consistent unexcused absences • Demonstrates little or no knowledge of the readings
F	• Rarely or never attends section • No contributions to discussion

APPENDIX: Goals for HIST 201 – “The Historian’s Craft”

Approved by Undergraduate Council, December 8, 2010

The “Historian’s Craft” courses offer an opportunity to experience the excitement and rewards of doing original historical research and conveying the results of that work to others. Through engagement with locally available or on-line archival materials, the courses encourage undergraduates to become historical detectives who can define important historical questions, collect and analyze evidence, present original conclusions, and contribute to ongoing discussions—the skills we have defined as central to the history major.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be prepared to undertake substantial historical research and writing in a variety of courses, including the HIST 600 seminar. Specific goals for this course include learning to:

1. Ask Questions: develop the habit of asking questions, including questions that may generate new directions for historical research.

- Develop historical questions through engagement with primary sources, secondary literature, and/or broader ethical, theoretical, or political questions.
- Ask historical questions to guide individual research.
- Pose questions to prompt productive group discussion.

2. Find Sources: learn the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and consult them to identify and locate source materials.

- Identify the purposes, limitations, authorities, and parameters of various search engines available both through the library and on the world-wide web.
- Take advantage of the range of library resources, including personnel.
- Locate printed materials, digital materials, and other objects.
- Be aware of, and able to use, interlibrary loan.

3. Evaluate Sources: determine the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials.

- Distinguish between primary and secondary material for a particular topic.
- Determine, to the extent possible, conditions of production and preservation.
- Consider the placement of sources in relation to other kinds of documents and objects.
- Identify the perspective or authorial stance of a source.
- Summarize an argument presented in a text.
- Distinguish between the content of a source and its meaning in relation to a particular question.

4. Develop and Present an Argument: use sources appropriately to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and new questions.

- Write a strong, clear thesis statement.
- Revise and rewrite a thesis statement based on additional research or analysis.
- Identify the parts of an argument necessary to support a thesis convincingly.
- Cite, paraphrase, and quote evidence appropriately to support each part of an argument.

5. Plan Further Research: draw upon preliminary research to develop a plan for further investigation.

- Write a research proposal, including a tentative argument, plan for research, annotated bibliography, and abstract.
- Identify the contribution of an argument to existing scholarship.

6. Communicate Findings Effectively: make formal and informal, written and oral presentations tailored to specific audiences.

- Write a clearly argued, formal academic paper, using appropriate style and bibliographic apparatus.
- Deliver a concise, effective, formal verbal presentation with appropriate supporting material.
- Contribute constructively to discussion, whether proposing or responding to an idea