History 228: The Boundaries of the German Nation (1848-1945)

Fall 2003
MWF, 1:30-2:30pm
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Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 Mondays, 12-1 Tuesdays, and by appointment

Course Description:

This course is explicitly constructed around the problematic of the German nation, the German state and German citizenship. We will use the history of Germany to specifically question how belonging was defined in Central Europe during this period. This course looks at several vectors of inclusion and exclusion—questions of national identity, citizenship, gender, class, race, etc. and examines how their interactions reinforce, conflict and complicate one another during this exciting and often troubling period of history. Throughout the period covered by this course, Germans were concerned with defining what it means to be German—who is to be included in the German nation, who is to be excluded, and what the consequences of this inclusion and exclusion were. Throughout the semester, we will also focus on some of the key debates in German historiography—in particular, the debate about the “peculiarity” of Germany’s national development.

Prerequisites and Requirements:

This course assumes a background in European history (either through taking AP European history or History 102). If you do not have this background, please come see me as soon as possible so that we can determine if this course is right for you.

The course format is a combination of lecture and discussion. Twice per week, (usually) Mondays and Wednesdays, you will attend class that will be a combination of discussion and lecture. On the dates marked on the syllabus, we will have a discussion, which will focus on integrating the readings with the information and narratives provided in lecture.

Your grade in this course is based on a combination of several requirements that are spelled out as follows:

Before every discussion of the readings, there will be a short, optional essay question that is part of a list of discussion questions. (These discussion questions will be posted on blackboard no less than two days before discussion.) Over the course of the semester, you must complete 4 of these 2-page essays; 2 of the 4 must be completed by Fall Break. These essays are primarily designed as think pieces which will be graded on a Ô-,Ô,Ô+ system. I want you to use the essays as a way of thinking through some issue in the reading and getting individual feedback on a semi-regular
basis. **Short essays must be turned in to the digital dropbox on Blackboard or via email by 9am on the day of discussion.**

10% of your grade is based on a five page paper on one of several assigned topics, due in early October. This paper does not require any extra readings, but should reference course readings where appropriate. I will distribute questions two weeks before the paper is due.

30% of the course grade is based on a 10-12 page paper. Papers must have the following format: the first part will lay out the significance of this historiographical question. The second part of the essay will explore various “answers” that historians have given to this question. Finally, you will evaluate the evidence of these different historians and talk about who you agree with (or why you agree with none of them, or what merits each answer has) and why. Although it is not required, you should probably consult with me on your topic. Right before Fall Break, you will turn in a preliminary bibliography (the paper can use course readings but should not—and in most cases, cannot—rely on them exclusively) and topic question. Several weeks later, you will turn in a three page “thought piece” about your paper. The paper itself is due right before you leave for Thanksgiving. Late papers will be downgraded 1/3 of a grade for every day that they are late. The preliminary assignments for this paper are not graded, but if they are turned in late, they are governed by the same late policy and this 1/3 of a grade will be taken off of your grade for the paper itself.

There will also be a final exam, which will be comprised of several short ids, and two longer essays. These essays will address some of the larger narratives that we have been discussing over the course of the term. We will talk more about the final as we get towards the end of the semester.

All work for this class is governed by the honor code. You must write and sign the honor code pledge at the end of each assignment. We will talk briefly about the honor code in class, but if you have further questions, please go to: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.

The breakdown of the grade is roughly as follows:

- 15% Short essays (total of four)
- 25% Final Exam
- 20% Discussion Participation
- 10% Short Paper
- 30% Long Paper

All written work must be turned in in order to receive credit for this class.

**Texts Available For Purchase**


All of these texts are available for purchase at the bookstore.

Other required readings have been put on reserve at ERes. Readings from ERes are marked with an asterisk.

All required books have also been placed on reserve.

*Schedule of Lectures, Readings and Questions:*

September 3  Introduction—What is Germany? Did it have a Sonderweg? Overview of the course and course themes.

September 5  Liberalism and the revolutions of 1848—What went right? What went wrong?


September 8  Narratives of Unification

September 12 Germany in the 1870s and 1880s

September 15 Discussion of the Readings

September 17 The 1890s: The German Public Sphere(s) & Challenges to the “Politics of Notables”—Socialism, Nationalism and the “Social”


September 19 NO CLASS

Readings: *R. Evans, “Liberalism and Society: The Feminist Movement and Social Change” in Evans, ed. Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany, pp. 186-214; *Marion Kaplan, The Making of the Jewish Middle Class, Chapters 1, 2 & 5; Bismarck on the Polish Question: http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~german/gtext/kaiserreich/speech.html

September 22 Sexual Politics in the Empire

September 24 Jews & Poles in the Reich

September 26 Discussion of the Readings


September 29 African Imperialism

October 1 World War I—The Origins of War and The Fischer Controversy

October 3 Discussion of the Readings


October 6 NO CLASS, Yom Kippur

October 8 World War I—The Experience of War on the battlefield

October 10 WWI—The Home Front

SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 10th

October 13 Discussion of the Readings
Readings: *Letters from the battlefield and the home front; *Peter Fritzsche, Germans into Nazis, pp. 11-82; *Belinda Davis, “Reconsidering Habermas, Gender and the Public Sphere: The Case of Wilhelmine Germany,” Society, Culture, and the State in Germany 1870-1930

October 15 World War I—Settlements (Brest-Litovsk, Versailles) & the German Revolution

October 17 Discussion of the Readings

Readings: *Elizabeth Domansky. “Militarization and Reproduction in World War I Germany,” Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870-1930: 427-464; *Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, selections

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PAPER TOPIC DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 17th

FALL BREAK

October 27 Weimar—The Weimar Constitution, Politics and the Welfare State

October 29 The New Woman

October 31 Discussion of the Readings


BY THIS TIME YOU MUST HAVE 2 OF 4 RESPONSE PAPERS TURNED IN

November 3 Weimar—Territorial Revisionism & The Rhineland Crisis

November 5 Weimar—The Encounter with American Culture—Jazz and Rationalization

TURN IN THREE PAGE “THINK PIECE” FOR PAPER IN CLASS NOVEMBER 5th

November 7 Discussion of the Readings

Readings: Peter Gay, Weimar Culture, introduction and skim (on reserve); Peukert, Weimar Republic, 147-end; *Jünger, “On Danger,” (1931); Bruno Taut “A Program for

November 10  Weimar—The ideological extremes: Nazism and Communism

November 12  Weimar—Final crisis of the Weimar State

November 14  Discussion of the Readings


November 17  The Nazi State—Ideology and (Dis)Organization

November 19  Nazism—Anti-Semitic Measures 1933-1939

November 21  Nazism—Gleichschaltung and the attempt to create a German Volk


November 24  Nazism—Discontent and Resistance

November 26  NO CLASS, PAPER DUE BY 5PM

November 28  NO CLASS, Happy Thanksgiving

Readings: Michael Geyer, “Resistance as Ongoing Project: Visions of Order, Obligations to Strangers, Struggles for Civil Society” in Nazism and German Society; *Nazi reports on anti-Nazi jokes

December 1  Nazism—World War II

December 3  Nazism—The Holocaust

December 5  Discussion of the Readings

Readings: Ulrich Herbert, “Labor as Spoils of Conquest, 1933-1945,” in Nazism and German Society; *Selections from Hitler’s talks on the Colonization of the Eastern Territories (1941-42); Browning, Ordinary Men
December 8  1945-\textit{Stunde Null}

December 10  Putting German History in Perspective

December 12  Review for Final

\textbf{FINAL EXAM}