

## **Syllabus**

Hist 635-02: Germany in the Age of Extremes  
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George Mason University

## **Description**

Eric Hobsbawm has famously called the period of history that began with the Great War in 1914 and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 "the age of extremes." This label is especially apt for Germany, whose history includes two World Wars, hyperinflation and the Great Depression, the Nazi dictatorship and the Holocaust, division into ideological blocs under the threat of nuclear Armageddon, liberal democracy and abundance, and totalitarian communism and scarcity. Why did these things happen? How did they shape and reshape Germany and German society? This course will explore these and other questions in the historiography and primary sources. Along the way, students will produce short essays on the assigned readings and a longer bibliographical essay on a subject of their choosing.

## **Requirements**

Your grade will be determined by the following components according to the percentages that follow them:

- Informed class participation, 30%
- Review essay 1, 10%
- Review essay 2, 10%
- Bibliographical essay (with required intermediate steps), 50%

The review essays will be 5 pages long (double-spaced), and the bibliographical essay will be 15 to 20 pages long, plus the actual bibliography.

No late work will be accepted, except in the case of significant illness or injury. If that is the case (knock on wood), you must supply medical attestation right away.

## **Grading System**

I determine all grades for the above components as letter grades, and then I convert them to numbers based on a 100-point scale to determine your course average. The equivalents I use are as follows: A = 95 (occasionally higher for particularly excellent work), A- = 92.5, A-/B+ = 90, B+ = 87.5, B = 85, B- = 82.5, and so on.

I calculate course grades according to the weighting in the requirements section above. The cutoff for an A in the course is a 93 average, for an A- a 90 average, for a B+ an 87.5 average, for a B an 83, for a B- an 80, and so on.

## **Communication**

My office hours this semester are Wednesdays, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., in Robinson B 342, or by appointment on the same day. Other days are only possible if you can come to

the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC (near Dupont Circle, Red Line), <http://www.ghi-dc.org>.

The best way to reach me outside of class and office hours is via email at [mstonema@gmu.edu](mailto:mstonema@gmu.edu).

I will usually make announcements via Blackboard, <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>, although I might email students if I think it is urgent.

### **Honor System**

Academic honesty is essential not only to the success of the course, but also to your academic and professional careers. Hence, you are expected to know what plagiarism is and abide by the GMU Honor System and Code at <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=4792>. If you are at all unclear about what plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are, please talk to me.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring an academic accommodation should see me immediately and also contact the Office of Disability Services at <http://ods.gmu.edu> or (703) 993-2474.

### **Required Books**

The following required books are listed in the order we will discuss them:

Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2008: The Divided Nation*, 3rd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.

Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. Richard Deveson, Hill and Wang, 1993.

Peter Frizsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, Belknap Press, 2009.

Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace*, Harper, 2009.

Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, University of California Press, 2000.

Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*, Princeton University Press, 2007.

Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*, Oxford University Press, 2013 (reprint).

Jonathan Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

### Other Readings

We will also read some relevant articles, as per the schedule below, but be prepared to do a bit of additional reading on other days, if it becomes necessary.

I also strongly encourage you to visit and use German History in Documents and Images, <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org>, even when I have not made specific assignments there. This resource includes summary overviews of various periods as well as a wealth of primary sources.

### Schedule

Jan. 22

- Discussion: Fulbrook

Jan. 29

- Workshop: Bibliography topics and research tips
- Come to class with several ideas for your bibliography project

Feb. 5

- Discussion: Chickering
- Option 1 for first review essay (due by beginning of class)
- Description (ca. 100 words) of bibliography project (due by beginning of class)

Feb. 12

- Discussion: Peukert
- Option 2 for first review essay (due by beginning of class)

Feb. 19

- Discussion: Fritzsche
- Option 3 for first review essay (due by beginning of class)

Feb. 26

- Discussion: journal articles (to be announced)
- Bibliography project update (1-2 pages) with preliminary bibliography (due by 9:00 a.m. Saturday, Mar. 1)

Mar. 5

- Discussion: Bessel
- Option 4 for first review essay (due by beginning of class)

Mar. 10-16: GMU Spring Break

Mar. 19

- Discussion: Poiger
- Option 1 for second review essay (due by beginning of class)

Mar. 26

- Discussion: Biess
- Option 2 for second review essay (due by beginning of class)

Apr. 2

- Discussion: Herzog
- Option 3 for second review essay (due by beginning of class)

Apr. 9

- Discussion: Betts
- Option 4 for second review essay (due by beginning of class)

Apr. 16

- Discussion: Zatlin
- Option 5 for second review essay (due by beginning of class)

Apr. 23

- Discussion: journal articles (to be announced)

Apr. 30

- Last class: stocktaking
- Bibliography essay (due by 9:00 a.m. Saturday, May 3)

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