

Hist 314: Germany in 19th and 20th Centuries

Fall 2018

George Mason University
Innovation Hall 204, 7:20–10:00 p.m.
Dr. Stoneman
Email: mstonema@gmu.edu
Office hours: to be announced

Description

This course explores social, economic, cultural, and political developments in German history. It concentrates on the period from 1815 to 1989; however, it also considers legacies from the medieval, early modern, and revolutionary eras, not to mention Germany's most recent past. Major topics include the industrial and political revolutions of the nineteenth century and their accompanying social and cultural effects; the creation of a German nation-state in 1871 from a loose collection of independent kingdoms, principalities, and city-states; developments in war and society that led to two World Wars and ended in Germany's division and the Cold War; the integration of West Germany into NATO and the European Community, on the one hand, and East Germany into the Warsaw Pact and Soviet economic structures, on the other hand; and, finally, reunification of the capitalist West and communist East within the context of Western economic, political, and security frameworks. The World Wars and Holocaust pose central interpretive challenges; however, the course also explores other lines of development.

The goal of this course is not only to learn about this specific historical material but also to foster your historical thinking skills more generally. In addition, the course will help you to cultivate your critical thinking, critical reading, and analytic writing abilities. In fact, only by applying these skills can you truly begin to understand the material—a process that entails much more than memorizing an assemblage of facts, names, dates, and places.

Requirements and Grading

There are five graded requirements for the course. Each contributes to your overall course grade according the percentages in the list below.

- Informed and attentive participation (15%)
- Midterm exam (20%)
- Two source analysis papers, 750 to 1,000 words long (15% each)
- Final exam (35%)

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.

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.

Readings

There are no assigned textbooks, **but every student is expected to acquire and use a survey of German history**. Possible options include Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, and William Hagen, *German History in Modern Times*. For more detail, there is David Blackbourn on the nineteenth century and Mary Fulbrook on the twentieth. The texts by Gordon Craig and Volker Berghahn are out of date, but they still offer useful starting points. There are others too, but please consult me before you spend any money.

Specific pages will not be assigned in these books. Instead, read the chapters that cover what is happening in class.

The remaining readings will be electronic articles and primary sources, according to the schedule below. Readings must be completed by the class for which they are scheduled. Please note, that many are still TBA (to be announced) so that I can adapt as things progress. You will always have at least one week's notice for the reading assignments, longer before papers and exams.

Other Policies

Communication

Check your email regularly. This is the main way you will receive announcements and other messages from me. If you need to contact me, please email me at mstonema@gmu.edu. Phone is a bad idea, as I cannot receive messages at Mason.

Office hours will be on Wednesdays, late afternoon or early evening, when I am on campus. Time and place to be announced. (Or by appointment.)

Honor Code

Academic honesty is essential not only to the success of the course, but also to your academic and professional careers. Thus, you are expected to know what plagiarism is and abide by the Mason Honor Code at <https://oai.gmu.edu>. 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu> or 703-993-2474.

Recording

Recording class is not permitted unless you require such a specific academic accommodation. In that case, consult with me first, and please note that any such recordings are for your personal use only, not for wider dissemination.

Screens

Studies show that people absorb material better when they take notes by hand with pen and paper because they are forced to process the material instead of mindlessly transcribing what they hear. Nonetheless, many of you will prefer to take notes on a laptop or tablet. Besides taking notes, you might also find it convenient to do the assigned readings on an electronic device. Using your laptop or tablet for any other purpose will hurt your learning and distract your neighbors. If you cannot resist the impulse to use your device for other purposes, please sit in the back row of the classroom so that your classmates can still concentrate.

Schedule

Aug 29 – Introduction

Sept 5 – Overview of Modern German History: Chronology and Themes

- Review Syllabus.
- Review A Sense of History: Some Components by Gerald Schlabach, <http://www.geraldschlabach.net/about/relationships/benedictine/courses/handouts/sense-of-history>.
- Browse German History in Documents and Images (GHDI) at <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/home.cfm> to get a feel for how it is set up and what kinds of subjects it covers. Focus on material since 1815.
- Purchase and begin reading a survey of German history. See Suggestions above under “Readings.”

Sept 12

- Reading TBA

Sept 19

- Reading TBA

Sept 26 – First source analysis paper due

Oct 3

- Reading TBA

Oct 10

- Reading TBA

Oct 17 – Midterm exam

Oct 24

- Reading TBA

Oct 31

- Reading TBA

Nov 7 – Second source analysis paper due

Nov 14

- Reading TBA

Nov 21 – No class (Thanksgiving break)

Nov 28

- Reading TBA

Dec 5 – Last class

- Reading TBA

Dec 12 – Final exam