



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

HISTORY 410: HISTORY OF GERMANY, 1871 TO THE PRESENT



Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, 1930



Potsdamer Platz, 1973, showing the Berlin Wall

Course Information

Instructor:	Prof. Brandon Bloch (bjbloch@wisc.edu)
Office Hours:	Tues. 2-4 p.m. or by appointment (Humanities 5118 or online)
Semester:	Spring 2025
Class Meetings:	Mon./Wed. 2:30-3:45 p.m. (Humanities 2251)
Modality:	In-person
Credits:	3
Requisites:	Sophomore standing
Course Designations:	Breadth – Social Science Level – Advanced L&S Credit – Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S Honors optional
Canvas site:	https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/440893

Course Description

This course surveys the turbulent history of modern Germany, Europe's dominant political power and the third-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 Germans participated in political, social, and economic transformations that have formed the modern world.

Three core themes will guide our exploration. First, we will situate Germany in the wider world. We will ask 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 nature 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 today. 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. 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 and secondary 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

- Assess the significance of nationalism, industrialization, 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
- Create a public-facing webpage presenting your analysis of a historical theme in a format that is accessible and compelling to a broad audience

Course Books

Inge Deutschkron, *Outcast: A Jewish Girl in Wartime Berlin*, trans. Jean Steinberg (Lexington, MA: Plunkett Lake Press, 2017) [1978]. ISBN: 9780961469658.

Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. A. W. Wheen (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987) [1928]. ISBN: 9780449213940.

These books are available for purchase at the University Book Store, and are placed on reserve at College Library.

Although there is no required textbook, you may find the following texts useful reference points when completing the assignments. I have listed the most recent editions, but previous editions will work as well.

David Blackbourn, *History of Germany, 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003). ISBN: 9780631231967.

Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany, 1918-2020: The Divided Nation*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021). ISBN: 9781119574231.

Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany, 1871 to the Present*, 8th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018). ISBN: 9781138742246.

Course Requirements

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

1. Class Participation (25%)

This class will include lecture, discussion, and small group work. Your attendance and active participation are critical to the success of the course. I will structure class discussions to facilitate an inclusive and constructive dialogue, but you are expected to arrive prepared to engage with the readings. 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 am happy to meet if you would like to discuss strategies for speaking up in class. In-class writing, debate, and peer review exercises, as well as the discussion posts (see below), will count toward this portion of your grade.

Over the semester, you will be asked to submit four responses on the course readings (approx. 150-200 words each) to the Canvas discussion board. Discussion posts are due by the beginning of class on Wednesday and should discuss that week's readings. Posts should be submitted by weeks 3, 6, 10, and 14, but you are welcome submit in any week as long as you meet these deadlines. Reading questions will be available in advance.

While regular attendance is a course expectation, I understand that extenuating circumstances may require you to be absent. You will have a free pass to miss two class meetings, for any reason. If you need to miss class more than twice due to religious observance, illness, or family emergency, please fill out the Absence Notification form available on Canvas. In some cases, you may be asked to submit additional discussion posts to make up for missed classes beyond the two excused absences.

2. Take-home Midterm Exam (15%)

A take-home midterm exam will be distributed at the end of class on Feb. 26 and is due by the beginning of class on March 3. The exam will cover material from the first five weeks of the course (through the Great War), and will consist of one primary source analysis (approx. 300 words) and one essay (approx. 1,200 words). You will be permitted to use course readings, lecture slides, and notes to complete the exam.

3. German history webpage (35%)

In lieu of a traditional research paper, you will be asked to create a webpage on our class Google Site related to a theme in modern German history during the period from 1918-50 (the Weimar Republic, National Socialism, World War II, and the early postwar period). The goal is to trace the continuities and changes within your chosen theme across different political regimes. The webpage should take the form of a research essay—that is, it should make an argument about your topic rather than simply summarizing 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 2,000 words (equivalent to 6-7 double-spaced pages) along with accompanying visual images and links. For your research, you will draw on at least 5 primary sources, as well as 2-3 secondary sources (scholarly articles or book chapters).

We will discuss expectations for this project in class, and you will be introduced to online and print repositories where you can find translated primary sources. For now, keep in mind the following deadlines. The preliminary assignments will count for 5% of your course grade, and the final webpage for 30%.

- One-paragraph topic description: March 12
- Revised topic description and annotated bibliography: March 19
- Draft of webpage text (for in-class peer review): April 16
- Final webpage: April 27 at 11:59 p.m.

4. Take-home Final Exam (25%)

A take-home midterm exam will be distributed on May 2 at 9 a.m. and is due by May 9 at 5 p.m. (Please note that the due date is based on the exam time set by the Registrar. Since this is the day before Commencement, you may wish to submit your exam earlier.) The exam will cover material since the midterm, and will include one primary source analysis (approx. 300 words) and one essay (approx. 1,800 words). You will be permitted to use course readings, lecture slides, and notes to complete the exam.

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 class meetings, 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.

Honors Optional Credit

Students taking this course for honors credit 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. Any student is welcome to take the course for honors credit; you do not need to be enrolled in the L&S Honors Program.

Late Work

If you are unable to meet an assignment deadline, please let me know as soon as possible and we can work out a plan for you to get caught up. The schedule of discussion posts allows you to choose which weeks will require more work, and the webpage assignment is broken up into several intermediate deadlines to help you stay on track. In cases of unexcused late work, I reserve the right to apply a deduction to late assignments out of fairness to other members of the class.

Please note that I am not able to accept any written work for this course after Friday, May 9, the last 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 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 me. 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 I 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

Discussion Posts and Exams: The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for the discussion board posts or the take-home midterm and final exams.

German History Webpage: You may use generative AI tools to help you brainstorm ideas for your webpage and construct an outline. If you utilize AI in this capacity, you will be asked to submit a note when you complete the webpage explaining how you used the AI tool—including the prompts you submitted—and whether you found it helpful. However, you are not permitted to directly import text generated by AI into the webpage, or to submit text that is merely a revised version of a draft written by AI.

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. However, I am implementing these restrictions for two reasons: a) AI does not function as a “source” (for reasons we will discuss in class); and b) the purpose of History 410 is to foster your skills as an independent thinker, researcher, and writer (which will allow you to use AI more thoughtfully in the future). Submitting text generated by AI for any course assignment will be considered as an academic integrity violation.

Technology

Laptops are permitted in class for taking notes and referencing readings. At several points, you will be asked to use laptops to complete peer reviews and other in-class exercises. Of course, I 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.

Accessibility

I am committed to ensuring that all students receive equal access to the course materials and equitable opportunities to achieve the 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 Classroom Environment

Studying history involves discussion of complex themes including race, imperialism, 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 a Group Agreement, a set of 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 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:

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/>

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

Monday classes will be reserved for (interactive) lectures on the week's theme, while Wednesday classes will focus on discussion, debate, and writing exercises. Readings and assignments are due by the beginning of class on Wednesday, unless otherwise indicated.

Assignment guidelines and rubrics, as well as all readings and films (except the course books) are available on Canvas. See the Modules tab for week-by-week links.

WEEK 1 (Jan. 22): Course Introduction

- **All Quiet on the Western Front* is a long book (albeit a fast read), so I advise beginning to read the book early in the semester

WEEK 2 (Jan. 27, 29): The Rise of Imperial Germany

- National Liberal Party, Founding Program (1867)
- Social Democratic Workers' Party, Eisenach Program (1869)
- Association of German Catholics, Founding Manifesto (1872)
- German Conservative Party, Founding Manifesto (1876)
- Hedwig Dohm, "Women's Right to Vote" (1876)

WEEK 3 (Feb. 3, 5): Mass Politics from the Left and Right

- Selection from *The German Worker: Working-Class Autobiographies from the Age of Industrialization*, ed. Alfred Kelly (1987)
- Adolf Stoecker, "Our Demands of Modern Jewry" (1879)
- Rosa Luxemburg, "The Mass Strike, the Political Parties, and the Trade Unions" (1906)
- Assignment: Discussion Post #1 (final deadline)

WEEK 4 (Feb. 10, 12): German Colonialism

- Friedrich Fabri, "Does Germany Need Colonies?" (1879)
- Friedrich Kapp, Speech against "Colonial Chauvinism" (1880)
- Otto von Bismarck on "Pragmatic" Colonization (1884)
- August Bebel, Reichstag Speech against German Colonial Policy (1889)

- Adam Blackler, “From Boondoggle to Settlement Colony: Hendrik Witbooi and the Evolution of Germany’s Imperial Project in Southwest Africa, 1884-1894,” *Central European History* 50, no. 4 (2017)

WEEK 5 (Feb. 17, 19): The Great War

- Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* [all]

WEEK 6 (Feb. 24, 26): The German Revolution and the Birth of the Weimar Republic

- Weimar party platforms (1919-22)
- Kathleen Canning, “Claiming Citizenship: Suffrage and Subjectivity in Germany after the First World War,” in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects*, eds. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (2010)
- Assignment: Discussion Post #2 (final deadline)

**Take-home Midterm Exam distributed at the end of class on Feb. 26; due by the beginning of class on March 3*

WEEK 7 (March 3, 5): Weimar Politics and Culture

- FILM: *The Blue Angel*, dir. Josef von Sternberg (1930)

WEEK 8 (March 10, 12): Weimar in Crisis and the Rise of Nazism

- Ernst Thälmann, “The SPD and NSDAP are Twins” (1932)
- Social Democratic Party, “The Iron Front for a United Front!” (1932)
- Reports by Otto Meissner and Kurt Baron von Schröder (1932-33)
- Louise Solmitz, diary entries (1933)
- “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” (1933)
- “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring” (1933)
- “Nuremberg Laws” (1935)
- Assignment: One-paragraph topic description for webpage

WEEK 9 (March 17, 19): The Nazi “Racial State”

- Deutschkron, *Outcast*, chs. 1-4
- Jonathan Wiesen, “American Lynching in the Nazi Imagination: Race and Extra-Legal Violence in 1930s Germany,” *German History* 36, no. 1 (2018)
- Assignment: Revised topic description and annotated bibliography

*SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10 (March 31, April 2): Nazi Germany at War

- Deutschkron, *Outcast*, chs. 5-8, 11
- Assignment: Discussion Post #3 (final deadline)

WEEK 11 (April 7, 9): Allied Occupation and the Making of Cold War Germany

- Elizabeth Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (1996)

WEEK 12 (April 14, 16): West Germany and Cold War Globalization

- Assignment: Draft of webpage text (for in-class peer review)

WEEK 13 (April 21, 23): Coercion and Consent in East Germany

- FILM: *Good Bye, Lenin!*, dir. Wolfgang Becker (2003)
- Assignment: Webpage due April 27 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 14 (April 28, 30): Race, Migration, and Populism

- OPTIONAL: Essays by Helga Emde and Astrid Berger in *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, eds. May Opitz, Katharina Ogunttoy, and Dagmar Schultz (1986)
- OPTIONAL: Michelle Kahn, “Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial, and Germany’s Far Right: How the AfD Tiptoes around Nazism,” *Journal of Holocaust Research* 36, no. 2-3 (2022)
- Assignment: Discussion Post #4 (final deadline)

Take-home Final Exam distributed May 2 at 9 a.m.; due May 9 at 5 p.m.