

HISTORY 3428G
Modern Germany, 1871 to the Present
Winter 2026

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Office Hours: **Wednesdays, 1:30 to 3:30**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description:

Germany was arguably the dominant state in continental Europe from its founding until 1945. Since reunification it has again begun to play this role. Its achievements and its crimes cast long shadows on all its neighbors. We examine all aspects of this history, including domestic politics, social divisions, and culture.

Prerequisite: Registration in third year or above, any module.

Antirequisite: The former History 3415E.

Course Syllabus:

In the period we study there were at least five distinct political regimes in Germany: the authoritarian monarchy of the German Empire (1871-1918); the Weimar Republic (1918-1933); the Nazi regime (1933-1945); and the two post-1945 regimes, the German Democratic Republic (1949-1990) and the Federal Republic of Germany (1949 to the present). One might consider the period of rule by the victors of the Second World War between 1945 and 1949 a separate regime, but that was clearly only an interregnum. Perhaps the development of European institutions from the 1960s and 1970s is creating a sixth regime, one whose significance for the nation states that are its members is still being worked out. We analyze the character of each regime, its political structures and the domestic tensions and foreign policies that characterized each.

The history of Germany in the period we examine is also one of large-scale economic and social change. Industrialization led to migration from the countryside to cities; over time raised living standards; created new forms of inequality; and caused periodic recessions and depressions, among the many other changes it produced. Women gained access to higher education and broader employment opportunities, and also new rights within marriage and as citizens. From the 1960s migration to West Germany led to significant changes in the ethnic composition of the country. These and other changes of a similar order of magnitude are also explored in the historical literature and in this class.

The course relies on secondary works from English speaking historians and from German academics who write in English or whose work has been translated. Germany has long had a

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highly developed system of public universities, as well as institutes dedicated to historical research, also publicly funded. These have provided institutional support for thousands of historians. Germany also has a well developed system of public and private archives. A sign of the significance of historical research in the Federal Republic is the existence of a government office, the *Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung*, the Federal Agency for Civic Education, that publishes historical studies – among other books – in very inexpensive paperback editions to make them accessible to the German public. Thousands of books and articles are published each year on German history.

A one semester class must leave many of the subjects that German historians have examined unexplored. But one must start somewhere. The class provides an introduction and a framework. In many areas it sacrifices breadth for depth, so that students may examine particular events, institutions, social forms, and popular beliefs and practices in some detail. Assignments include both primary and secondary sources.

In the first seven weeks of the class Gordon Craig's *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1978) will serve as our textbook. Because this book is eight hundred pages in length, I am only asking students to read selections, about half of the book. Craig's book is demanding; it has a high level of resolution. It emphasizes political and diplomatic history, and has less to say about social and cultural history, which we will explore in other assigned texts. As the dates covered by the book indicate, it is constructed in large part to explain the phenomenon of Nazism and the actions of the Nazi regime. That line of inquiry is central to the period we examine, but there are numerous others, and we shall explore them as well. On some occasions, in the view of the instructor of this class, Craig adopts too much the tone of the prosecutor. We will discuss some of these occasions in class. But many of his judgments have stood the test of time. Because of the date of publication, 1978, and its status as a classic, the instructor was able to acquire used copies for the class inexpensively. Several physical copies are also available in Western libraries, and the book can also be accessed on-line through Weldon.

The class will also examine a range of other texts and documents and, where appropriate, excerpts from documentaries and other films. Students are expected to regularly attend meetings of the class, to respond to the in-class writing assignments based on assigned texts, to research and write one essay, and to take an essay based final examination.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

Explain the causes and consequences of, and relationships between, events and processes of historical change in modern German history, including industrialization; the political structure of the German state founded in 1871; changing gender roles and expectations; class conflicts; the events leading to the First World War and the effects of this war on German society; the challenges faced by the first German republic between 1918 and 1933; the rise of Nazism, the nature of Nazi rule, and the Second World War; the social and political institutions and practices of the German states created in 1949; and the causes and consequences of reunification;

Evaluate primary sources, demonstrating an ability to explain the meanings they contain and their historical significance;

Construct analytic, logical, and clear historical arguments in an essay;

Make informed, constructive, and concise contributions to discussions of complex subjects.

Methods of Evaluation:

Contributions to class discussions. Students are expected to participate periodically in class discussions. In calling on students, the instructor will give priority to students who have not commented previously in a class, or in recent classes. Students will be able to earn full credit in this part of the class if they respond to a question posed by the instructor on an average of once every two weeks, or at least six times in the course of the semester, and the answers they give reflect a careful reading of the assigned sources. Quality, not quantity or length, is the key.

10%

Weekly response papers (to be submitted in class)

20%

Essay (roughly 3,000 words) **The essay is due at midnight on Tuesday, March 17th. Please submit the essay to the Assignments section of the course website.**

30%

Final Examination (to be taken during the fall exam period, December 10-21, at the date assigned by the Registrar's office).

40%

Response Papers: Because I believe that it will promote the quality of class discussions, because some students are more reluctant than others to participate in these discussions, because I want to be able to provide at least some credit to students who have carefully done the reading for a class but are unable to, or for any other reason do not, demonstrate this in the class discussion, and because the class is so large, in most classes I will ask students to respond in writing to a question or questions about the reading. I plan to distribute only one response paper in most classes. I will ask students to write a response to the question or questions posed on the page of paper I will distribute. Students will usually have ten minutes for this exercise; if the question is complex, it might be a bit longer. This exercise is open book and open notes; students may consult any assigned course materials and any notes that they have prepared before class. I will post the grades on the response papers in the Gradebook section of the course OWL website.

Students are not informed before class of the question or questions to be posed on the response papers. Part of the purpose of the response paper is to test student preparation of the assigned reading for each class. As with respect to class participation, the lowest response paper grade will not be included in determining the final grade for this part of the evaluation of the course. If a student fails to complete a response paper because they were absent from the class and their Academic Advising Office requests an accommodation, or if the instructor grants an accommodation for another reason, the grade of zero will not be included in the determination of the grade for the semester. Response papers may not be completed after the class.

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Essay: The course requires one essay, which will be due at 9:00 pm on Tuesday, March 17th, but may be submitted earlier. This is the designated deadline for submission. However, pursuant to Western policies encouraging lenience in the imposition of penalties for lateness, essay submissions will not incur a late penalty until 12:05 am (five minutes after midnight) on Wednesday, March 18th. This will provide a margin for technical and other last-minute difficulties.

Essays that are late will be penalized one point per day, including weekends, on a hundred point scale, starting at 12:05 am on Wednesday, March 18th. For the purpose of determining the starting time of the late penalty, submission takes place when the essay is recorded as received in the Assignments section of the course OWL website. **No essays may be submitted after Friday, April 9th, without approval by the student's Academic Advising Office.**

Please submit the essay in Word or as a pdf document to the Assignments section of the course website. Students will be given a selection of possible essay questions at the start of the semester. They may also create a question for themselves, but in this case must seek prior approval from the instructor. Late essays will be penalized one point per day for late submission, starting at 12:05 on Wednesday morning, March 18th. The penalty will be waived if the Academic Advising Office requests an accommodation.

Guidance in organizing and writing your essay, and with respect to the proper citation of historical sources, can be found in the *Guide to Researching and Writing a History Essay*, found on the course website.

Final Examination: The final examination, which will take place during the winter term examination period at the time assigned by the Registrar, is closed book and closed notes. No use of electronic devices is permitted during the examination. The exam will consist of three essay questions. Students will be asked to answer one question regarding each of three of the three time periods into which the material we have examined may be divided: 1871-1918; 1918-1945; and 1945-present. Students will be given a choice of two or three questions from which to choose with respect to each period. All of the questions on the exam will be drawn from a list of questions given to students several weeks before the exam. Please see the end of this syllabus for an example of an earlier final examination in this class. Some of the questions on this exam may appear on the examination given this class, but very likely there will also be new and different questions.

Make-up exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Students who are granted academic consideration with respect to the final examination will be provided with the opportunity to take a make-up final examination. Final examinations always require supporting documentation as the basis for academic consideration.

Course Materials:

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Gordon Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1978). [to be supplied by the instructor, or borrowed from the Western library system, or read on-line through the Western library catalogue]

Other materials will be made available on the course website.

Course Schedule and Readings:

January 8 The German states before 1870. The path to unification. The German Empire during Bismarck's chancellorship, 1871-1890: key and characteristic episodes.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, preface, 1-43 (founding of the German state), 61-78 (Kulturkampf), 140-57 (attacks on the Socialists), 171-9 (Bismarck's final years, and dismissal).

*Margaret Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, 2000), 45-50, 152-161.

*Chart showing Reichstag election results in the Kaiserreich (the German Empire).

January 15 German society and culture in the imperial period. German urban antisemitism. schools. Industrialization and the development of an working class. Gender roles. Jews and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 186-93.

*Juergen Kocka, "Problems of Working-Class Formation in Germany: The Early Years, 1800–1875," in *Working-Class Formation. Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg (Princeton University Press, 1986), 283-89, 294-301, 316-24.

*Angelika Schaser, "Gendered Germany," in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (Oxford University Press; 2008), 128-50. Available on-line through Weldon library.

*Carole Adams, *Women clerks in Wilhelmine Germany: Issues of class and gender* (Cambridge University Press), 6-30.

*Dietz Bering, *The Stigma of Names. Anti-Semitism in German Daily Life, 1812-1933* (Ann Arbor, 1992), 209-20.

*Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, excerpts.

Craig calls the German public school system "one of the principal supports of the existing order." (p. 188) On what does he base this claim?

January 22 William II, a misfortune for Germany and for Europe. German foreign policy since 1871. German imperialism. The path to the First World War.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 224-39.

*Roger Chickering, "Militarism and Radical Nationalism," in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (Oxford University Press; 2008), 196-217. Available on-line through Weldon library.

*Prussian national song ("Ich bin ein Preuss").

*Jürgen Kocka, "Looking back on the Sonderweg," *Central European History* 51.1 (2018): 137-142. [online](#)

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 302-38.

January 29 The First World War.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 339-95.

*Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 134-41, 154-72.

*Ernst Jünger, *The Storm of Steel. From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975; first published in German in 1924), 302-19.

*Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. by A.W. Wheen (Boston: Little, Brown, 1929), 268-81.

February 5 The Weimar Republic. Hitler and Nazism.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 396-433, 434-40, 448-68, 534-68.

*"The programme of the Nazi Party, as adopted on February 24, 1920," from *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader*, ed. by J. Noakes and G. Pridham, Vol. 1, *The Rise to Power 1919-1934* (Exeter: A. Wheaton, 1983), 14-16.

*Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 37-65, 176-86.

February 12 Hitler's domestic and foreign policies, 1933-1939; the terrible fate of German Communist refugees in the Soviet Union.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 569-91, 631-45.

*"Reichstag Debate on the Enabling Act, 23 March 1933," from Mitchell Allen and Michael Hughes, eds., *German Parliamentary Debates, 1848-1933* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 245-81.

*Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death. The Making of the Nazi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 140-67.

*Wolfgang Benz, *A Concise History of the Third Reich*, translated by Thomas Dunlap (University of California Press, 2006), 113-20.

*Reports of American State Department officers on life in Germany in 1933: Frank Bajohr and Christoph Strupp, "*Dritte Reich*," *Berichte ausländischer Diplomaten über Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Wallstein, 2011), 386-7.

*Marta Appel, Memoirs, in *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. by Stella Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 351-3.

*"Pastor Julius von Jan's Protest against the 9 November 1938 Pogrom," from Peter Hoffmann, *Behind Valkyrie. German Resistance to Hitler. Documents* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 156-67.

*Hans Berger, "Remembrances of Kristallnacht," in *Jewish Life in Germany. Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. by Stella Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 386-97.

*Katja Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall. A History of East Germany* (Basic Books, 2023), 9-34.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 673-713.

*Hossbach Memorandum

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 657-67.

*Thomas Mann, *The Coming Victory of Democracy* (Alfred Knopf, 1938), 7-19.

February 19 - Reading Week, no class

February 26

The Second World War. Genocide.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 714-64, 667-72.

*Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance 'Euthanasia' in Germany 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130-43, 160-80.

*Jürgen Forster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," from *Germany and the Second World War*, vol 4, *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 481-85, 1140-9, 1160-1, 1172-6.

*David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution. Public Opinion under Nazism* (1996), 101-15.

* Extracts from the Diary of Captain Wilm Hosenfeld, from Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist, the Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945*, trans. by Anthea Bell (Toronto: McArthur and Co., 2003), 177-181, 193-208.

*Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins. The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 2002), 38-43, 74-84, 163-73, 226-29.

*Michael Stolleis, "Theodor Maunz: The Life of a Professor of Constitutional Law," in *The Law under the Swastika. Studies on Legal History in Nazi Germany*, trans. by T. Dunlap (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 185-92.

*"German Scholar Unmasked as Former SS Officer," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1995, p. 3.

*Heinrich Böll, "Murke's Collected Silences," from *The Stories of Heinrich Böll* (Knopf, 1986), 495-513.

March 19 **Essay due at midnight on Tuesday March 17th: please download to the Assignment section of the course website: if for some reason there is a problem doing so, send the essay to enathans@uwo.ca as an attachment in Word.**

Lecture on the history of the Federal Republic, 1949-1991. (explanation: I am not satisfied with any of the English language histories of this subject. The lecture will be based primarily on works I cannot assign because they are in German. Also, I realize that students may have some problem in tackling a great deal of reading this week because the essays are due on the 17th.)

March 26 **The German Democratic Republic (DDR). The last years of Stalinism to the forced resignation of Walter Ulbricht in 1971.**

Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic* (Longman, 2000), 35-39.

Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Palgrave, 2012), 30-33, 50-53.

*Ralph Jessen, "Mobility and Blockage During the 1970s," in *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, Konrad Jahrausch, ed. (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 341-59.

*Songs of Wolf Barman

By what methods, and with what results, did the Soviet Union and East German Communists attempt to gain control over East Germany in the period between 1945 and 1971?

What does Ralph Jessen's essay suggest about the methods the East German state employed to gain the loyalty of at least part of the society, and the degree to which they were successful?

Grading of the essays will be based on the clarity, breadth, and logical development of the answer, and the extent to which claims are supported by references to the texts and other sources assigned for – or, in the case of documentaries and other visual material, shown during - the class.

1. 1871-1918

1. How did Bismarck attempt to maintain his control of political decision-making, and also the power of the traditional Prussian elite to which he belonged, between 1862 and 1890? Consider the policies he adopted at home and abroad and the form taken by constitution of the German state founded in 1871.

2. What were the most significant divisions in German society during the German Empire (the German state founded in 1871) prior to the First World War, and how did these divisions affect the opportunities of individuals belonging to different groups? Please consider class, gender, and confessional divisions, and any other categories that you think were significant.

2. 1918-1945

1. Do you agree with Gordon Craig that the Weimar Republic “failed in the end partly because German officers were allowed to put their epaulettes back on again so quickly and because the public buildings were not burned down, along with the bureaucrats who inhabited them”? Why or why not?

2. With what goals and methods did Hitler and the Nazi regime seek to change German society between 1933 and 1939?

3. What generalizations can one make about how Germans responded to the crimes of the Nazi regime before and during the war, based primarily on the evidence read for the class, or discussed in the lecture?

3. 1945-present

1. In the 1950s and 1960s, what factors enabled West Germans to create a stable and prosperous republic integrated into West European and Atlantic alliances, an enormous contrast with the post World War One experience? Consider the role played by the policies of the Allies, and especially of the United States, the hegemonic power; the division of Germany and the Cold War; the political structures of the Federal Republic; the role of economic factors; and the policies and person of Konrad Adenauer, the political figure who dominated the politics of West Germany between 1949 and 1963.

2. What were the most important challenges faced by the East German state in creating a sense of loyalty among its citizens? Focus especially on the 1970s and 1980s.

Additional Statements

Communication policies: I am happy to speak with students after class, or during my weekly office hours. If these times are not convenient, I am happy to arrange alternative times to meet.

I am in my office most days of the week. Please write me at enathans@uwo.ca to schedule a time to talk. I am also happy to talk by phone or via Zoom.

Use of electronic devices: No electronic devices, or books or notes, may be used during the quiz or the final examination.

Classroom behavior: Please turn off cell phones and refrain from using any recording devices during the class. Please remove earbuds during the class.

Use of electronic devices: No electronic devices, or books or notes, may be used during the quiz or the final examination.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): Students may use artificial intelligence tools in studying for the class and in preparing the assigned essay. However, you should not take language from AI or make claims based on AI without verifying these claims in the sources assigned for each essay, or similar sources that you have located on your own. Citation to an anonymous source, like AI, is not acceptable.

Each essay must be primarily the student's own work. Note that AI often makes very general claims, and is likely not to reflect the particular claims and interpretations found in the assigned texts. ChatGPT and other AI tools have not yet - although one day perhaps they will - learned how to correctly cite the sources I have assigned for the essays, and the result is that essays written with ChatGPT and other AI tools fail to incorporate a necessary element of the required essay. **Essays submitted without accurate footnotes to the assigned sources will receive failing grades. As noted above, all of the assigned sources listed in the syllabus must be used in the assigned essays.**

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.