

# **Global Seminar in Berlin**

## **GS 154: Modern Germany – From Bismarck to Hitler**

**Instructor: Frank Biess**

**Place: Berlin**

**Time: Summer Session I, Mon 3-6**

**Excursions: 6hrs/week (Wednesdays and some afternoons/evenings)**

### **Course Description:**

Germany has been at the center of some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most crucial events. Conflicts and tensions inside Germany frequently spilled over Germany's borders and affected the lives of millions of non-Germans, thus shaping the course of 20<sup>th</sup> century European and world history. This course follows the extremely volatile and often violent course of German history from its emergence as a nation state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the total collapse of the Nazi dictatorship in 1945. In particular, the course will examine two major themes: first, we will examine continuities and contingencies in Modern German History. Was there, for example, a direct link between the unification of Germany through "iron and blood" under Bismarck in 1870/71 and the rise of Hitler in the 1930s? Why did the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) that was celebrated for its liberal constitution, progressive welfare system, and vanguard culture turn into one of the most destructive regimes in human history? What were the alternatives to this disastrous course of Modern German history and why did these alternatives ultimately not materialize? Secondly, the course will entail a detailed examination of the Nazi period. We will address such issues as the structure of the Nazi dictatorship, the nature of the Nazi "racial community," the peculiar mixture of popular consent and coercion, and the regime's policies of war and genocide.

Throughout the course, the main emphasis will be on the significance of German history for thinking through and understanding some more general problems of modern history and, indeed, of our own troubled present. Leading questions include: what are the conditions for the success of democracy? In what way does the struggle over modern culture influence the prospects for democracy? What is the popular appeal of authoritarianism? How do authoritarian regimes seek to manufacture consent? My goal is not for you to remember all the details about the German history during this period but rather to use the example of German history to enable all us to think through some of these more general problems.

### **Course Readings:**

Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest*

Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany. Promise and Tragedy*

Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*

## **Week 1: The German Empire**

Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest*

Sources:

The Constitution of the German Empire (Preamble, Art 5,6,7,11,12,15,20, 59,60,78)

August Bebel, Reichstag Speech (November 8, 1871)

Heinrich von Sybel Describes the Structure of the German Empire and the Prospects for Liberty ( January 1, 1871)

Paul Göhre, "Working Class Life" (1891)

Eduard Bernstein, "The Immediate Tasks of Social Democracy" (1899)

Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution?"(1899)

Heinrich Class, "If I Were Kaiser"(1912)

**Excursions:**

**Mon: City Walk**

**Tue: Reichstag**

**Wed: Spreewald visit**

**Th: Museum of German History**

## **Week 2: World War I and Revolution**

Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany. Promise and Tragedy*

**Sources:**

The "Blank Check": Ladislaus Count von Szögyény-Marich (Berlin) to Leopold Count von Berchtold (July 5, 1914)

Helmuth J. L. von Moltke to Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (July 29, 1914)

Soldiers Describe Combat: Eduard Schmieder (1914-15), Sophus Lange (1914-15),

Peter Hammerer (1916)

The Homefront: Dancing the Polonaise (1916), The Impact on Popular Morale

(March 1917), The Strikes of January 1918

The Constitution of the German Republic

**Excursions:**

**Tue: Tiergarten and Rosa Luxemburg Memorial**

**Wed: Jewish Berlin: Visit to Jewish Museum, Neue Synagogue, Scheunenviertel**

**Th: Visit to Deutsche Nationalgalerie**

## **Week 3. Weimar Germany**

Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany. Promise and Tragedy*

Rudolf Kaiser, "Americanism"  
Katharina Rathaus, "Charleston: Every Age Has the Dance It Deserves."  
Ivan Goll, "The Negroes Are Conquering Europe"  
Elsa Herman, "This is the New Woman"  
Lola Landau, "The Companionate Marriage" (1929)  
"Textile Workers: My Workday, My Weekend,"

***Excursions***

***Tue: Schwules Museum***

***Wed. Visit to Bauhaus Museum in Dessau,***

***Th: Wall Museum***

**Week 4: National Socialism**

Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*

Melita Maschmann, "A German Teenager's Response to the Nazi Takeover in 1933,"  
"The Enabling Act"

"Speech by the Social Democrat Otto Wels against Passage of the "Enabling Act"  
(March 1933)

Adolf Hitler, "Opening Address at the House of German Art", July 19, 1937

"Reports on the Sources of Working Class Support for the Nazis and the Limits of  
Opposition, 1935-39"

Adolf Hitler, "Speech to the National Socialist Women's Organization," September  
1934 (ibid., 79-82)

Heinrich Himmler, "On the Question of Homosexuality", 1937

Marta Appel, "Jewish Life after the Nazi Seizure of Power in 1933"

Inge Deutschkron, "Growing Up Jewish in 1930s Germany"

David H. Buffom, "Report on Kristallnacht"

***Excursions:***

***Tue: , Topography of Terror***

***Wed: Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp***

***Th: Museum of German Resistance***

**Week 5: War, Genocide, Aftermath**

Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide*

Field Marshall von Reichenau, "Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories" (1941)

Herman Friedrich Graebe, Description of Mass Execution of Jews in Ukraine in 1942

Chaim Kaplan, "In the Warsaw Ghetto, 1939-1942"

The White Rose, "Second And Sixth Leaflet"

***Excursions:***

***Mo: Berlin Cabaret Show***

***Tue: Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen***

***Wed Comparing Commemorative Sites: Holocaust Memorial, Bayrisches Viertel,***

***Neue Wache, Soviet Memorial Treptow***

***Th: World War II Bunker Tour***

***Fr: Boat Tour, River Spree***