

History of Modern Germany

TTH 1.30- 2.45 pm

AS 100.233 | Gilman 17

Distribution Area: Humanities (H), Social & Behavioral Sciences (S)

AS Foundational Abilities: Citizens and Society (FA4), Democracy (FA4.1), Ethics and Foundations (FA5)

Instructor: Victoria Harms, Associate Teaching Professor

Email: vharms1@jhu.edu

Office hours: Gilman 342

Tuesdays, 9.30 -11.00 am, Thursdays, 3.00 - 4.00 pm (and by appointment)

Please sign up in advance:

[Book time with Victoria Harms: Office Hrs Fall 2025](#)

Teaching Assistant: Mihai Olteanu

Email: molteanu@jhu.edu

Office hours:

Please feel free to contact our liaison librarian Siân Evans about any research inquiries:

Siân Evans (she/her), MA, MSLIS

Liaison Librarian for: Africana Studies | History | History of Science and Technology | Women, Gender and Sexuality

Sheridan Libraries

[Schedule a meeting with me](#)

Description

There is more to Germany than beer, BMWs, and Bayern Munich. In this interactive lecture course, we will explore the history of Germany since 1740. Our focus will be the 20th century. We will interrogate the relationship between politics, culture, economics and society to understand Germany's position within Europe and the world throughout the last 150 years. The class pays special attention to the making of the German Empire and its collapse in World War I, the interwar period and the short-lived Weimar Republic, National Socialism and the Third Reich, World War II, and the Holocaust, the two Germanies (East and West) during the Cold War, German unification and the Berlin Republic as well as Germany's role in the European Union and the world today. We will investigate German history in relation to its European neighbors and its friends and foes around the world.

Apart from reading and analyzing secondary literature and primary sources, students are expected to engage in class discussions and group work, interact with guest speakers and experts, analyze movies, news reports, and conduct independent research.

Consider every class and every assignment an opportunity to improve your skills in reading and writing, critical thinking, deliberation, meaningful conversations, and analysis.

This syllabus serves as a contract between you and me that explains what I expect of you, and what you may expect of me. By enrolling in this class, you accept the terms laid out below. Please read them carefully. In case I need to make changes to the syllabus, I will provide as much advanced notice as possible.

Recommended and partially required readings:

Hagen, William W. *German History in Modern Times. Four Lives of the Nation*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. (You can borrow a copy for 1 hr on the Internet Archive)

Fulbrook, Mary. *A History of Germany, 1918-2014*. New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. (available as e-book)

Trentmann, Frank. *Out of Darkness. The Germans, 1942–2022*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2024.

Great resources for news from Germany (and beyond) often with some historical context are the YouTube channels [DW News](#) and [DW Documentary](#).

Learning objectives

- ✓ Comprehending and summarizing secondary literature
- ✓ Analyzing and interpreting primary sources
- ✓ Critical use of feature films
- ✓ Identifying and analyzing historical *narratives* in rituals, education, films, documentaries, museums, memorials, statues, national holidays, etc.
- ✓ Understanding comparative, transnational, and entangled history
- ✓ Leading and contributing to group discussions effectively
- ✓ Active listening and engagement in mutually beneficial team work
- ✓ Reflecting the historical context of current affairs and the historical background of policies and policymakers
- ✓ Understanding structural and everyday racism, gender as a social construction and gender inequality as well as social inequities, and the ways they shape society and individual opportunities
- ✓ Thinking through our role as learners, engaged citizens, and Hopkins affiliates in the wider world

A safe and a brave space

- ✓ Our class is a community of learners. We come from different walks of life, our individual and historical experiences differ, and we celebrate these differences as a source of power, inspiration, and resilience
- ✓ We respect one another's chosen identities.
- ✓ Be respectful/ show respect – controversy with civility.
- ✓ Stay engaged. Understand that learning involves risks (letting go of old ideas, wrestling with new truths).
- ✓ Speak your Truth. Own your intentions *and* your impact.
- ✓ Experience discomfort. Courage and respect in the face of conflict.
- ✓ Expect and accept non-closure.

Our time at Hopkins can be stressful, and the various expectations that you have to met and the challenges you are confronted with can feel overwhelming. Please make sure to stay healthy and protect your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Take the necessary precautions and seek professional support if necessary. Do not hesitate to reach out to the [Counseling Center](#) during regular working hours 410-516-8278. After hours: press 1. A trained, professional, and diverse staff is ready to assist you.

If you find yourself in a hostile or adverse environment, please take good care of yourself. Your personal safety, your emotional and mental well-being are more important than any class. If you sense that something is not right, do not wait, get assistance. Do not hesitate to reach out to the [Counseling Center](#) during regular working hours 410-516-8278. After hours: press 1.

Use of generative AI

Students should not use generative AI to answer reading questions or complete any required writing assignment.

This is considered use of unauthorized electronic devices or software as stated in the university ethics policy.

More important, the purpose of these assignments is to give you practice developing the important skills of deliberating, writing, critical thinking, and applying course concepts.

Students are allowed to use generative AI to brainstorm ideas or ask questions about how to solve a problem, but the final work has to be their own. Students who use generative AI should indicate how they used it in their assignments. The purpose is not to raise suspicion, but to help the instructor identify possible sources of incorrect information. Generative AI has a bias to give an answer, even if it is not correct. This is especially the case with more sophisticated topics such as those studied in this course. When using generative AI, be sure to verify any information provided against the course

materials. If you have any questions about appropriate use of these technologies, please consult the instructor.

Assignments

Grading:

- 25% Class participation
- 25% Quizzes
- 25% Curated primary source collection
- 25% Research Paper (scaffolded)

Do not attempt to negotiate your final grade, please. You have all semester and plenty of opportunities to demonstrate you deserve an A. Do not try to talk your way to an A when all grades are in, and you realize you are “only” a few decimal points short. It is unfair to everyone else and disrespectful to the instructors. The official cut off between an A and an A- is 94.0.

Class Participation: 25%

Attendance is the most basic requirement for a college education. If you miss more than **four classes** unexcused/ without *legitimate* reasons (i.e., illness, conflicting athletic or academic obligations) **you will not receive a passing grade.**

Make sure you show up to class prepared and on time. This is an interactive lecture course with plenty of group work. You are expected to engage with the instructors, assigned material, and your peers. Common rules of courtesy apply.

Pop Quizzes: 25%

We will have **six pop (unannounced) quizzes** during the term. The lowest grade will be dropped. Each quiz is worth five points.

For each week, you will find **reading questions on Canvas**. The questions on the pop quizzes are identical to those reading questions. You are encouraged to prepare notes and **copy-paste** them into an assignment on Canvas as your quiz response.

You will have five minutes in class to submit and tweak your response.

There will be no make-up quizzes. If you know you will miss a class, please, send in your reading responses ahead of time. In case of a pop quiz, they will count in lieu of the quiz. If we do not have a pop quiz, you have ensured your continued intellectual growth,

demonstrated your commitment to our class, and kept up with your peers, so that you can return to our conversations without missing out or lagging behind.

Curated primary source collection: (25%)

10 pages plus bibliography/ works cited.

Pick one of the broad themes listed below and curate a collection of at least 5 different primary sources of different genre and/ or media that speak to (aspects of) that theme within German history:

1. Political movements and ideologies
2. Great Power Politics and international relations until 1961
3. Art and Culture until 1939
4. Economy including labor movement and labor rights before World War II

In your curated primary source collection, you are expected to address the following:

- Historical context of the creation of the sources
- Author(s)
- Type of source
- Target audience
- Content : message, motivations, intentions, objectives
- Possible biases
- Consequences and impact

You are free to design your curated primary sources collection as you see fit as long as it covers the expectations laid out in this assignment and communicates your research findings and analysis clearly to a general, well-informed audience. We will discuss options, advantages and disadvantages in class.

Please declare **your theme choice by OCTOBER 14, 2025 (EOD)**. You will find a *non-graded* assignment on canvas. Please enter your choice and any questions there. If you wish, you can add the literature and sources you plan to use and/ or consult. The content of your entry is only accessible to you, the instructor, and the TA.

For the bibliography, you are free to choose a reference style you prefer. However, it must be one of the commonly accepted reference styles and it must be applied correctly and consistently.

Deadline: 12 pm on OCTOBER 27, 2025. (Turnitin on canvas)

RESEARCH PAPER: gender, race, and/ or class in German history (scaffolded: 20+ 5%)

Eight pages max plus bibliography/ works cited.

Identify a topic that allows you to explore the ways in which concepts and constructions of gender, race, and/ or class have emerged, shaped, and evolved in German history.

This is a research paper. You are encouraged to make use of our readings and in-class discussions, but you have to demonstrate an independent research effort. Transfer, expand, challenge, and/ or corroborate arguments we have debated during the semester. You are free to explore topics we have neglected in class!

Please respect the rules of academic writing: introduce the topic, formulate a research question, contextualize and organize your argument(s) cogently, and substantiate them with evidence (primary and secondary sources). The paper consists of an introduction, proper body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Observe the formal requirements for any piece of academic writing you submit.

You are expected to submit your topic, potential research questions, prospective argument, and initial research (sources) to an assignment on Canvas **by EOD December 2, 2025**.

You will have the opportunity to discuss ideas and arguments during our final class on December 4, during which you are expected to receive and provide constructive feedback on the upcoming assignment. This first step of the final assignment is worth **5% of the final grade**.

You are free to choose a reference style you prefer. However, it must be one of the commonly accepted reference styles and it must be applied correctly and consistently.

Deadline: EOD DECEMBER 12, 2025. (Turnitin on canvas)

WRITING CENTER

Writers, all writers, need feedback on their writing to advance their projects. The JHU Writing Center provides free writing support to all undergraduate and graduate students in degree programs on the Homewood Campus in a peer tutoring model. We work individually with writers on all writing projects – whether personal, academic, or professional – at any stage of the writing process.

Please to check the [Writing Center's website](#) for general writing advice and to schedule an appointment with one of its tutors.

Formal requirements for all written assignments

- Margins: 1" all around, 12 pt. font size, standard font (e.g. Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial).
- Double spaced
- Your choice of reference style (Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.) as long as you use it correctly and consistently
- Add your name and basic course information to the top of the first page, the cover page, or the header
- ALWAYS add your last name to the file name (no spaces in file names)

- Page numbers
- List of references (bibliography) on a separate page
- You are expected to be aware of and comply with Hopkins' rules of [academic integrity](#)
- Every academic paper consists of a title, an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion
- JHU has defined the use of **AI** as illegitimate use of computers and devices. Thus, a detection of AI in any paper carries the same penalties as cheating and plagiarism.

General policies

Absences

Absences are excused for illness, religious observance, participation in certain university activities, and other circumstances described in the university's policies and must be explained to your instructor before class.

If you miss four classes or more unexcused/ without legitimate reasons (such as conflicting athletic, ROTC, academic obligations), **you will not receive a passing grade.**

If you miss class for reasons other than illness, please make sure to complete the assigned reading and submit your reading note(s) for that week.

Please consult Hopkins' policies on [religious and spiritual holidays](#).

Academic Integrity

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. See [Student Affairs'](#) website for more information.

Accommodations

Johns Hopkins University is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need any form of accommodation, please consult with the [Student Disability Services](#) ((410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu). The instructor will receive a confirmation regarding your request for and the type of accommodation needed.

Please reach out to me at the beginning of the semester to discuss your specific needs. I will make sure to take all the necessary steps to accommodate you and guaranteed everyone a successful performance in this class.

Screen Policy

Please put all mobile devices away except the one you are using. Turn off notifications and sounds on all devices. **Use your devices for class-related work only.**

Communication

Please use proper formatting and address when writing your email. The best way to reach me is after class or during my office hours. Allow 24 hours for email responses. Communicate any concerns or challenges you are facing early.

Mental Health

The University is aware that many students experience anxiety, depression, and other emotional challenges. If you would like to speak to a professional counselor, please visit the campus [Counseling Center](#).

SCHEDULE

August 26: Introduction

August 28: Out of Many One

William W. Hagen, "Liberté? Facing the French Revolution, 1789-1815," in *German History in Modern Times. Four Lives of the Nation*, pp. 97-111.

Please read at least one primary source:

- [German Federal Act](#) (June 8, 1815) in GHDI.
- [Carlsbad Decrees](#): Confederal Press Law (September 20, 1819) in GHDI.

September 2: "Vormärz" and the 1848 Revolution

William W. Hagen, "Freedom and Voice, 'Iron and Blood' (Eisen und Blut). Liberalism and Nationalism, 1815-1914," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 129-145.

Please read at least one primary source:

1. The Liberals: [Heppenheim Program](#) of the Southwest German Liberals (1847)
2. The Democrats: Gustav von Struve: [Motion in the German Pre-Parliament](#) (March 31, 1848)
3. The Conservatives: Friedrich Julius Stahl: "[What is the Revolution?](#)" (1852)

September 4: Working Class

William W. Hagen, "Sozialdemokratie: workers and politics in the age of industrialization," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 153-169.

Please read excerpts from this primary source:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848), [The Communist Manifesto](#) (selection in the [class module](#) on canvas, not e-reserves)

September 9: Empire & German Colonialism

Conrad, Sebastian. "Chapter 4: The German Colonial Empire," in *German Colonialism. A Short History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 36-65. (includes several illustrations)

Christoph Hasselbach, "[Germany's colonial era brought to light amid global protest](#)," *DW* (June 22, 2020.) (short)

September 11: World War I

William W. Hagen, "Krieg: The Prussian-German Monarchy's Sudden Death in War and Revolution, 1914-1920," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 227-240.

September 16: Patriotism, Pacifism, Loyalty

All Quiet on the Western Front (1930), directed by Lewis Milestone, based on the novel by Erich Maria Remarque, 133 mins.

September 18: Weimar Republic

Fulbrook, Mary, "Chapter 2: The Weimar Republic. Origins and Orientations," in *A History of Germany, 1918-2014*, pp. 15-39. New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

September 23: The Rise of Fascism

William W. Hagen, "A People without a State? Middle-class discontent and populist utopia," and beginning of "Volksgemeinschaft. The People's Community at Hitler's Command," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 261-**287**.

- Adolf Hitler, "[Appeal to the German People](#)" (February 1, 1933) in GHDI.
- [Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service](#) (April 7, 1933) in GHDI.

September 25: "The Third Reich"

Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*, 1935. approx. 105 mins.

September 30: World War II

William W. Hagen, "Lebensraum: War for Empire in Eastern Europe," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 303-318.

Please read this primary source:

- Adolf Hitler, "Speech before the Reichstag," (September 1, 1939), in R. G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society*. (Macmillan Learning, 2009), pp. 110-112.

October 2: The Holocaust

William W. Hagen, "*Shoah*. Banned from Nation and Earth: German Jews after 1914, National Socialist 'Jewish Policy,' and the Holocaust," in *German History in Modern Times*, pp. 319-350.

Please read this primary source:

- [The Wannsee Protocol](#) (20 January 1942), in GHDI.

October 7: Postwar Germany

Mary Fulbrook, "Occupation and Division, 1945-1949," in *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, pp. 113-141.

October 9: Two Germanies

Mary Fulbrook, "Crystallization and Consolidation, 1949-1961," in *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, pp. 144-163.

October 14: Choice of Primary Source Theme

October 14: 1968 (the Long Sixties)

Brown, Timothy Scott, "Chapter 1: Space," in *West Germany and the Global Sixties. The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1979*, pp. 21-78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

- "[Rudi Dutschke Demands the Expropriation of the Springer Press Empire](#) (July 10, 1967)," orig. *Der Spiegel* (10 July 1967), in GHDI.

October 16: FALL BREAK – no class

October 21: Détente & Divergence

Mary Fulbrook, "Transformation and the 'Established Phase,' 1961-1988," in *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, pp. 164-182.

October 23: Life & Repression in the GDR

Film: *Barbara* (2012), directed by Christian Petzold (on Kanopy)

Gary Bruce, "Participatory Repression? Reflections on Popular Involvement with the Stasi," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 52, Supplement 9 (2014), pp. 47-58.

October 28: Deadline for Primary Source Analysis

October 28: German Unification

DW Documentary: [German Reunification - a Short History](#), January 13, 2017, 43 mins.

October 30: 1989

Film: *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker.

November 4: Berlin Republic

Mary Fulbrook, "The Berlin Republic," in *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, pp. 283-300.

November 6: Neoliberalism and the 1990s

Philip Ther, "Cotransformation. The Case of Germany," in *ibid.*, *Europe since 1989*, (Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 259-287.

Please read this primary source:

- ["The Sick Man of the Euro,"](#) *The Economist*, Special, 3 June 1999.

November 11: Germany's Search for a New Identity (A Summer Fairy Tale)

Trentmann, Frank. "Who are the People?," in *Out of Darkness. The Germans, 1942–2022*, pp. 502-506.

Sark, Katrina. "Fashioning a New Brand of 'Germanness': The 2006 World Cup and Beyond." *Seminar: Journal of Germanic Studies* 48, no. 2 (2012): 254-66.

- Read at least one of the primary sources from Deniz Göktürk, et al., eds. *Germany in Transit. Nation and Migration, 1955–2005*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. (selection in canvas class module)

November 13: Globalization and the Euro Crisis

Trentmann, Frank. "Germany at its Limits," in *Out of Darkness. The Germans, 1942–2022*, pp. 507-516.

Schild, Joachim. "Leadership in Hard Times: Germany, France, and the Management of the Eurozone Crisis." *German Politics and Society* 31, no. 1 (2013): 24-47.

OR

Hertner, Isabelle, and Alister Miskimmon. "Germany's Strategic Narrative of the Eurozone Crisis." *German Politics and Society* 33, no. 1 (2015): 42-57.

November 18: The "Refugee Crisis" and the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Trentmann, Frank. "We can do this" in *Out of Darkness. The Germans, 1942–2022*, pp. 522-532.

Witting, Volker and Jens Thureau, "[Germany's AfD: Euroskeptics turned far-right populists](#)," DW (March 11, 2024).

November 20: Diversity & "Germans on Probation"

Fischer, Mia, and K. Mohrman. "Multicultural Integration in Germany: Race, Religion, and the Mesut Özil Controversy." *Journal of International and Intercultural communication* 14, no. 3 (2021): 202-220.

TBD In class, we will speak with Efe Can Özek, PhD, a post-doc at the University of Freiburg. He is an expert in transnational political campaigns and the Turkish diaspora in Germany and the Netherlands.

Thanksgiving Break, November 24-28

December 2: Anti-Black Racism in Germany

DW Documentary, "[Black and German. Racism in Germany](#)," (February 10, 2023). (43 minutes)

In class, we will speak with Katharina Hacker, PhD candidate at the International Centre for the Study of Culture, Gießen, Germany. She is an expert in the long-term impact of the German genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama in present-day Namibia, the official recognition of said genocide, and the discourse around reparations.

December 2: Germans, the Environment, and the Climate Crisis

Trentmann, Frank. "Energiewende," "Emissions and Omissions," and "Fellow Creatures" in *Out of Darkness. The Germans, 1942–2022*, pp. 635-658.

December 2: Choice Topic Research Paper

December 4: No reading assignments – prepare to discuss your research paper

December 12: Deadline for Research Paper

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU DID IT.

GOOD LUCK WITH FINALS!