

History 342: Modern Germany

John McCole

Fall 2020: this course will be taught remotely in three “live,” synchronous sessions each week, MWF 9:30-10:20

email: mccole@uoregon.edu

Course Description

This course examines the paths of modern German history since the first national unification in 1871, up to and including the unification of the postwar west and east German states in 1990. Major topics will include:

- the social and religious politics of the German empire;
- the rise of mass political, social and cultural movements including nationalism, social democracy, and antisemitism;
- the roots of German imperialism and expansionist aims;
- the issue of Germany’s responsibility for the first World War;
- the contentious, brilliant, tragic history of the Weimar Republic, Germany’s first full-fledged democracy;
- Nazi Germany: causes and consequences of the Nazis’ rise to power, and the realities of life in Nazi Germany;
- the Holocaust and other racial and political mass murders;
- the postwar partition of Germany in the Cold War, including both the western and eastern German states;
- the fall of the Wall, the reunification of Germany in 1990, and the issues facing Germany in the twenty-first century.

Throughout the course, we’ll address major controversies about modern German history, including issues of historical explanation--*why* did things happen the way they did?--as well as political and moral responsibility. We will also track the question of whether or not it’s helpful to think of modern German history as following a “special path”--what Germans call the *Sonderweg* debate.

The course will include a mixture of lecture and discussion. On most Fridays, we’ll have discussions of the supplementary readings. (This means that attending on Friday is important.) Questions are always welcome during lecture, I’ll provide time for general discussion as well.

Course Requirements

- attendance and active participation in discussions
- a midterm exam
- a final exam
- an analysis of one of the supplementary primary source readings
- one book review (6-8 pp.) from a list of books to be distributed, due no later than the Wednesday class in week 10

Weights:

midterm exam: 25%

final exam: 25%

weekly reading analysis: 25%

book review: 25%

total = 100%

Attendance and active participation can raise your grade by a notch (e.g. by raising a B+ to an A-).

What you can expect to learn in this course

If you work at it, you will:

- develop a sound knowledge of the events, trends, movements, and phases of modern German history;
- become a participant in debates over fundamental historical questions and moral and political issues that arise from modern German history;
- gain experience, skills, and confidence in learning about history by using a variety of materials, including primary sources, interpretive studies, scholarly articles, and fiction;
- and sharpen your interpretive reading and analytical writing skills.