

History 427

Prof. John McCole

Winter 2018

Class: M/W 12-1:20, 175 Lillis

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*please note: some changes to the syllabus will be made before the start of classes
FOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE SCROLL DOWN TO THE END OF THE
SCHEDULE TO THE SECTION "NUTS AND BOLTS"*

GERMAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY FROM NIETZSCHE TO THE POSTWAR

Course description

This course examines some of the major issues and figures in German intellectual life beginning around 1871, at the time of German national unification, and continuing through to the postwar. During this time, Germany went through a remarkable and often catastrophic series of ruptures. The imperial nation-state created by national unification in 1871 was destroyed in the First World War and replaced by a democratic, parliamentary republic; this “Weimar Republic” was in turn overthrown by the brutally oppressive, genocidal Nazi regime; in the wake of the Holocaust and a second World War, two German states, east and west, epitomized the divisions of the Cold War. Now, in our own time, a reunified Germany has become a key part of a larger, emerging, but contested Europe. We will look at how German intellectuals have responded to these events by exploring a series of key episodes in cultural criticism, social theory and sociology, aesthetic rebellion, Jewish renewal, psychoanalysis, radical conservatism, modernist design reform, forced intellectual emigration, the Frankfurt school, and debates on guilt, public memory, and national identity.

This is a course in intellectual history. As we move through the term, I will provide pointers to the major developments in German history during this period. However, *this course is not primarily a survey of that history*. (If that’s what you’re looking for, you might prefer my History 342, “Modern Germany,” which will next be taught in 2017-18.) Rather, my goal is to engage you in the ideas and the debates, through contextualization and through close reading and discussion of the authors’ works.

Texts

The following are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Oxford edition)
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*
- Günter Figal, ed., *The Heidegger Reader*
- Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford ed.)

In addition, the following books are available on reserve at Knight Library:

- Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*
- Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*
- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Buber, *On Judaism*
- Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*
- Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy*
- Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford edition)
- Adorno, *Critical Models*
- Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* is available online via Knight Library's catalog
- Jan-Werner Müller, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification, and National Identity*

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: Modern German Intellectuals and Society (January 9, 10)

- Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (on reserve):
 - “Introduction: The Mandarin Type,” 1-13
 - “The Origins of the Educated Middle Class,” 14-25
 - “The Mandarin Tradition in Retrospect,” 81-127
- Immanuel Kant, “Answer to the Question, ”What is Enlightenment” (online)

Week 2: The German Empire and Visions of Regeneration: Nietzsche (January 15, 17)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*

Week 3: Wilhelmine Germany and Mandarin Sociology I: Georg Simmel (January 22, 24)

Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine

- “Fashion”
- “The Stranger”
- “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
- “Subjective Culture”

Week 4: Wilhelmine Germany and Mandarin Sociology II: Max Weber (January 29, 31)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Week 5: Rebels with Many Causes / German-Jewish Culture (February 5, 7)

Martin Buber, “The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism,” in Buber, *On Judaism*

Wednesday, February 7: mid-term exam (in class)

Week 6: The Great War, Psychoanalysis, and Society: Freud (February 12, 14)

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Week 7: The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of “Classical Modernity” (February 19, 21)

Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*:

- “Revolution from the Right,” 330-354
- “Designing the New World: Modern Architecture and the Bauhaus,” 429-453

Week 8: National Socialism and the Radical Conservatives: Jünger and Heidegger

(February 26, 28)

Günter Figal, ed., *The Heidegger Reader*

Week 9: Exiles: The “Frankfurt” School, Walter Benjamin, and Hannah Arendt

(March 5, 7)

- Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility,” version 2 (in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, v. 3)

Week 10: Coming to Terms with Catastrophe: Reconstructions after Nazism, War, and the Holocaust (March 12, 14)

- Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment,” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
- Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* (excerpts)
- Theodor Adorno, “The Meaning of Working through the Past,” in Adorno, *Critical Models*
- recommended: Jan Werner Müller, “Nation, State, and Intellectuals in West Germany since 1945: The Public Uses of History,” in Müller, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification, and National Identity*, 20-63

**Final Exam: Tuesday, March 20, 10:15-12:15,
in our regular classroom**

NUTS AND BOLTS

What you can expect to learn in this course (a.k.a. learning objectives)

- a knowledge of the overall course of modern German intellectual history;
- familiarity with a number of key texts produced by key German thinkers during this period;
- experience reading primary sources in the history of ideas; and
- an understanding of how intellectual history combines contextualization with close reading to provide a historical account of intellectual life.

How the course will work

The course will combine lecture and discussion: as a rule, lectures will be held on Mondays and the first part of Wednesdays, with questions and discussion always welcome. The second part of Thursday's class will be reserved for discussion. *The course will work only if you come to class every Wednesday prepared to discuss the readings.* Reading and discussion questions will be provided each week.

Level and prerequisites

This course is intended primarily for juniors, seniors, and graduate students from a wide variety of majors. Some previous knowledge is expected, but it need not be in German history. It may come from any of a wide variety of fields, including modern European history, the history of modern literature, political theory, social theory, or philosophy.

Required work (for undergraduates)

- Midterm exam 30%
 - Essay (8-10 pages) 30%
 - Final exam 30%
 - Participation 10%
- TOTAL: 100%

Essay assignment

The essay will be an 8-10 page paper on a topic chosen from among a list of possibilities that I will distribute in advance. It will ask you to revisit and rethink an issue we have addressed in the course. Your sources will be the readings assigned for the course. That is, it is not a research paper that requires outside reading; rather, it is a "think piece" that asks you to return, read more closely, and reflect on an issue that has concerned you.

Exam dates and due dates

Midterm exam: Wednesday, February 7, in class

Essay: to be announced (between the midterm and the final)

Final exam: Tuesday, March 20, 10:15-12:15 in our regular classroom

Note: I cannot grant requests for early final exams. Please plan accordingly.

Grading policy

My grading policy follows the History Department's norms; see <http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/grading-policy/>. When you receive an individual assignment, it will describe the criteria that I will use to grade it. I do not grade on a curve. I grade for accomplishment, not effort. In general, these are my standards for grading:

A: Work that distinguishes itself through its sophisticated grasp of the material and unusual accomplishment, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies main criteria of the assignment but lacks the element of distinction that carries the work into the realm of excellence.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards, but which exhibits some engagement with the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect; satisfies none of the assigned criteria.

Academic honesty

All work that you submit for this course, including papers and exams, must be your own, and it must have been produced for this course. Please be sure that you are familiar with the University's policies regarding academic honesty. When you submit work for the course, you are certifying that you have complied with these guidelines.

Be sure you do not inadvertently commit plagiarism. It's your responsibility to understand it. If you have questions at any time, please don't hesitate to ask.