

HIS 126
HITLER'S GERMANY
SPRING 2024

Meeting Times: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:40–10:55am
Room: Lattimore 201

Instructor

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:00-2:00pm or by appointment

Teaching Assistants

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“But fascism was always about more than the dictators. Indeed, it is a kind of liberal illusion to focus on the figure of the dictator, as though one person was the only problem. The real problems lie in the dictator’s shadow, in the conditions that enable the leader’s rise.”

–Mark Mazower

This course revolves around the most essential question in modern German history: was Hitler’s regime particular to Germany, German culture, and German society, or was merely the manifestation of an immanent quality in all modern nation states? What does it mean to compare any political figure to Hitler? Was his kind of “evil” *suus generis* or dangerously banal? This course places the rise and fall of the Nazi Party and Hitler in the longer *durée* of German history, from the collapse of the Second Empire in WWI, to the Weimar Republic, Nazi State, and the Two Germanys of the Cold War.

Texts to Purchase:

William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*
Benjamin Carter Hett, *Death of Democracy*
Wendy Lower, *The Ravine*

Texts I Will Provide but You May Purchase if You Like:

Frans Masereel, *The City: A Vision in Woodcuts*
Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*
Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*

Primary Source Collections (Available via Blackboard)

Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (available as ebook through library)
Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*

Hard copies of books and articles are also on reserve in Rush Rhees Library.

The Kelly Family History Book Fund: In 2022, the History Department received an endowed fund to purchase class text books for undergraduate students enrolled in a history course. If you need help acquiring your books, you may apply for funds through this link <https://forms.gle/c2WArDa5g696oKeU6>. Preference will be given to history majors but any student may apply.

Guidelines

PARTICIPATION: Complete all assigned readings, regularly attend class and participate in discussion. Since there is no textbook for this course, your learning depends upon your participation.

Pop Quizzes: I will hold regular, multiple choice pop quizzes on the readings. These quizzes are designed to be easy but also to compel you (gently) to familiarize yourself with the assigned reading before each class. So come prepared to discuss the reading in question on the day it is assigned.

ATTENDANCE: I will not take attendance. Things are stressful enough as is, and I don't feel like it's worth my time or energy to make sure you are sitting in front of your computer. Nevertheless, I expect you to be present and participate because you are college students who are interested in this subject. If you cannot bring yourself to regularly participate or do the work, this is not the class for you and I suggest you drop it immediately.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

1. Complete the assigned readings, regularly attend class and participate in discussion.
2. Complete an in-class midterm exam.
3. Write a party platform paper for the 1930s Election Simulation exercise. I will hand out instructions beforehand.
4. Complete a written, open-book final exam.

Assignments

Pop Quizzes	20%
1930s Election Simulation	25%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%

Computers: Obviously our current work is impossible without the internet and computers. We will be staring at screens 100% of the time, which frankly, is a real bummer. That being said, I invited you to use our class time as an opportunity to escape the oppressive, constant drum of the internet and focus on a single subject for an hour of your time every day. I will do my best to vary class activities and discussion. I want to engage you where you are (mentally). So whenever you feel the urge to do something else during class, try to put off that stuff for an hour. Social media, consumer capitalism, and the constant din of "Breaking

News” will still be there when we are done for the day. Hopefully by paying attention to something else for a little while, you’ll feel some relief.

Email: I am available via email for questions or concerns about the class. There are types of questions, however, that I don’t generally answer. If you write an email telling me you are going to miss class, I will take note, but won’t write back. If you write with a question about an assignment or reading, and the answer is on the syllabus or assignment sheet, I will not write back. Otherwise I do my best to keep up with your questions, although occasionally an email slips through the cracks. If you don’t hear back within a few days, try me again or come up to me after class.

Disability Services:

The University offers a number of accommodations for students through the Office of Disability Resources, including special testing locations, extra time, and help with note taking. For a full list of services, please visit <https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/faculty/accommodations-defined.html> and feel free to contact me with additional questions or requests.

Academic honesty: Intellectual integrity is the University’s most fundamental commitment. Plagiarism of any kind will be penalized to the fullest possible extent. There is no mitigating circumstance, ever, for plagiarism. Please visit the University’s official policy on academic honesty here, <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>.

Whenever you draw upon somebody else’s words *or ideas* to make a point, give them credit in a footnote. The most common causes of plagiarism are not deliberate dishonesty. Often it is careless note-taking. Make sure that in your notes you distinguish clearly your thoughts on the reading and the words you have copied from a secondary source. Waiting too long to do the research and the stress and confusion that may result from that rush to finish may produce mistakes that in public represent the most serious violation of academic values. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged to start assignments well in advance of the deadline.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I. Introduction

Jan. 18 – Anti-liberalism: Fascism, Nazism, and Trumpism?

PART I – THE RISE AND FALL OF WEIMAR, 1914-1932

Week II. The Cracked Consensus

Jan. 23 – The End of World War One and Civil War

Primary Source: in Stackelberg & Winkle, “Proclamation of the Council of People’s Representatives to the German People, 12 November 1918” p. 49

Jan. 25 - Versailles and Weimar Constitution

Discussion: Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, Intro and Ch. 1, “A Troubled Beginning,” pp. 1-40

Week III. Crisis and Stabilization

Jan. 30 – Hyperinflation and Hitler’s Origins

Primary Source: in Kaes et al., Friedrich Kroner, “Overwrought Nerves” (p. 63-64)

Feb. 1- 1923: NSDAP, Beer Hall Putsch’s, and the Occupation of the Ruhr

Discussion: Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy*, Ch. 2, “Don’t Believe Him, He’s Telling the Truth,” pp. 35-61

Week IV. The Weimar Republic & Modernity

Feb. 6 -- Two Roads Diverged: Hitler’s v. Stresemann’s Germany; Americanization

Primary Source: Kaes et al., “Berlin Stahlhelm Manifesto”, May 8, 1927., pp.339-340

Feb. 8 – Gender and Sexuality, from Liberation to Misogyny

Primary Source: Kaes et al., “This is the New Woman,” Elsa Herrmann, 1929, pp. 206-208

Week V. Weimar Culture

Feb. 13 – The City and Modernity

Discussion: Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 2 & 8, pp. 41-79, 297-331
Frans Masereel, *The City: A Vision in Woodcuts*

Feb. 15 – Expressionism to New Objectivity

Week VI. The Crisis and Collapse of Weimar

Feb. 20 – The Great Depression and Constitutional Crisis of the 1930s

Discussion: Hett, *Death of Democracy*, Ch. 3 “Bloody May and the Creeper,” pp. 62-93

Feb. 22 – The Onset of the Great Depression and Ensuing Political Crisis

Week VI. The Nazi Seizure of Power

Feb. 27 – The Rise of Nazism in a Small Town

Discussion: William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, Chapters 1-3, 6, 8, or 3-40, 70-90, 108-127,

Feb. 29 – In Class Preparation. Work in your assigned political parties.

Week VII. The Election Debate of 1930

March 5 – 1930 Electoral Debate Simulation

March 7 – The Reichstag Fire and *Gleichschaltung*, or “Putting into Gear”

Discussion: Hett, *Death of Democracy*, Ch. 7 “Coordination” pp.

MARCH 9TH-17TH – SPRING BREAK/NO CLASS

PART II

ECONOMICS, RACE, AND THE ROAD TO WAR IN NAZI GERMANY 1933-1938

Week VIII. Midterm and Nazis in Power

March 19 – Midterm Exam

March 21 – A Nazi New Deal?

Extra Credit: Attend Wendy Lower Discussion on “Documenting the Holocaust” at George Eastman Museum, March 21 @7pm

Week IX. Jewish Life and Racial Thinking in Nazi Germany

March 26 - Weeding and Cultivating the Racial Garden

Primary Source: Kaes et al., “Marriage Laws and the Principles of Breeding,” Richard W. Darré pp. 133-137

March 28 – Jews and Germans between 1933 and 1939

Discussion: Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, Introduction & Ch. 1-2, 5-6.

Week X. The Road to War

April 2 - 1936 and Military Mobilization

Primary Source: Stackelberg et al., “Notes of Chief of the Army General Staff Ludwig Beck on the risks of war with Czechoslovakia, 16 July 1938” pp. 220-221

Begin: Lower, *The Ravine*, excerpts

PART III – WAR AND GENOCIDE, 1939-1945

April 4 – War in the West and Barbarossa

Week XI. War, Empire, & Genocide, Part I

April 9 – General Plan *Ost*

April 11 – The Wehrmacht in the Killing Fields

Discussion: Lower, *The Ravine*, excerpts

Week XII. War, Empire, & Genocide, Part II

April 16 – Auschwitz and Modernity

April 18 – Collapse

Week XIII. The End

April 23 – Film: Arendt

PART IV: HITLER’S LEGACIES, 1945-PRESENT

April 25 – Holocaust Memory and Modern Germany

Week XIV. Postwar Germanys

April 30 – Exam Review

Final Exam – May 8th, 4:00pm in Lattimore 201