

**CORE-UA 556
CULTURES AND CONTEXTS: GERMANY**

**Tuesday, Thursday 2--3.15
Silver 408
Professor Thomas Ertman**

This course seeks to introduce students to modern German culture through the works of emblematic figures—both positive and negative—whose ideas have helped shape, for good and for ill, that culture over the past century and continue to do so to varying degrees in our own day. We begin with Luther, the father of modern literary German and instigator of the Reformation, which has left the country religiously divided down to the present and helped provoke the devastating Thirty Years War, the focus of week two. We then engage with Lessing and Kant, Enlightenment thinkers whose values in part provide the legitimacy for today's democratic Federal Republic of Germany, before turning to the ambiguous universal genius Goethe and his close friend Schiller. Interspersed with analyses of these literary figures will be lectures focusing on Central Europe's rise to musical preeminence as embodied in the works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

The trio of Karl Marx, Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, all revolutionaries in their own ways, will occupy us in weeks seven through nine, before we turn to the culture of the newly united German Empire as represented by the later Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann. The defeat of the Empire in World War I paved the way for Germany's first experiment with democracy, brutally ended by Adolf Hitler in 1933. We will use the writings of Hitler himself found in **Mein Kampf** to try to come to grips with the Third Reich, before devoting the final two weeks of the course to the attempts build a new Germany after the horrors of Nazism, as captured in two short novels by East German writers Christa Wolf and Jenny Erpenbeck.

Course requirements: The requirements of this course are: 1) Weekly attendance and participation in recitation sections (20% of grade). 2) **Eight** weekly two-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins) on something that **inspired or provoked you** in the week's reading, plus **two papers** on your responses **to a film, work of visual art, or concert relevant to the course**, for a total of **ten** response papers. They are to be handed in to your preceptor **at the beginning of class** on Thursday. The papers will be graded check, check plus or check minus (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on **March 24** (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **Thursday, May 14 from 11 to 12.50 in our classroom (Silver 408)** (30% of grade). ***ALL CASES OF PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN AN F FOR THE ASSIGNMENT AND WILL BE REPORTED TO YOUR DEAN!***

THE USE DURING CLASS TIME OF ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES, INCLUDING COMPUTERS AND CELL PHONES, IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED EXCEPT BY SPECIAL PERMISSION!

Prof. Ertman's office hours are Thursday 3.30-4.30 and by appointment.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

I. MARTIN LUTHER AND THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 28) Course Introduction: The German Lands in 1500
2. (Jan. 30) Martin Luther and the Reformation in the Empire

Required Reading

Martin Luther, *The Ninety-Five Theses and Other Writings* (Penguin 2017), pp. 1-13, 122-129, 160-193, 200-209.

II. THE GERMAN CIVIL WAR, 1618-1648

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 4) The Origins of the Thirty Years War
2. (Feb. 6) The Thirty Years War and Grimmelshausen's "Simplicius"

Required Reading

Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus* (Penguin, 2018), pp. 3-43, 89-111, 130-196.

III. AUFKLÄRUNG: THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN GERMANY I

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 11) The Saxony of August the Strong and Bach
2. (Feb. 13) The Prussia of Frederick the Great and Kant

Required Reading

Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" available on the web at:
www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html.

IV. AUFKLÄRUNG: THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN GERMANY II

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 18) Haydn and Mozart
2. (Feb. 20) Lessing and his "Nathan der Weise"

Required Reading

Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise: A Dramatic Play in Five Acts* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), entire.

V. STURM UND DRANG

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 25) An 18th Century Bestseller: Goethe's "Werther" (1774)
2. (Feb. 27) The Century's Most Controversial Play? Schiller's "The Robbers" (1782)

Required Reading

Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers and Wallenstein* (Penguin Classics, 1980), pp. 21-160.

VI. BEETHOVEN AND GOETHE

Lecture Topics

1. (March 3) Why is Beethoven Considered Perhaps the Greatest Western Composer?
2. (March 5) Goethe: Germany's Shakespeare?

Required Reading

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Faust, Part One* (Oxford World's Classics, 2008), pp. 1-148;
Friedrich Schiller, "Ode to Joy," handout.

VII. KARL MARX

Lecture Topics

1. (March 10) The Industrial Revolution in Europe and Germany
2. (March 12) Karl Marx's Theory of History

Required Reading

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence Simon (Cambridge, Mass.: Hackett, 1994),
pp. 54-81, 157-186, 315-332.

NO CLASSES MARCH 17 AND MARCH 19: SPRING BREAK

VIII. RICHARD WAGNER

Lecture Topics

1. (March 24) **IN-CLASS MIDTERM**
2. (March 26) Richard Wagner: The Most German of Artists?

Required Reading

Richard Wagner, "Art and Revolution" (1849) available on the web at:
users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagartrev.htm; Wagner, "Judaism in Music,"
available on the web at: <https://archive.org/details/judaisminmusicda00wagn>.

IX. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Lecture Topics

1. (March 31) The First German Unification
2. (April 2) Nietzsche: Cosmopolitan Anti-Nationalist or Father of the Blond Beast?

Required Reading

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (Oxford World's Classics, 2009), pp. 3-136.

X. IMPERIAL GERMANY (1871-1918)

Lecture Topics

1. (April 7) Imperial Germany: The New World Power
2. (April 9) Culture and Sexuality in the Works of Thomas Mann

Required Reading

Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice and Other Tales* (Penguin, 1998), pp. 103-150, 161-228, 253-284.

XI. THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC (1918-1933)

Lecture Topics

1. (April 14) Germany's First Experiment with Democracy: The Weimar Republic
2. (April 16) Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Berlin: Irmgard Keun's "The Artificial Silk Girl"

Required Reading

Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (The Other Press, 2011), entire.

XII. THE THIRD REICH (1933-1945)

Lecture Topics

1. (April 21) Hitler: Historical Aberration or the Embodiment of "German Values"?
2. (April 23) The Third Reich: Race War and Genocide

Required Reading

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp. 3-65, 187-240, 284-329, 373-407.

XIII. GERMANY DIVIDED (1945-1990)

Lecture Topics

1. (April 28) West Germany 1949-1990: Bonn is Not Weimar
2. (April 30) East Germany 1949-1990: Marx's Vision Realized?

Required Reading

Christa Wolf, *They Divided the Sky* (University of Ottawa Press, 2013), entire.

XIV. GERMANY REUNITED

Lecture Topics

1. (May 5) The Collapse of East Germany and German Reunification 1989-1990
2. (May 7) Today's Democratic Germany and the Challenges of the Past and Future

Required Reading

Jenny Erpenbeck, *Visitation* (New Directions, 2010), entire.

**FINAL EXAM THURSDAY, MAY 14 FROM 2 TO 3.50 IN OUR CLASSROOM
(SILVER 408)**