



Nazi Germany: Wars, Racism and Antisemitism in a European Context

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This course covers the history of the German Society from 1918-1945. We try to understand better the context of the numerous mass crimes committed in Germany and in Europe under German occupation. Why were almost six million Jews murdered and six to seven million from other victim groups? How are these mass crimes linked to the German society?

We use a broad approach, taking political, social, cultural and economic aspects into consideration. We situate the German development in a European context starting with World War I, 1918 and interwar Europe. The second half of the course includes a close look at the development of warfare and its repercussions in Germany and Europe. Thus, we see many challenging interconnections between antisemitism, racism and warfare.

Throughout we discuss and implore methodological issues, sharpen our tools for our craftsmanship as historians. During each of the 12 sessions we study sources, concepts and narratives from multiple perspectives. Only the combination of multiple perspectives might give us varying insights into the experiences of people at the time. Even though our emphasis is on the non-Jewish perspectives, we include Jewish experiences as well.

As introductory overview I recommend Mary Fulbrook, Part I 'A Divided Society. The Weimar Republic and the Third Reich', in: Idem, *A History of Germany 1918-2014. The Divided Nation*, Wiley Blackwell 2015, pp. 1-109.

A quite comprehensive monograph on the topic of our course is: Nikolaus Stargardt, *The German War. A Nation under Arms, 1939-1945*, Basic Books 2015.

The best series in English on Jews in Germany 1933-1946 was published by the USHMM, Jürgen Matthäus (ed.), *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, Volumes I-V, Rowman & Littlefield 2010-2015.

Course Requirements:

1. All students are to write two response papers (5-6 page, double spaced) about the readings of their choice. Deadlines will be set later.
2. Students can choose to write a final paper of about 10 pages (double spaced) about a topic of their choice, but the topic should be discussed and approved by me. Final papers have to be submitted via Moodle until July 10th.
3. Students can write a Seminar paper (25 pages, double spaced, by using primary sources). It is necessary to write a proposal about the topic (state of research, question of research,

sources) which need to be discussed and approved by me. Seminar papers have to be submitted via Moodle until October 31.

Final Grade for students with no Referat or Seminar paper:

50 % class active participation; 50% response papers

Final Grade for students writing a final paper or Seminar paper:

25 % class active participation; 25 % response papers; 50 % Final / Seminar paper.

Lectures & Readings:

Wednesday, 23 February

Welcome and organizational issues

Topic: World War I and the meanings of “1918”

The “water-shed” of World War I. End of old empires, creation of new democracies and of new fascist movements. Until the end of 1920s we see post-war societies in Europe and Germany. Interpretations of “1918” and “Versailles” as numerous “stabs in the back” are there, but still at the fringes of Weimar republic.

In this first session a few organizational issues need to be dealt with.

Reading:

- Michael Mann, ‘A sociology of fascist movements’, in: idem, *Fascists*, Cambridge University Press 2004, pp. 1-30.
- Zara Steiner, ‘Conclusion: Europe reconstructed?’ in: *The Lights that failed. European International History 1919-1933*, Oxford University Press 2005, pp. 602-634.
- Zara Steiner, ‘Conclusion: The Hinge Years 1929-1933’, in: Ibid, pp. 800-816.

Wednesday, 2 March

Interwar Period: Democracy, Fascism and the Soviet Union. A story still open-ended

At the beginning of 1930s we see a major shift. In Germany a pre-war society emerges with the Nazis coming to power. Why do we find only two fascist parties – in Italy and in Germany - in power in Europe? What was the role of conservative parties in Europe? Why were democracies so weak in interwar Europe? How can we assess economic and cultural factors? Which role does the “new” power of the socialist Soviet Union play?

Reading:

- Michael Mann, ‘Explaining the Rise of Interwar Authoritarianism and Fascism’, in: Idem, *Fascists*, pp. 31-91.
- Zara Steiner, ‘Conclusion’, in: Idem, *Triumph of the Dark. International European History 1933-1939*, Oxford University Press 2011, pp. 1036-1057.

Wednesday 9 March (no class - seminar at Yad Vashem)

Wednesday, 16 March

1933-1937 Specifics of NS-Power

Power relations and hierarchies within and of the Nazi party, the state and other organisations are in the focus here. How did their relations develop and how do we analyse their power? Includes history of SA, SS, Police, concentration camps and prisons in Germany.

Reading:

- Ian Kershaw, chapter 4: 'Hitler: 'Master in the Third Reich' or 'A Weak Dictator?''', in: *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Fourth edition, Bloomsbury 2015 (first 1999). (no page numbers given because of the many editions)
- Nikolaus Wachsmann, 'The dynamics of destruction: the development of concentration camps 1933-1945', in: Jane Caplan/Nikolaus Wachsmann (eds.), *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany. The New Histories*, Routledge 2010, pp. 17-44.

Wednesday, 23 March

1938-1939 The path to war: invasion of Austria, "Munich", "Kristallnacht" and the invasion of Czechia

In 1938/1939 Nazi leadership clearly accelerated its path to war. Austria is annexed, "Munich" happens, Sudetenland is annexed. Attacks on the "inner enemy" (= the Jews) are intensifying massively; "Reichskristallnacht" represents a clear turning point. Czechia is invaded, significant numbers of non-Germans get under German control. From now on repercussions of foreign policy and warfare will massively influence life inside Nazi Germany.

Reading:

- Ian Kershaw, chapter 2, 'The drive for expansion', in: idem, *Hitler. Nemesis 1936-1945*, W.W. Norton & Company 2001. (no page numbers given because of the many editions)
- Saul Friedländer, 'Redemptive Antisemitism', in: idem, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. I The Years of Persecution 1933-1939*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1997, pp. 73-112.

Wednesday, 30 March

Jews in Nazi Germany 1933-1939

Diverse reactions of German Jews and Jews in Germany in 1933, 1935 and 1938

Reading:

- Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1 The Years of Persecution*, chap 1, S. 9-40.
- Marion Kaplan, 'Changing Roles in Jewish Families', in: Francis R. Nicosia, David Scrase (ed.), *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany. Dilemmas and Responses*, Berghahn Books: New York/Oxford, 2010, pp. 15-46.

Wednesday, 6 April

I have not planned this seminar specifically. We are going to use it for catching up, summarizing, adding topics we have neglected. Further details during the course.

Wednesday, 27 April (class ends at 18:00 - Holocaust commemoration eve.)

German Society at War 1939-1941. Poland, France, Great Britain, Soviet Union. The Greater German Reich and the diverse aspects of "Blitzkrieg"

With warfare actually beginning the many turns are to be found and traced. What effect did warfare have on the German society? Perspectives of the Nazi leadership and the German population are of central interest here.

Reading:

- Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend. The 1940 Campaign in the West*. Naval Institute Press 2013 (first in German 2005). Chapters to read:
 - Introduction 'The miracle of 1940'
 - Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, Penguin 2006.
 - Ch 12: 'Britain and America. Hitler's Strategic Dilemma', pp. 396-425.

- Ch 13: 'Preparing for Two Wars at once', pp. 429-460.

4 May (no class - National Memorial Day)

Wednesday, 11 May

German Society at War 1941/1942. Fear of Failure and escalation of the Mass Crimes

1941 changed everything. What, how and why? Now the European trap for Jews and partly other victim groups were closed.

- Adam Tooze, *Wages*, ch. 16 'Labour, Food and Genocide', pp. 513-551.

Wednesday, 18 May

Jews in Germany and under German rule 1939-1941

Jewish Life in Germany after *Reichspogromnacht*. What happened in the annexed Polish territories and the Generalgouvernement. The How and Why of the Beginning of Deportations of Central European Jews to the "East".

Reading:

- Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, Oxford University Press 1998, chap. 6 and 7.

Wednesday, 25 May

German Society at War 1943-45. No second "1918"

1942-1945 are often neglected periods in teaching. Even though the violence escalated further from summer 1942 onwards. How come that Germany could hold out so long? What did this mean for various victim groups, including European Jews?

Reading:

- Bernd Wegner, 'Waging War "as if...". Germany's strategic position from the spring of 1944 onwards', pp. 1167-1193; 'Orchestrating the end', pp. 1194-1211. In: Karl Frieser 6 | *Nazi Germany: Wars, Racism and Antisemitism in a European Context*

et. al (ed.), *Germany and the Second World War, vol. VIII The Eastern Front 1943-44: The war in the East and on the Neighbouring Fronts*, Oxford University Press 2007.

- Peter Fritzsche, 'Babi Yar, but not Auschwitz. What Did Germans Know about the Final Solution?', in: Susanna Schrafstetter, Alan E. Steinweis (ed.), *The Germans and the Holocaust. Popular Responses to the Persecution and Murder of the Jews*, Berghahn Books: New York/Oxford, 2016, pp. 85-104.

Wednesday 1 June

Daily Life of Jews in Germany and under German rule until 1945

- Beate Meyer, 'Between Self-Assertion and Forced Collaboration: The Reich Association of Jews in Germany 1939-1945', In: Francis R. Nicosia/David Scarse (eds.), *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses*, Berghahn Books: New York/Oxford, 2010, pp. 149-169.
- Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, chapter 8.

8 June

Concluding session