

Rise of an Iron Kingdom? History and Legacy of Prussia in Berlin and Potsdam

Winter Semester 2021/22: 18 October 2021 - 19 February 2022

CATEGORY

History

COURSE STRUCTURE

2 contact hours à 45 min per week (winter semester: 16 weeks)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Monday: 4.15 pm – 5.45 pm

Place

Hausvogteiplatz 5-7, 10117 Berlin
Room 0323-26

COURSE LANGUAGE

This course is taught in English, including the core readings. Some optional readings might be in German and in-class discussions rely on a basic understanding of German historiographical terminology, although all terms are explained in class. B2 or higher in English is recommended, A2 or higher in German is helpful but not required. Field trips can be done in German or English, according to the wishes of the group.

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

English B2 or higher

German A2 or higher (helpful, but not required)

TARGET GROUP

International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

CREDITS = 5 ECTS

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes.

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in case of online classes

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will follow the development of Prussia from a small duchy beyond the Eastern periphery of the Holy Roman Empire to one of the most powerful kingdoms at the center of Europe. Much of European history since the Thirty Years' War can indeed be understood as a function of this "Prussian Expansion", a fateful development that upended the traditional balance of power and ultimately led to the creation of a monster at the heart of Europe: Imperial Germany, hell-bent on acquiring the great power status it thought it deserved.

But there is another, less tragic story that can also be told about Prussia: One of enlightened culture, of world-renowned education and universities, of state modernization and democratic rights that resonates until today. Between Königsberg, Potsdam and Berlin a particular worldview took shape that was both distinctly Prussian, German and cosmopolitan.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- describe Prussian political and social history since the 17th century;
- understand the history of Europe as a function of that territorial and political expansion;
- embed Prussian history into German history more broadly;
- contextualize remnants from the Prussian history of ideas present in Germany today;
- analyze modern narratives and collective memory in Berlin regarding Prussia.

READINGS

Required

Reading materials will be provided online prior to the commencement of the course. A course reader will be distributed at the beginning of the class.

Suggested

Christopher Clark: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia*, Penguin 2007.

Brendan Simms: *Europe. The Struggle for Supremacy*, Penguin 2014.

Peter Wilson: *The Holy Roman Empire*, Penguin 2017.

Heinrich August Winkler: *Germany. The Long Road West*, Oxford 2006.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
 - a written paper of 25,000 characters, including spaces.

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Christian E. Rieck is an Assistant Professor at the Chair of War Studies at the University of Potsdam. He teaches at the interface between international relations and contemporary history at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid and Strasbourg, as well as at Humboldt University. He has also lectured at several universities in Europe and Latin America.

After studies in Bayreuth, Sevilla and at HU Berlin, the area studies specialist holds a postgraduate degree in Latin American Studies by the University of Oxford. Previous posts include stints at the foreign policy think tank at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Berlin, the Latin American Institute of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies GIGA in Hamburg, as well as a Carlo Schmid Fellowship at the United Nations in Mexico City.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1+2:

The Prussian Expansion:

Remembering Prussia in the Capital of Reunified Germany, 1991-2020

Defining the "Prussian Expansion"; Disentangling "Prussia" from (Imperial) "Germany"; Prussian legacies in contemporary Germany: Weltanschauung, political ideas, culture and the arts; Memorial cultures in the three Prussian capitals: Königsberg, Potsdam, Berlin; The built environment as monument and responsibility: palaces, museums, churches; Places of Prussian memory in the center of Berlin (guided tour).

Session 3:

Birth of a Teutonic Nation:

An Iron Kingdom in the East, 1230-1568

The Teutonic Order: from the Holy Land to the Baltics; Eastern colonization: from missionaries to administrators; the State of the Teutonic Order and its neighbors; Marienburg: preserving independence outside the Holy Roman Empire; the Order as occupier: ethnic diversity and internal resistance to Teutonic rule; Tannenberg: the downfall of the Order and the Peace of Thorn; the imagined Middle Ages and German national identity in the 19th century.

required reading:

Jordan, William Chester (2001): "Baltic and Central Europe", in: Jordan, William Chester: *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, London, 243-258.

Czaja, Roman / Nowak, Zenon Hubert (2015): "An Attempt to Characterise the State of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia", in: Czaja, Roman / Radziminski, Andrzej (eds.): *The Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia*, Torun, 13-30.

Session 4:

The Long Way West:

Consolidating Prussian Power in the Holy Roman Empire, 1525-1701

Albrecht and the Reformation in Brandenburg-Prussia; building a new state against the Teutonic Order; Prussia and Poland; consolidating institutions, expanding territory; the Thirty Years' War as the German "Urkatastrophe": weaknesses and dysfunctions of the Holy Roman

Empire, implications for states and societies; the Thirty Years' War as a European war: part religious conflict, part international power play; the "Great Elector": Frederick William.

required reading:

Clark, Christopher (2006): "Devastation", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 19-37.

Clark, Christopher (2006): "An Extraordinary Light in Germany", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 38-68.

Session 5:

Field Trip to Charlottenburg: Schloss Charlottenburg and Baroque Gardens

Charlottenburg Palace, the only Hohenzollern Palace in former West Berlin; the palace as a showcase of West German monument protection and identity politics against Eastern Germany; Charlottenburg as an urban palace as compared to Potsdam's "Kulturlandschaft"; stroll through the Baroque Gardens; Prussian collections in Charlottenburg.

Session 6:

A Game of Thrones: Hohenzollern and Habsburgs and the Holy Crown, 1701-1786

The rise and rise of Prussia: Becoming a kingdom; modernization and immigration; religious freedom and Jewish emancipation; militarism and the arts: the two Fredericks; outshining Königsberg: Potsdam as a "new Arcadia"; Prussian territorial expansion; the Silesian Wars; Prussia, Austria and the third Germany: the struggle for supremacy in the Holy Roman Empire; European repercussions of Prussia's great power status; the death of "Old Fritz", the end of an era.

required reading:

Wilson, Peter H. (2016): "Dynasty", in: Wilson, Peter H.: *The Holy Roman Empire. A Thousand Years of Europe's History*, London, 179-232.

Session 7:

Field Trip to Potsdam: The Palaces and Gardens of Park Sanssouci

Park Sanssouci as the playground of the Prussian kings since the 18th century; from Prussian Baroque to Italian Classicist: architectural styles and functions of the palaces; Sanssouci Palace and the Prussian collections in Potsdam; stroll through the park and visit of the grave of Frederick the Great; the Church of Peace and the tombs of Frederick III and Frederick William IV.

Session 8:

Beyond Weimar:

The Belle Époque of Classical Berlin, 1786-1815

Great Awakenings: "Berliner Klassik" as an urban cultural achievement of national importance; sources and consequences of German Enlightenment; A Tale of Two Cities: Classical Weimar as complement to Classical Berlin; Prussian and German luminaries and their legacies: philosophy, natural sciences, military and state administration and the arts; the Humboldt brothers: reinventing education and science; the Hohenzollern as a supporter of the arts and sciences.

required reading:

Clark, Christopher (2006): "Dare to Know!", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 247-283.

Session 9:

Paradise Lost?

The Napoleonic Challenge and the Wars of Liberation, 1799-1848

The French Revolution and its implications for Prussia; Napoleon remakes the European order; Prussia, the German states and the end of the Holy Roman Empire; Europe reacts: the Coalition Wars; the Prussian Wars of Liberation: cultural renewal under arms; the Congress of Vienna, European Restoration and the Holy Alliance; the German Confederacy; "Vormärz", Prussian liberalism and the Frankfurt Parliament.

required reading:

Clark, Christopher (2006): "The World the Bureaucrats Made", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 312-344.

Clark, Christopher (2006): "Hubris and Nemesis: 1789-1806", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 284-311.

Session 10:

Blood and Iron:

Bismarck's Prussia and the Wars of Unification, 1848-1871

Liberalism and repression in Prussia: a failed revolution; "Kulturnation" and early projects of unification; Erfurt: Bismarck and "Unionspolitik"; Crowding out the Habsburgs and convincing the rest of Germany and Europe; Middle Ages and Modernization: remembrance as a political project; Prussia and the Wars of Unification; the North German Confederacy; achieving statehood: founding the Second German Empire under a Prussian crown.

required reading:

Barclay, David E. (2001): "Revolution and counter-revolution in Prussia, 1840-50", in: Dwyer, Philip G. (ed.): *Modern Prussian History 1830-1947*, New York, 66-85.

Clark, Christopher (2006): "Four Wars", in: Clark, Christopher: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*, London, 510-555.

Session 11:

Dreaming of Empire:

Prussia, Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic, 1871-1933

Prussia in the Second German Empire: domestic politics and the role of the Hohenzollern emperors; "Kulturkampf" in Prussia; militarism, industrial revolution, scientific revolutions and the arts; foreign policy: "Weltpolitik", imperialism, great power rivalry; Prussia in the Great War; Interwar years: Berlin between tradition and modernity, violence and stability; the Weimar Republic: societal disruption, fragile democracy; Prussia as "the bulwark of democracy".

required reading:

Lamberti, Marjorie (2001): "Religious conflicts and German national identity in Prussia, 1866-1914", in: Dwyer, Philip G. (ed.): *Modern Prussian History 1830-1947*, New York, 169-187.

Session 12:

Field Trip to Lichterfelde:

The German Federal Archives, the Prussian Cadet Corps and Wannsee

The history of the Cadet Corps, the main officers' school in Prussia and home to the Hitler's bodyguard, the Leibstandarte SS; the Federal Archives, main repository of German history since 1871; landmarks of Prussian-German history on the shores of the Wannsee, Berlin's pleasure ground: Bismarck and the Borussia monument, and the Flensburg Lion.

Session 13:

**From Munich to Potsdam:
Prussia, National Socialism and the War that Ended it All, 1933-1945**

The rise of Hitler: from the beginning in Munich to the takeover of Berlin; Actors and ideologies underpinning the conspiracy to destroy the Weimar democracy; Homegrown roots of National Socialism in Prussia; Subjugating the "bulwark of democracy"; Occupying the Old, symbolizing the New: Prussia, Groß-Berlin and "Welthauptstadt Germania"; the end of Jewish Berlin; the Prussian capitals and WWII; the Potsdam Conference and the dissolution of Prussia.

required reading:

Simms, Brendan (2001): "Prussia, Prussianism and National Socialism, 1933-47", in: Dwyer, Philip G. (ed.): *Modern Prussian History 1830-1947*, New York, 253-273.

Schulze, Hagen (2001): "Democratic Prussia in Weimar Germany, 1919-33", in: Dwyer, Philip G. (ed.): *Modern Prussian History 1830-1947*, New York, 211-229.

Session 14:

**Field Trip to Potsdam:
Schloss Cecilienhof, Marmorpalais and Pfingstberg**

Cecilienhof Palace, the last Hohenzollern palace to be built; Cecilienhof and the Potsdam Conference marks the end of Prussia; the Marble Palace and surrounding gardens as an example of a classical Prussian "Kulturlandschaft"; the Belvedere on Pentecoste Hill and surrounding neoclassicist mansions as an example of neo-classicist memory of the Prussian golden age.

Session 15:

**In Wilhelm's Shadow:
Conflicting Memories of the Iron Kingdom in East and West, 1945-1991**

Misrepresentations of Prussian history after WWII and the political reasons for it; ideologized memory as founding myths for East and West Germany; dealing with Prussian legacies in East

and West: palaces, museums, churches. The cultural turn in the GDR: rediscovering Prussia and the German-Russian friendship. Selective memories: fusing Wilhelm and Hitler; Bringing back Frederick the Great after reunification: a body re-buried, a nation re-founded?

required reading:

Wilson, Peter H. (2016): "Afterlife", in: Wilson, Peter H.: *The Holy Roman Empire. A Thousand Years of Europe's History*, London, 655-686.

Showalter, Dennis (2001): "Prussia's military legacy in Empire, Republic and Reich, 1871-1945", in: Dwyer, Philip G. (ed.): *Modern Prussian History 1830-1947*, New York, 230-252.

Session 16:

Field Trip to Dahlem:

Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Freie Universität and Domäne Dahlem

The Prussian State Archives, central repository of Prussian history in Germany; Berlin's second university as memorial and anti-memorial to Prussian values and virtues; surviving institutes of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Advancement of Science, the predecessor to the present-day Max-Planck Gesellschaft; Dahlem as a "German Oxford".

Field trips are subject to change, depending on weather conditions and student interest. If more time should be needed for individual sessions, coursework will take precedence.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 20 August 2021