

Fall term 2021: 6 September – 11 December 2021

Nazi Germany – Rise and Fall

Instructor

Prof. Dr. Jochen Hille / Stefka Wiese

Schedule

weekly

Time and place

Monday, 4.00-6.30 pm

Course Level & Target Group

Humboldt Perspectives Study Abroad courses are designed for undergraduate students.

Language requirements

This course is taught in English, including readings in English. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class, a language level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.

ECTS

6 ECTS

Course Description

In two World Wars Germany tried to dominate the globe in the first half of the 20th century and all major decisions had been made in the capital Berlin:

Why was Germany such an aggressive power until 1945? How did Hitler manage to gain and keep power? Why were many Germans Nazis and deeply racist? How was the life of ordinary people during the war? Why did the Nazis kill millions of Jews and other innocent people in concentration camps? What were the long term effects of World War II? What happened to the Nazis after the war?

The course will provide answers to such questions via readings of texts from political science, sociology and history.

The aim of the course is to introduce participants to the history of Nazi Germany. After a brief introduction to the historical and ideological backgrounds which led to the rise of the Nazi Regime we will turn to a detailed analysis of the event history which led to World War II. The course will answer the question why Germany was such an aggressive power and how the Nazi movement managed to gather broad public support within the majority of the German population until the end; while causing war and the death of millions of Jews, opponents etc. at the same time. Finally, we will discuss the effects of World War II, on world history; e.g. the Cold War, European Integration and decolonization.

Course Objective & Learning Outcomes

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

- why the Nazis were a popular movement
- why the Nazis killed so many people (Jews, Gypsies etc.)
- why Germany finally lost the war

and to reflect on the results of World War II

- as decolonization and the Cold War

and the function of Nazis in contemporary pop culture.

Course Schedule

PART I: Historical background/overview (10 lectures)

1. Introduction and course outline
2. Mapping Germany, Europe, and the World in and after World War I
3. Historical and ideological backgrounds: Militarism, racism, anti-democratic tradition and late nation building, weak central power (Georg Lucács, Karl Mannheim, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson)
4. Excursion: Overview of German history 1914 – 1945, Permanent Exhibition in the German Historical Museum
5. German national mythology: "Stab in the back" ("Siegfried the dragon slayer", Film 1924, Fritz Lang)
6. The 1920th: The unstable democracy: Street fights between communists and national socialists in Berlin (Horst Wessel song vs. Bertholt Brecht)
7. Deep economic crisis: high inflation and mass unemployment

PART II: Hitler´s path to power (5 lectures)

1. Founding of the Nazi Party
2. Organs of the party: SS, SA, Gestapo etc.
3. Election of Hitler in a democratic election in 1933
2. Eliminating the external opposition ("Enabling Act of 1933") and within the Nazi Party ("night of the long knives")

PART III: What life in Nazi Germany was like: inclusion for the Germans; exclusion and death for the other (15 lectures)

Inclusion of the Germans

1. The Nazi version of the New Deal: Workfare for the "people's community" (Volksgemeinschaft): building roads (Autobahnen), the "people's car" (Volkswagen), maternity protection, new public holidays etc..
2. Nazi culture and propaganda: "The Triumph of the will" (Leni Riefenstahl), movies, radio, TV, music (Zarah Leander)
3. Inventing traditions (Ernest Gellner), mixing old symbols and rituals ("bricolage", Lévi-Strauss) from ancient India (swastika), Roman Empire (Hitler salute) and medieval German stories and castles with modern technology and (quite) efficient centralised government.
4. Plans for Berlin as the "Capital of the World" (Germania); walk through Berlin

Exclusion and death for the other:

1. Imprisonment of opposition and programs (Reichskristallnacht) against Jews
2. Excursion: "Topography of Terror" (Museum)
3. Defining who is German, who is not: The racist Nuremberg Laws
4. The "Final Solution" to kill "inferior races" (social Darwinism)
5. Excursion: Walk to "Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe" and "Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen"

PART IV: World War II (10 lectures)

1. Preparing war and Appeasement
2. The beginning of the war: Early victories (Blitzkrieg) in Poland, France, Norway, etc.
Film: "Das Boot" (The Boat)
3. The war against the Soviet Union (Stalingrad)
4. Film: The downfall (Der Untergang)
5. Loss of reality: The dream of the final victory ("Endsieg")

PART V: After the downfall of Nazi Germany (5 lectures)

1. What to do with the Nazis: Nuremberger Trial and "ratlines"
2. How to deal with collective shame and guilt?
3. Political consequences: The Cold War, European Integration and decolonisation
4. Interviews/Fieldwork with old Berliners
5. Presentations of interviews in class
6. Neo-Nazis today
7. Nazis in popular culture: Iron Sky, Marathon Man, Inglorious Basterds, Death Snow etc.
8. Summary: Making sense of the past? (Shmuel Eisenstadt)
9. Wrap-up and Evaluation

Assignments

In order to be granted 6 ECTS, participants will be asked to attend actively all sessions, to present in class and to write an academic paper (5-10 pages) on Nazi Germany.

Submission deadline: last course day.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of a presentation (20%), the final academic paper (60%) and active participation in the class discussion (20%).

A minimum of 80% class attendance is required.

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

Expectations & Policies

Preparation for lively discussions in the classroom: 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 schedule including handing over to the lecturer.

Commitment in class: Pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers, locals engaged with on the visits).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

Attendance policy: 80% class attendance are required. Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work.

Field trips: If classes involve a field trip or other external visits, these require attendance as well as appearance in time.

Your Instructor

Stefka Wiese is a social scientist and

Prof. Dr. Jochen Hille, born 1972, is a political scientist and professor for social work at iba University of Cooperative Education in Hamburg. His main interests are welfare studies (mainly health and labor market policies), European Integration and the construction of national identity. His regional focus lies on Germany and Norway. He studied and carried out research at Freie Universität Berlin, Philipps University Marburg, Universities of Bergen and Oslo (Norway), ETH Zurich and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Beside the scientific work he is professionally working as a consultant for social policies and as a project manager/social worker in diverse governmental labor market programs. He gained a wide range of teaching skills in governmental programs, in civic education, public schools and by teaching high ranked governmental professionals.

In academia he regularly teaches political sciences and economics on the welfare state at „Berlin School of Economics“, the „University of Cooperative Education Plauen“ and the „University of Applied Sciences for Media, Communication and Management“ and occasionally at Best-Sabel University, HTW and Business School Berlin.

In the HUWISU program he has been teaching since 2013 the courses on:

The Berlin Wall

Nazi-Germany – Rise and Fall

German Social Market Economy – a better Capitalism?

The course and its syllabus are subject to change.

Last update: 24.02.2021