

PO/HS 352-A – German Political Thought: An Introduction
IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to German Political Thought from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. A chronological survey of important thinkers and fundamental texts, it revolves around a theoretical reflection on a variety of core topics such as war and peace, bureaucracy and political leadership, extremism and totalitarianism, feminism and postcolonialism. Texts will include not only political treatises and sociological essays, but also literary texts with political relevance. Placing thinkers and texts within their historical, social and political contexts, the course invites students to grapple with social and political phenomena both past and present, and to adopt a comparative approach.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- Group work and discussions
- Student presentations and reports on chosen topics
- Films and other visual materials
- Course related field study trips to relevant places of modern German history.
- Moodle will be used to enhance students' learning experiences.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Participation-10%
- Midterm Exam-30%
- Panel Presentation-20%
- Final Project-40%

Participation

Course participation includes attendance, participation in class discussions, familiarity with the assigned texts and the topics covered in class. Students are expected to come prepared with personal notes on the readings. The grading rubric for participation is available in the IES Berlin Academics Manual on Moodle.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will cover the contents of course sessions 1-10. Students will be required to answer 3 questions in essay format. They will be given 180 minutes to work on the exam.

Panel Presentation

Every week, one to two students will be assigned as our "panelists" (or: experts). As a panelist, you will study the material especially thoroughly, answer the reading questions and suggest questions for in-class discussion. As a panelist, you can decide what angle to focus on when approaching the reading(s): for example, is the reading still relevant today? Or, what questions does the reading leave out entirely?

Final Project

The final project consists of the final paper (25%) and a creative final presentation of the findings (15%). The Final presentations will be held during our last session; they should be a brief (not more than five minutes), creative

addition to your final paper. For instance, a video, a cartoon, a play--or something else entirely. The final paper (approx. 1,500 words) is due at the end of finals week (Thursday, 6 p.m.) and is to be submitted via Moodle. The final paper can be based on the material reviewed for the panel presentation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, student will be able to:

- identify the unique aspects of German political thought,
- critically assess the continuing relevance of German political thought,
- distinguish main political concepts relevant to German history (liberalism, socialism, communism, Nazism, totalitarianism, colonialism, feminism),
- draw the comparison between German political and social phenomena and phenomena prevalent in other countries and societies (such as the USA).

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

For our up-to-date attendance and exam policy, see:

<https://moodle.iesabroad.org/mod/page/view.php?id=1004317>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code. Assignments need to be properly and amply footnoted where appropriate, with all sources attributed, including images. This not only applies to written assignments but also presentations by means of PowerPoint, Prezi or posters. Contributions may be checked with plagiarism-detecting software.

CONTENT:

This class will provide students with selections from primary and secondary sources. For some sessions, there will be both mandatory and optional readings assigned. Additionally, to the optional readings, the lecturer will suggest more material (videos, blog entries, etc.) during class and via Moodle. Students are encouraged to bring related material to class to spark fruitful discussions.

Sessions	Content	Readings
Week 1	<p><i>Sessions 1 & 2: Introduction & Classical Theories I</i></p> <p><i>Introduction</i> What is German Political Thought—and what are some of its key issues? What is a canon--and what are some of the issues of "canonization"? What topics have been left out of traditional German political thought, and why?</p> <p><i>Classical Theories I: Perpetual Peace--Idealism in International Relations</i> What is peace and how can it be achieved and maintained? We will focus on Immanuel Kant's answers to these questions in a text that can be considered a very early example of "international relations". We will zoom in on Kant's idea of a "Federation of States" and his endorsement of cosmopolitanism. We will also consider the historical background to Kant's text, namely, the Enlightenment and the 1795 peace treaty between Prussia and France.</p>	<p>Reading (in class):</p> <p>Immanuel Kant, <i>Perpetual Peace</i>, pp.67-109.</p> <p><u>Sign-up for panel presentations</u></p>

Week 2	<p><i>Sessions 3 & 4: Classical Theories II: Realist Approaches in International Relations</i></p> <p>In this week's sessions, we will contrast Kant's "idealist" approach to politics and international relations with "realist" approaches that emphasize the reality of conflict and war. Amongst those, we will discuss Clausewitz's definition of war as a legitimate act of statecraft in the early 19th century.</p>	<p>Reading: Carl von Clausewitz, <i>On War</i>, Book 1, Chapter 1, "What is War?", pp. 13-31</p> <p><u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 3	<p><i>Sessions 5 & 6: Marxism</i></p> <p>In today's sessions, we turn to Engels' and Marx' theories of history and revolution, and their critique of capitalism. We will grapple with their description of "historical materialism" and their depiction of capitalism as "alienation" and "exploitation". We will also discuss the historical, social and political background to the "Communist Manifesto" (1848) such as the Industrial Revolution and the German Revolution of 1848.</p>	<p>Reading: Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>, pp.469-500.</p> <p><u>Optional:</u></p> <p>Erich Fromm, "Marx's Historical Materialism" in Fromm, <i>Marx's Concept of Man</i>, pp.8-19</p> <p><u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 4	<p><i>Sessions 7 & 8: World War I and the Question of Meaning</i></p> <p>We will continue our discussion of war from Sessions 3 and 4 from yet another perspective: how can we make sense of war, especially of "total" or highly industrialized war? In this week, we will turn to two very different literary accounts of World War I, both revolving around the loss of the individual in a "total war" and the question of how to find meaning in a senseless world.</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Ernst Jünger, <i>Storm of Steel</i>, Chapter 1, "In the Chalk Trenches of Champagne", pp. 13-20</p> <p>Erich Maria Remarque, <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>, Chapter 1, pp.5-12; Chapter 6, pp.46-63;</p> <p>Film (in-class): Lewis Milestone, "All Quiet on the Western Front" (selections)</p> <p>Optional: Ernst Jünger, <i>Storm of Steel</i>, "Daily Life in the Trenches", pp. 69-81</p>
Week 5	<p><i>Sessions 9 & 10: Socialist Feminism</i></p> <p>In today's class, we discuss the work of two of Germany's first feminists, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg who also understood themselves as socialists. In particular, we will discuss how Zetkin and Luxemburg describe the link between socialism and feminism in their fight for equal opportunities and universal suffrage. Focusing on Zetkin and Luxemburg, we will trace the links between Germany's entry into World War I and the movements of pacifism and internationalism. Moreover, we will also see just how Luxemburg's assassination in 1919 shaped the so-called Weimar Republic.</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Clara Zetkin, "Only in Conjunction with the Proletarian Woman Will Socialism Be Victorious", pp.72-83</p> <p>Rosa Luxemburg, "Writings on Women, 1902-14", pp.233-245</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u></p> <p>Valerie Bryson, "Marxist Feminism in Germany and Russia" in V. Bryson, <i>Feminist Political Theory</i>, pp.104-120.</p> <p><u>Panel Presentation</u></p>

	Field Trip: Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and the Revolution of 1919: A Walk Through Friedrichshain	
Week 6	Mid-terms	Exam (3 mini essays, 180 mins)
Week 7	<p><i>Sessions 11 & 12: Bureaucracy, Charisma and War: Political Leadership in the Modern World</i></p> <p>In today's sessions, we will discuss two thinkers who grapple with the question of political leadership in modernity: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt. Against the background of the Weimar Republic, Weber emphasizes the role of charisma in an age of rationalization and bureaucratization. Writing a decade later, Schmitt, on the other hand, argues for the necessity of war in order for "the political" to exist.</p>	<p>Reading: Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", pp. 32-40; Carl Schmitt, <i>The Concept of the Political</i>, pp.19-37 <u>Optional Reading:</u> Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", pp. 54-94; <u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 8	<p><i>Sessions 13 & 14: Totalitarianism</i></p> <p>In today's sessions, we turn to Hannah Arendt's <i>Origins of Totalitarianism</i>, her analysis of Nazism and Stalinism. For Arendt, the Nazi regime and the horrors it inflicted can only be understood if we decipher the "fictional world" that the Nazis created.</p> <p>Field Trip: The Rise of the Nazis (Topography of Terror or Walking Tour Kreuzberg)</p>	<p>Reading: Hannah Arendt, "The Totalitarian Movement", in H. Arendt, <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>, pp.341-388. <u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 9	<p><i>Sessions 15 & 16: Art After Auschwitz. Adorno and Celan.</i></p> <p>"To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric", writes Theodor Adorno, one of the most important thinkers and critics of post-World War II Germany. How can we understand this dictum? How has art (and culture) become implicated in the horrors of the Holocaust according to Adorno? And what hope is there of a new kind of art, one that would help us "escape barbarism"? For Adorno, one of the answers lies with the poetry of Paul Celan who sought to reconfigure language for a post-Holocaust world.</p>	<p>Reading: Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society", pp.17-34 Celan, "Deathfugue" and other poems published in <i>Memory Rose into Threshold Speech: The Collected Earlier Poetry</i></p>
Week 10	<p><i>Sessions 17 & 18: Black German Feminism</i></p> <p>In today's sessions, we turn to the life and work of May Ayim (1960 to 1996), a German-Ghanaian poet, historian, and activist. Like other Afro-German women, Ayim was strongly influenced by the Black feminist Audre Lorde, who spent extended periods of time in Berlin in the 1980s</p>	<p>Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz, Dagmar Schultz (eds.) [1991], <i>Showing our Colours: Afro-German Women Speak Out</i> (selections) May Ayim, [1996], <i>blues in black and white</i> (selections)</p>

	<p>and early 90s and became instrumental for the birth of the Afro-German identity movement.</p> <p>Panel Discussion: Black Activism in Germany Today</p>	<p>Podcast: Decolonization in Action. Season 3, Episode 2: Black Feminism is Intersectional Justice. Interview with Dr. Natasha Kelly.</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u> Charly Wilder, "Lorde's Berlin", <i>NYT</i> July 19, 2019. Ca. 5 pages.</p> <p><u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 11	<p><i>Sessions 19 & 20: What about the Future? Ecological Movements Then and Now</i></p> <p>This week's sessions approach the history of ecological movements from both a theoretical and a historical angle. First, we will become acquainted with Hans Jonas' <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i> (1979). Asking questions such as "are we responsible for the future implications of our actions? Are we responsible for keeping our planet "livable"?", Jonas formulated a kind of environmental ethics that continues to be highly relevant today.</p> <p>We will substitute our discussion of Jonas with a historical retracing of Germany's ecological movements, from the nuclear disarmament movement and other ecological social movements in Germany in the 80s and the foundation of Germany's Green Party to today's Fridays for Future.</p>	<p>Reading: Hans Jonas, <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i>, pp.1-24.</p> <p>Christa Wolf, <i>Accident: A Day's News</i>, pp. 3-39.</p> <p><u>Panel Presentation</u></p>
Week 12	<p><i>Sessions 21 & 22: Final Discussion & Wrap-Up.</i></p> <p>Bringing together our discussions of German For our last session, we will wrap-up and review our discussions throughout the course, addressing the questions such as: what distinguishes German political thought? How is it linked up with German political history? And how have German thinkers and authors informed global and national debates outside of German?</p> <p><i>Session 23: Individual Paper Consultation (TBA)</i></p>	<p>FINAL PRESENTATIONS</p>
Week 13	<p>FINALS</p>	<p><u>Final paper due Thursday (18:00)</u></p>

FIELDTRIPS and GUEST SPEAKERS

Week 5, Sessions 9 & 10: Revolutionary Berlin

This week's fieldtrip serves the purpose of introducing students to the 1919 revolution and the role played by Rosa Luxemburg. We will go on a guided tour through "revolutionary Friedrichshain".

Week 8, Sessions 13 & 14: Totalitarianism: The Topography of Terror

This fieldtrip will further deepen our understanding of the rise of the Nazis in the early 1930s.

Week 10, Sessions 17 & 18: Black Activism in Berlin Today.

In today's session, we will discuss the importance of Black activism in Berlin today. We will also speak about the rise of extremism in Germany.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Adorno, T.W. (1983). [1967]. "Cultural Criticism and Society". In T.W. Adorno. *Prisms*. Transl. by S. and S. Weber. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983, pp. 17-34.
- Arendt, H. (1996). "The Totalitarian Movement". In H. Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Orlando: A Harvest Book Harcourt Inc., 1996, pp.341-388.
- Ayim, M. (2003). *Blues in Black and White*. Transl. by A. Adams. NJ: Africa World Press.
- Celan, P. (2020). *Memory Rose Into Threshold Space. The Collected Earlier Poetry. A Bilingual Edition*. Transl. by P. Joris. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Clausewitz, C.v. (2007). *On War*. Transl. by M. Howard and P. Paret. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.13-31.
- Engels, F. and K. Marx. (1978). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. In *The Marx-Engels Reader. Second Edition*. Ed. by R. Tucker. New York: Norton & Company, 1978, pp.469-500.
- Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. (2002). *The Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Ed. by G. Schmid Noerr. Transl. by E. Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, pp.1-34.
- Jonas, H. (1984). *The Imperative of Responsibility*. Transl. by H. Jonas with the collaboration of D. Herr. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984, pp.1-24.
- Jünger, E. (2004). *Storm of Steel*. Transl. with an introduction by M. Hoffmann. London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 13-20.
- Kant, I. (2006). "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" in Kant, I. *Toward Perpetual Peace and other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*. Ed. and with an introduction by P. Kleingeld. Transl. by D.L. Closs. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 67-109.
- Luxemburg, R. (2004). "Writings on Women, 1902-14". In *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. Ed. by P. Hudis and K.B. Anderson. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004, pp.233-245.
- Oguntoye, K., M. Opitz & D. Schultz (eds.) (1991). *Showing our Colours: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Remarque, E.M. (1984). *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Transl. by A. W. Wheen. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1984, pp.5-12 and pp.46-63.
- Schmitt, C. (1996). *The Concept of the Political*. Transl. and with an introduction by G. Schwab. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996, pp.19-37.
- Weber, M. (2004). "Politics as a Vocation" in Weber, M. *The Vocation Lectures*. Ed. and with an introduction by D. Owen and T.B. Strong. Transl. by R. Livingstone. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2004, pp. 32-40.
- Wolf, C. (2001). *Accident: A Day's News*. Transl. by H. Schwarzbauer and R. Takvorian. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001, pp.3-39.
- Zetkin, Clara. (2015). "Only in Conjunction with the Proletarian Woman Will Socialism Be Victorious" in C. Zetkin. *Selected Writings*. Ed. by P. S. Foner. Chicago: Haymarket Books, pp.72-83.

Optional Readings

- Bryson, V. (2016). "Marxist Feminism in Germany and Russia". In V. Bryson. *Feminist Political Theory. 3rd Edition*. London: Palgrave, 2016, pp.104-120.
- Fromm, E. (1980). "Marx's Historical Materialism" in E. Fromm. *Marx's Concept of Man*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980, pp.8-19.
- Weber, M. (2004). "Politics as a Vocation" in Weber, M. *The Vocation Lectures*. Ed. and with an introduction by D. Owen and T.B. Strong. Transl. by R. Livingstone. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2004, pp.54-94.
- Wilder, C. (2019). "Lorde's Berlin". *New York Times July 19, 2019*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/19/travel/berlin-audre-lorde.html> (accessed 6 Jan 2023).



FILM & AUDIO

Film:

Milestone, L. (193). *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Schultz, D. (2012). *Audre Lorde. The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992*.

Podcast:

de Bonhomme, E. *Decolonization in Action Podcast. Season 3, Episode 2: Black Feminism is Intersectional Justice*.

Interview with Dr. Natasha Kelly. Available at <https://www.decolonizationinaction.com/episodes/season-3-episode-2>

(10/2024)