PO/HS 352 – GERMAN POLITICAL THOUGHT  
IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION:
This course examines the patterns of German political thought from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and links these patterns to specific examples and events in German history. It focuses on the relationship between German history and politics on the one hand, and German political philosophy and literature on the other. The course thus revolves around a theoretical reflection on a wide variety of fundamental topics such as the nature of peace in international relations and the role of war therein, the importance of bureaucracy for a modern state, and the development of the public sphere. We will use examples drawn from political philosophy, but also history, literature, and the politics of the day. Thematically, the course will range from Enlightenment, the First World War, the Weimar Republic, and Nazism, to the Cold War to important more recent political trends such as environmental movements. We will read selections of both primary and secondary texts in German. The instructor will provide students with plenty of support for handling these texts. At the end of the course, we will be able to understand and assess the interaction of political thought and history in the German context.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

INSTRUCTOR: A.M. Vaisfeld, PhD

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: German

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%
- Presentation-20%
- Research Paper-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. It will be a take-home exam. Students will be required to answer 3 questions in essay format. They will be given 180 minutes to work on the exam.
Presentation
Students will be required to hold a presentation (10 minutes) on a topic of German Political Thought with the objective of encouraging in-class discussion. Students will be required to provide a handout before their presentation. They may use power point or another appropriate format to support their in-class presentation.

Research Paper
Based on their in-class presentation, students will be required to write an essay (approx. 1,500 words). Final papers are due at the end of finals week (Thursday, 24:00) and are to be submitted by email.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon completion of this course, student will be able to:
- identify the unique aspects of German political thought,
- relate German politics and history to German political thought,
- apply categories of political theory to German politics and history,
- distinguish main political concepts relevant to German history (liberalism, socialism, communism, Nazism, extremism, totalitarianism).

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Attendance and punctuality in all courses and field studies are mandatory. Absences can only be excused for valid reasons. Unexcused absences can affect students’ grades. Students who miss 25% or more of all class sessions will fail the course. Missed exams cannot be taken at another time except in case of documented illness. Late submission of term papers and other work will result in grade reduction unless an extension due to illness or an emergency is approved. Please consult the IES Abroad Berlin academics manual on Moodle for additional details.

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 most 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.

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<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Session 1: Introduction What is German Political Thought—and what are some of its key issues?</td>
<td>Fieldtrip: A Walking Tour of Philosophical Berlin Sign-up for in-class presentations</td>
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<td>Session 2: Perpetual Peace—Idealism in International Relations 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.</td>
<td>Reading: Immanuel Kant [1795], “Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf”, pp.104-122. Optional: Immanuel Kant [1795], “Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf”, pp. 123-150.</td>
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**Week 2**  
**Session 3: Dialectics of War I: Realist Approaches in International Relations**  
In the two sessions this week, we will contrast Kant’s “idealist” approach to politics and international relations with “realist” approaches that emphasize the reality of conflict and war. In today’s session, we will discuss Clausewitz’s definition of war as a legitimate act of statecraft in the early 19th century.

**Reading:**  
Carl von Clausewitz [1832-34], *Vom Kriege*, Book 1, Chapter 1, “Was ist der Krieg?” pp.14-29.  

**Student Presentation**

**Session 4: Dialectics of War II: Today’s Warfare**  
Continuing the theme of realist approaches in politics, we will critically discuss Schmitt’s notion of the political and the distinction between “friend” and “enemy” at its core. Lastly, we will reflect on whether these “classical” theories of war continue to be relevant today.

**Reading:**  
Carl Schmitt [1932], *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 11-20  
Herfried Münkler, “Der Krieg führt sich selbst”. Interview in *Spiegel Online*, October 7, 2003, ca. 1 page  
Optional: Carl Schmitt [1932], *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp.20-33

**Student Presentation**

**Week 3**  
**Session 5: Marxism and the Critique of Capitalism**  
In this session, we turn to Engels’ and Marx’ theories of the state and their critique of capitalism.

**Reading:**  

**Student Presentation**

**Session 6: Communist Berlin**  
**Fieldtrip: A Tour through Communist Berlin**

**Week 4**  
**Session 7: First Wave of Feminism: The Fight for Equal Opportunities and Suffrage**  
In this session, we turn to two of Germany’s most important early feminist thinkers: 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.

**Reading:**  
Clara Zetkin [1889], “Für die Befreiung der Frau! Rede auf dem Internationalen Arbeiterkongreß zu Paris (19. Juli 1889)” (ca. 3 pages)  
Rosa Luxemburg [1912], “Frauenwahlrecht und Klassenkampf” (ca. 4 pages)  

**Student Presentation**

**Session 8: Germany Divided: the GDR I**  
These next two sessions are dedicated to understanding how socialist and communist theories became “actualized” in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). We will also consider the role of women in the GDR and compare it to

**Reading:**  
Kathrin Aehnlich, “Frauenalltag in der DDR. ‘Bei uns endete die Gleichberechtigung an der Wohnungstür’” (ca. 8 pages)  
Optional: Christa Wolf [1963], *Der geteilte Himmel*, pp. 62-73
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Session 9: Germany Divided: the GDR II</th>
<th>Fieldtrip: GDR Museum</th>
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<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<td>Session 10: Modern Industrial Society: Rationalization and Bureaucratization</td>
<td>Reading: Max Weber [1919], “Politik als Beruf”, pp. 157-167;</td>
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<td>Optional: Max Weber [1919], “Politik als Beruf”, pp. 167-177;</td>
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<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Mid-terms</td>
<td>Take-home exam (to be uploaded to Moodle within 180 minutes)</td>
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<td>Session 11: World War I and the Question of Meaning I</td>
<td>Reading: Erich Maria Remarque [1928], <em>Im Westen nichts Neues</em>, Chapter 1, pp. 3-16.</td>
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<td>Ernst Jünger [1922], <em>In Stahlgewittern</em>, Chapter 1, “In den Kreidegräben der Champagne”, pp. 7-18;</td>
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<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<td>Session 12: World War I and the Question of Meaning II</td>
<td>Film (in-class): Lewis Milestone [1930], <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em> (selections)</td>
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<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Session 13: Political Thinkers in Exile I</td>
<td>Reading: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer [1944], <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em>, “Begriff der Aufklärung”, pp. 25-30 and &quot;Kulturindustrie&quot;, pp. 144-149</td>
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<td>Optional: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer [1944], <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em>, &quot;Kulturindustrie&quot;, pp. 149-188</td>
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<td>Student Presentation</td>
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<td>Session 14: Political Philosophers in Exile II</td>
<td>Reading: Karoline Kuhla, &quot;Brecht in Hollywood&quot; (ca. 4 pages)</td>
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<td>Film (in-class): Fritz Lang [1943], &quot;Hangmen also die!&quot; (selections)</td>
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| Week 9 | Session 15: Totalitarianism I  
In this session, we will continue to discuss totalitarian movements in Europe with the help of Hannah Arendt, another German political thinker who found refuge in the US. In particular, we will turn to Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*, her analysis of Nazism and Stalinism. | Reading:  
Student Presentation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Week 10 | Session 16: Totalitarianism II  
Field Trip: Berlin Wall Memorial  
Student Presentation | Session 17: What about the Future? Ecological Movements Then and Now I  
Are we responsible for the future implications of our actions? Are we responsible for keeping our planet “livable”? We will discuss these questions with reference to the work of Hans Jonas, another German philosopher in exile. We will also trace them historically, from the nuclear disarmament movement and ecological movements in Germany in the 1980s to the foundation of Germany’s Green Party and today’s Fridays for Future movement. | Reading:  
Hans Jonas [1979], *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, pp. 21-41  
Optional: Frank Decker, "Etappen der Parteigeschichte der GRÜNEN" |
| Week 11 | Session 18: What about the Future? Ecological Movements Then and Now II | Reading:  
Christa Wolf [1987], *Störfall*, pp. 9-23  
Optional: Alexandra Endres, "Wenn die Welt so weitermacht, landen wir bei zwei bis vier Grad plus", *Die Zeit*, Feb 26, 2021, ca. 1 page  
Discussion with activists from Fridays for Future |
| Session 19: The Public Sphere I  
In these sessions, we will turn to the theme of the “public sphere”, its historical development, its importance—and the threats it might be under. This session will also enable us to think about the “Corona pandemic” and its many impacts upon the public. | Reading:  
Jürgen Habermas [1962], *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, pp. 54-67.  
Optional Reading: Sebastian Domsch, "Das Kaffeehaus: Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit", pp.413-420 |
| Session 20: The Public Sphere II: The Corona Pandemic | Reading:  
Matthias Trautsch, "Menschliche Nähe mit Abstand", *FAZ*, March 17, 2020, ca. 1 page  
Christine Lieberknecht, Iris Gleicke and Linda Teuteberg, "Corona-Diktatur?", *FAZ*, March 11, 2021, ca. 1 page |
### Week 12

**Session 21: Alternative Berlin**  
Bringing together our discussions of German social and environmental movements and our discussion of the importance of the public sphere, we will explore "alternative Berlin": housing projects, street art, and more.  

**Fieldtrip: A Tour of Alternative Berlin**

**Session 22: Final Discussion**  
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?

**Final discussion & wrap up**

### Week 13

**Finals**

**Research paper due Thursday (24:00)**

### REQUIRED READINGS:

**Primary Texts:**

Secondary Texts:


OPTIONAL READINGS

Primary Texts:


Secondary Texts:


FILM & AUDIO

- Milestone, Lewis, (1930), “All Quiet on the Western Front” (Im Westen nichts Neues), selections
- Lang, Fritz (1943), “Hangmen Also Die!” (Auch Henker sterben), selections
- Brecht, Bertold (1947) "Testimony Before The House Un-American Activities Committee", audio