



**PO/HS 352A – 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. 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:** 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%
- 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.

Sessions	Content	Readings
Week 1	Session 1 <i>Introduction to Class</i> What is German Political Thought—and what are some of its key issues?	<b>Fieldtrip:</b> A Walking Tour of Philosophical Berlin
	Session 2 <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.	<b>Reading:</b> Immanuel Kant, <i>Perpetual Peace</i> , pp.67-109.  <u><a href="#">Sign-up for in-class presentations</a></u>

<b>Week 2</b>	<p>Session 3 <i>Dialectics of War I: Realist Approaches in International Relations</i> 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.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Carl von Clausewitz, <i>On War</i>, Book 1, Chapter 1, “What is War?”, pp.13-31</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
	<p>Session 4 <i>Dialectics of War II: Today’s Warfare</i> Continuing the theme of realist approaches in politics, we will also consider 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.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Carl Schmitt, <i>The Concept of the Political</i>, pp.19-37</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u> Herfried Münkler, <i>New Wars</i>, pp.5-22.</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 3</b>	<p>Session 5 <i>Marxism and the Critique of Capitalism</i> In this session, we turn to Engels’ and Marx’ theories of the state and their critique of capitalism.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>, pp.469-500.</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u> Karl Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844</i>, pp. 70-101; Erich Fromm, “Marx’s Historical Materialism” in Fromm, <i>Marx’s Concept of Man</i>, pp.8-19</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
	<p>Session 6 <i>Germany Divided: the GDR</i> This session is 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 the place of women in the Federal Republic of Germany.</p> <p><b>Fieldtrip to GDR Museum at Kulturbrauerei</b></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Christa Wolf, <i>They Divided the Sky</i>, pp.151-180.</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 4</b>	<p>Session 7 <i>Feminism: The Fight for Equal Opportunities and Suffrage</i> 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.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Clara Zetkin, “Only in Conjunction with the Proletarian Woman Will Socialism Be Victorious”, pp.72-83 Rosa Luxemburg, “Writings on Women, 1902-14”, pp.233-245</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u> Valerie Bryson, “Marxist Feminism in Germany and Russia” in V. Bryson, <i>Feminist Political Theory</i>, pp.104-120.</p>

	<p>Session 8 <i>Modern Industrial Society: Rationalization and Bureaucratization</i></p> <p>We will discuss Weber’s characterization of the modern world as <i>disenchanted</i> and the question what political leadership is necessary in an age of rationalization and bureaucratization.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, pp. 32-40;</p> <p><u>Optional Reading:</u> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, pp. 54-94;</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 5</b>	<p>Session 9+10 <i>Communism in Berlin</i></p> <p><b>Fieldtrip to the Soviet Memorial in Treptow</b></p>	
<b>Week 6</b>	Mid-terms	Take-home exam (to be uploaded to Moodle within 90 minutes)
<b>Week 7</b>	<p>Session 11 <i>World War I and the Question of Meaning I</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? 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><b>Reading:</b> Ernst Jünger, <i>Storm of Steel</i>, Chapter 1, “In the Chalk Trenches of Champagne”, pp. 13-20</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> Ernst Jünger, <i>Storm of Steel</i>, “Daily Life in the Trenches”, pp. 69-81</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
	<p>Session 12 <i>World War I and the Question of Meaning II</i></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Erich Maria Remarque, <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>, Chapter 1, pp.5-12; Chapter 6, pp.46-63;</p> <p><u>Film (in-class):</u> Lewis Milestone, “All Quiet on the Western Front” (selections)</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p>Session 13 <i>Political Thinkers in Exile I</i></p> <p>World War II saw an exodus of Germany’s political thinkers, writers and philosophers. Many settled in the US. In these two sessions, we will turn to some of them and see how they grappled with the twin problems of how to understand Nazism, that is, Germany’s self-destruction (which they understood as the West’s self-destruction) AND how to understand the world they were encountering, that is, the US.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i>, “The Concept of Enlightenment”, pp.1-34.</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
	<p>Session 14 <i>Political Philosophers in Exile II</i></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Bertolt Brecht, “Hollywood Elegies” and “On the Term of Exile”</p>

		<p><u>Film</u> (in-class): Fritz Lang, "Hangmen also die!" (selections)</p> <p><u>Audio</u> (in-class), Bertolt Brecht, "Testimony Before The House Un-American Activities Committee" (1947)</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<p>Session 15 <i>Totalitarianism I</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 <i>Origins of Totalitarianism</i>, her analysis of Nazism and Stalinism.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Hannah Arendt, "The Totalitarian Movement", in H. Arendt, <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>, pp.341-388.</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
	<p>Session 16 <i>Totalitarianism II</i></p>	<p><b>Field Trip:</b> Berlin Wall Memorial</p> <p><u>Student Presentation</u></p>
<b>Week 10</b>	<p>Session 17 <i>What about the Future? Ecological Movements Then and Now I</i> Are we responsible for the future implications of our actions? Are we responsible for keeping our planet "livable"? In these sessions, these will be our questions, which we'll discuss with reference to the work of Hans Jonas, another German philosopher in exile. We will also trace these questions historically, 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><b>Reading:</b> Hans Jonas, <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i>, pp.1-24.</p>
	<p>Session 18 <i>What about the Future? Ecological Movements Then and Now II</i></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Christa Wolf, <i>Accident: A Day's News</i>, pp. 3-39.</p> <p><i>Discussion with activists from Fridays for Future</i></p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<p>Session 19 <i>The Public Sphere I</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.</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Jürgen Habermas, <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i>, pp.27-56.</p>
	<p>Session 20 <i>The Public Sphere II: The Corona Pandemic</i></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> Maria Exner, Philip Faigle, et al., "'Germany Talks': What Germany Is Arguing About in the Corona Era, <i>Die Zeit</i> June 17 2020</p>

		Veronika Hackenbroch and Rafaela von Bredow, "The Changing Virus", <i>Der Spiegel</i> September 15 2021
<b>Week 12</b>	Session 21 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.	<b>Fieldtrip:</b> A Tour of Alternative Berlin
	Session 22 <i>Final Discussion</i> 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
<b>Week 12/13</b>	Session 23: Research Paper Consultation (via Zoom).	
<b>Week 13</b>	Finals	<u>Research paper due Thursday (24:00)</u>

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Arendt, H. (1996). "The Totalitarian Movement". In H. Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Orlando: A Harvest Book Harcourt Inc., 1996, pp.341-388.
- Brecht, B. (2011). "Hollywood Elegies". Transl. by A. Kirsch, *Poetry* (June 2011) available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/54758/hollywood-elegies> (accessed November 28, 2020).
- Brecht, B. "On the Term of Exile". Transl. by A. Kirsch, *Poetry* (June 2011), available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/54759/on-the-term-of-exile> (accessed November 26, 2020).
- 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.
- Exner M., P. Faigle, et al. (2020). "'Germany Talks': What Germany Is Arguing About in the Corona Era". *Die Zeit* June 17 2020, available at <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2020-05/germany-talks-2020-discussion-participants-questions-answers-english> (accessed September 2021).
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Transl. by T. Burger with the assistance of F. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, pp.27-56.
- Hackenbroch, V. and R. von Bredow, "The Changing Virus". *Der Spiegel* September 15 2021, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/winter-worries-the-changing-virus-a-d948fadb-7d58-4dd2-9230-21cb8bbad277> (accessed September 2021).
- 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. Cooclosure. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 67-109.
- Luxemburg, R. Rosa Luxemburg. (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.
- Schmitt, C. (1996). *The Concept of the Political*. Transl. and with an introduction by G. Schwab. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996, pp.19-37.
- 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.
- 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.
- Wolf, C. (2013). *They Divided the Sky*. Transl. by L. v. Flotow. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2013, pp. 151-203.
- 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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
- Jünger, E. (2004). *Storm of Steel*. Transl. with an introduction by M. Hoffmann. London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 68-81.
- Marx, K. (1978). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844*. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Second Edition. Ed. by R. Tucker. New York: Norton & Company, 1978, pp.70-101.
- Münkler, H. (2005). *The New Wars*. Transl. by P. Camiller. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, pp.5-22.
- 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.