

HISTORY 411B—THE RISE AND FALL OF NAZI GERMANY, 1933-1945

Spring Semester 2020



History Department Website: <https://his.uncg.edu/>

History Department Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/>

INSTRUCTOR

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Office: MHRA 2111

COURSE MEETING TIMES

Time: Thursdays, 4-6:50

Room: MHRA 2208

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Modern Germany is a nation rooted in a traumatic past that continues to reverberate. Tourists to Berlin pose before the Brandenburg Gate, where the Iron Curtain between a democratic West and communist East divided a nation for more than four decades. Walking a few paces, they can see the Bundestag, where politicians commemorate the victims of the dictatorship. Just a little further, visitors encounter the moving "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe," located in the heart of the erstwhile capital of the Third Reich. A stone's throw from this prominent symbol

of contrition was the bunker of the architect of this genocide and cataclysmic war that left Europe divided, and who continues to cast such a long shadow: Adolf Hitler. Who was this man that led a fringe political faction born in Munich beer halls to the most potent political force in a shattering democracy? Why did millions of Germans flock to its banners? How did National Socialism seek to remake the social and racial order of Germany, Europe, and the world? How did two Germanys emerge from the ruins of defeat, and contend with their toxic legacy? This course will provide a broad overview of the history of Nazi Germany, the various interpretations historians formulated to explain Nazism, and contemplate how Germans have long struggled to cope with their dark past. With an emphasis on primary sources and representative secondary readings, students will meet in seminars to discuss the materials. The goal of the course is to prepare students for a capstone project, an original analytical research paper based on critical examination of the materials and analysis of primary sources dealing with a relevant aspect of the history of Nazi Germany.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

History Department Student Learning Outcomes (HLG)

1. *Historical Comprehension.* Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures.
2. *Historical Analysis.* Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view.
3. *Historical Research.* Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources.
4. *Historical Interpretation.* Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing.

Beyond UNCG university and history department learning goals, this course seeks to help you:

- A. Understand** how historians “do” history. By analyzing primary sources within their historical contexts, you will learn how to evaluate what they tell us about that context, the author’s worldview, and intended audiences. You will also be introduced to academic debates, and how scholars interpret and use evidence to make claims about the past.
- B. Cultivate** the need to consider historical subjects on their own terms. The temptation may arise to view modern history as nothing more than the prehistory of our contemporary world, and to project our understandings, political views, and expectations onto the past. While the present is important to consider, this course will urge you to ponder the world around you as subject to historical processes, and a product of various historical accidents that the actors we encounter in the course navigated and responded to.
- C. Practice** critical thinking. Through close examination of primary documents, memoirs, film, and images, you will encounter the views, ideas, impressions, fears, and desires of people from a time and culture different from your own. By analyzing the texts they left behind, you will be challenged to think more deeply about humanity and history and, hopefully, develop critical and nuanced thinking skills.

- D. Improve** writing skills. Through course assignments, you will practice formulating research questions, marshalling evidence to support your thesis, and improve on your skills of synthesizing the evidence into an argument.
- E. Participate** in a lively and respectful atmosphere. Rigorous academic debate is also about difference of points of view, the aggregation of which enhances classroom experiences. All students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, orientation, background, or any other identity should feel welcome to participate. If you feel that this goal is not being met, please let me know in private how this can be remedied.
- F. Promote** citizenship. That is the goal of liberal arts. “Liberal” arts doesn’t refer to a political orientation, but rather to the idea that universities should cultivate the skills required of citizens who will partake in civic life. The humanities train critical thinking and communication, skills you will need in your life and careers. But more than produce competent employees, I want to provide you with the abilities to help understand and contribute to your communities and society as an informed citizen.

ACCESSIBILITY:

The university and myself strive to make the class as accessible as possible. Please let me know if you anticipate or over the semester experience physical, mental, or academic barriers that might interfere with your studies, and so that we can weigh options. Students with recognized disabilities should register with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). OARS is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC) in Suite 215 and maintains a [webpage](#). The mission of OARS is to provide, coordinate, and advocate for services which enable students with disabilities to receive equal access to a college education and to all aspects of university life.

POLICIES

- A. Attendance:** In order to succeed in this or any course, attendance is crucial. In addition to helping guide you through an intensive course, much of our learning will come from group discussion and interaction. Moreover, it is expected that you participate and come prepared, read the required assignments, and participate actively in order to make points or pose questions. I not only expect you to be physically present, but mentally as well. That means that surfing the internet, doing online shopping, playing around on your phone, or sleeping will lead to an ejection from the lecture, and will be marked as an unexcused absence. **If you miss more than two classes, your grade will fall by one full letter grade.** If you have an illness or family emergency, or are a student athlete, your absences may be excused. However, please coordinate with me and keep me in the loop, and I will make sure we catch you up on missed material.
- B. Late Assignments:** All work must be submitted in hard copy form on the day it is due. If work is submitted past the deadline without prior coordination with me, late assignments will only be eligible for a portion of the full credit. My policy for how many points are docked is the following: 1-3 days—5%; 4-7 days—10%; 8-10 days—25%. Work

submitted more than 10 days after the deadline can only receive a **maximum** 50% credit.

C. Academic Integrity Policy: All assignments and course interactions are subject to UNCG's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). This includes, for instance, procedures disciplining plagiarism. In plain language: Any indication that your work is not your own is an absolutely inexcusable offense that insults me, your peers, and sullies the standards of scholarship. It will be addressed vigorously. The consequences of violating the Academic Integrity Policy are not to be taken lightly, and it is not worth the risk of committing plagiarism just to get a slightly better grade in this course.

GRADING

The assignments (see below) and course grades will conform to the following values:

A (93–100%) • A- (90–92%)	Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment;
B+ (87–89%) • B (83–86%) • B- (80–82%)	Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment;
C+ (77–79%) • C (73–76%) • C- (70–72%)	Acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment;
D+ (67–69%) • D (63–66%) • D- (60–62%)	Marginal performance in the required exercises . . . a minimal passing level of attainment;
F (< 59%)	An unacceptable performance.

ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation	20%
Preliminary assignments (Research Question/Proposal, Source Analysis, Annotated Bibliography, Outline/Intro)	20%
Class Presentation	10%
Research Paper	50%

The assignments entail the following components, thought detailed information will follow over the course of the semester:

- A. **Attendance and Participation:** As noted above, both are vital for success in the course. Moreover, participation is mandatory, because your work will depend on the input of your peers. If you come to class, participate and are engaged, this should be easy points.
- B. **Preliminary Assignments:** These are intended as stepping stones toward your final paper that start the writing process, while also teaching you the process of conducting research. These assignments are pass/fail, and so are easy points. You will receive more instructions during the course of the semester, but briefly the components are:

- a. Research Question/Proposal: A description of the topic you plan to research, and what question you seek to answer.
 - b. Source analysis: A critical examination of a primary source you intend to use for your research paper. You will submit your analysis to me and to peers, who will provide feedback and commentary.
 - c. Annotated Bibliography: You will find at least five sources, and write a short paragraph describing the content or argument, and how it is relevant for your paper/thesis.
 - d. Outline/Intro: You will submit the introduction of your paper or a comprehensive outline to myself and your peers.
- C. **Rough Draft/Oral Presentation:** Each student will submit a rough draft to me and their peers. Furthermore, they will speak for 5-8 minutes on their research topic before the entire class and take the opportunity to take questions and input from the class. This is the last step before you begin the writing of your final research paper.
- D. **Final Paper:** An original research paper of 15-20 pages.

You will collaborate on this project with the help of your colleagues. However, I am available to help guide you, and am happy to work with you in improving your writing and comprehension skills. Please be aware, as well, that the university has an excellent [Writing Center](#) that can improve individual writing and impart techniques and skills that will help you succeed at UNCG and in your future careers.

TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS¹

Instead of a large and costly tome, I have opted for a combination of articles and novels/memoirs. I will provide you with many of the articles and materials via Canvas.

Some required books that will be of immense help to you must be purchased, and are available at the Student Store and online. The online route might be cheaper, and I don't care if you find an older edition. The book for the course is:

Wayne Booth, et. al, *The Craft of Research*
 Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*
 (Recommended)

Lectures will provide some context to help ground you in the material and provide possible ideas for papers, but given the breadth of the course cannot cover everything. Instead, the first half of the semester should be regarded as a series of conversations about Nazi Germany, the historical profession, and writing. If you require advice on books for background knowledge or your writing, please let me know. I can recommend a variety of sources.

¹ Note that the readings fulfill the following learning outcomes: GHP 2; GL 1, 2, 3; and HLG 1, 2.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule outlines the major topics that we will cover. It may (and very likely will) be modified if necessary, with adequate notice.

Part 1 | Nazi Germany: Overview and Examples

1. January 16 | Introductions

Readings:

- Watch *Look Who's Back*, 2015 (Netflix)
- "[Revisiting Hitler, in a New Authoritarian Age](#)," *New York Times*, September 29, 2019

2. January 23 | Hitler and National Socialism

Readings:

- Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, "Barbarous Utopias," in Burleigh and Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23-37
- Volker Ulrich, "The Leap into Politics" and "The King of Munich," in Ulrich, *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939* (New York: Knopf, 2016), 73-130
- Michael Wildt, "The Experience of War," in Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 21-36
- Adam Tooze, "Introduction," in Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 1-36

3. January 30 | Seizure of Power

Readings:

- Ulrich, "Totalitarian Revolution," in *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939*, 412-476
- Eric Weitz, "Revolution and Counterrevolution from the Right" and "Conclusion," in Weitz, *Weimar: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 331-368
- William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: the Experience of a Single German Town 1922-1945* (Brattleboro: Echo Point Books, 2014), 129-168
- Sebastian Haffner, "Street-Level Coercion," in *How Was it Possible*, ed. by Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 118-128
- Watch: [The Nazis: A Warning From History](#), episode 1

RESEARCH QUESTION/PROPOSAL DUE

4. February 6 | *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*

Readings:

- Ian Kershaw, “‘Führer without Sin’: Hitler and the ‘Little Hitlers,’” in Kershaw, *The “Hitler Myth”: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 83-104
- Thomas Kühne, “Watching Terror: Women in the Community of Crime,” in Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler’s Community, 1918-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 137-161
- Sebastian Haffner, “Achievements” and “Successes,” in *The Meaning of Hitler* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983), 23-72
- Watch: [The Nazis: A Warning From History](#), episode 2

5. February 13 | The Racial State

Readings:

- Ian Kershaw, “Hitler: ‘Master of the Third Reich’ or ‘Weak Dictator?’” in *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives*, Fourth Edition (New York: Hodder, 2000), 69-92
- Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, “Barbarism Institutionalized: Racism as State Policy,” in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44-74
- S. Jonathan Wiesen, “American Lynching in the Nazi Imagination: Race and Extra-Legal Violence in 1930s Germany,” *German History* 36 (2018): 38-59

6. February 20 | *Götterdämmerung* and Retribution

Readings:

- Norbert Frei, “People’s Community and War: Hitler’s Popular Support,” in: Herbert Mommsen, *The Third Reich Between Vision and Reality. New Perspectives on German History 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59-77
- Eagle Glassheim, “National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945,” *Central European History* 33, No. 4 (2000): 463-486
- Michael Wildt, “Postwar: Back in Civil Society,” and “Prosecution,” *An Uncompromising Generation*, 361-403, 419-424
- Watch: *The Nazis: A Warning from History* (1997), episode 6 [[video](#)]

7. February 27 | The “Unmasterable” Past?

Readings:

- Robert Moeller, “War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany,” *The American Historical Review* 101, No. 4 (October 1996), 1008-1048.

- Norbert Frei, “Coping with the Burdens of the Past: German Politics and Society in the 1950s,” in D. Geppert, *The Postwar Challenge. Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-1958* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 27-39.
- Watch *Hitler’s Children*, 2011 (available to rent online)

BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Part 2 | Researching, Organizing, Writing

8. March 12 | Library Workshop

9. March 19 | Class Meeting: Discussion of Sources

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE

10. March 26 | Workshop

INTROS/OUTLINES DUE

11. April 2 | Workshop

12. April 9 | Presentations

PRESENTATIONS/ROUGH DRAFT DUE

13. April 16 | Peer Reviews

14. April 23 | Final Comments and Conclusions

15. April 28 | The End

FINAL DRAFTS DUE