

Occupied Germany: Comparative Newsreel Assignment

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

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DESIGNED FOR: MODERN GERMANY: FROM UNIFICATION TO (RE)UNIFICATION
Course Type: Introductory survey course, no pre-requisites
Course Enrollment: usually 35-45 students
Student Composition: draws from all majors/minors; usually 25% are HIST or GERM majors

ASSIGNMENT BACKGROUND, GOALS, AND DESIGN:

Moving my course to an online, asynchronous format presented a variety of challenges – especially in terms of maintaining student discussions and interactions. I created this assignment to be an active learning exercise which required students to use knowledge from Course Reading and a Recorded Lecture/Slideshow to first analyze and react to two primary sources from the period of Germany’s post-war occupation-- and then compare their analyses via small group discussion on Canvas.

Students were already divided into 7 different Canvas groups (“teams”) of 4-5 students each. Students remained on the same Canvas team throughout the course – allowing the students within each small group to develop a sense of community and camaraderie, even though the asynchronous format of the online course meant that they were not having ‘live’ virtual interactions.

The assignment was created as a Discussion forum on Canvas. Students could access all materials on Canvas. They could read the posts of other members within their own small group, but not the posts of classmates in other groups. They could read/comment on each other’s posts only after they had submitted their own thoughts.

CANVAS DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT: Occupied Germany

PREPARATION: This week’s discussion assignment is based on the material in the **Week 13: Defeat, Occupation, and Division** module. In order to analyze the two Newsreels below, you will need to have completed the reading and worked through the slideshow (available in PPT and PDF formats). After you have completed this preparation, you will be ready to watch the two newsreels and submit your thoughts to the questions below.

ASSIGNMENT: Here are two newsreels depicting two perspectives on the same thing: the purpose and goals of occupying Germany after the Second World War. The first is a 1945 US Army Film; the second is a 1946 British War Department Film. As you watch these two films, be sure to consider the following questions:

- What kind of audience did each film appear to be targeting? How do you think that choice of audience influenced the tone, emotion, or mood of the film?

- Do you think these films are sending the same message about *why* Germany needs to be occupied? *Explain* your answer and offer *at least one example* from each film that illustrates your point.
 - Do these films suggest that Britain and the United States have the same occupational goals? Or do you see any differences in the long-term plans that each ally has? How might we explain these differences?
 - Do you see any differences in how each film depicts the average German? If so, explain and use examples.
 - Besides outlining the military and political goals of occupation, what other aspects of occupation society and culture do the films discuss? What might have been the reason(s) for including that material in each film?
 - Any other messages or ideas about Germans or German culture and society that strike you as worth noting? If so, why?
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NEWSREELS/INFORMATION FILMS:

U.S. Department of the Army, “Your Job in Germany,” 1945 (15 mins)

You Tube link: <https://youtu.be/821R0IGUL6A>

British War Department, “A Defeated People,” 1946 (19 mins)

You Tube link: <https://youtu.be/x8XG-nbM3BE>