

Weimar Germany: Annotated Syllabus Project

Syllabus Design and Explanation

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DESIGNED FOR: “Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy”
Course Type: Graduate Seminar
Course Enrollment/Size: 8-10 students
Student Composition: Humanities/Social Science graduate students

ASSIGNMENT BACKGROUND, GOALS, AND DESIGN:

Though I crafted this assignment for M.A. students, a majority of the graduate students who enter our program aspire to continue their education in a Ph.D. program. In addition, we cater primarily to graduate students interested in Western and Native American history in the Great Plains/Mountain West. As a result, most of our graduate students have little or no knowledge of German.

I, therefore, created this assignment in order to reach students who do not have a significant knowledge of German history, and to prepare them for the institutional rigors of a Ph.D. program. The project also offers students a flexible range in which to consider their hypothetical course. If they are able, in other words, to incorporate materials/themes/comparative topics that relate more with their own historical interests, all M.A. students need to do is explain how it relates to Weimar Germany in their annotations.

Perhaps more than any other project that I have assigned, this annotated syllabus provided students an opportunity to engage in work that they could draw upon repeatedly in the future. Few if any of them will likely ever teach a course on Weimar Germany in the future. Many of them, however, will lead discussion sections and instruct survey classes that require them to draft their own syllabus. This project both prepared them for this inevitability, and taught them about Weimar Germany’s rich history, as well.

THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT:

35% *Annotated Syllabus Project* (Due: 20 December 2019)

Students will submit an annotated syllabus for an upper-level undergraduate course on a topic of their choosing, related to the Weimar era (1919-1933). This is a major assignment that will require students to consider the entire scope of Weimar's history. I **urge** everyone to take this project seriously. Even the most senior faculty member requires time, research, and peer-review in order to construct a rich and thoughtful course syllabus.

This assignment is similar to both a historiographical essay and research article. You will need to examine numerous articles, books, films, and other sources to craft the chronological/thematic intent of their course, and then simultaneously posit it to their hypothetical student body in a manner that inspires curiosity and interest.

Some general (not all) questions for consideration:

What kind of course will I teach (thematic/content/etc)? What is my rationale for taking this approach?

Will my course have a clear chronological/thematic arch? Or will it follow a "chaotic" structure that seeks other kinds of outcomes for students?

What will I use for readings? Will I rely on a main text, or several? Or will I discard readings altogether and include different mediums to advance course content?

Do I intend for my course to be research oriented or reading intensive? Either choice is fine, but remember to have realistic expectations for your students.

What kinds of assignments will you offer your students? Will they write several analytical essays over the semester, take essay exams, or something else entirely? Make sure to provide examples of prompts/writing assignments/etc with your syllabus.

Are you teaching this course at a small liberal arts college, or a public research university? Does it even matter?

There is no fixed page number for this assignment. You should focus your attention on creating a comprehensive class that fulfills the requirements of an upper-division undergraduate course. Each week in the syllabus **must** include a thorough annotation that justifies the chosen readings, content,

assignment, and how it ties together with the course's larger goals. Finally, you can incorporate **no more than three books / two articles** from this syllabus.

While this is a rigorous assignment, it also should (hopefully) provide each of you with a rewarding experience. Remember that this is your course! Teach something that interests you and that you believe needs further attention at your institution. Have fun! That is the surest way to have a successful class—not just for you, but also (and most importantly) your students.

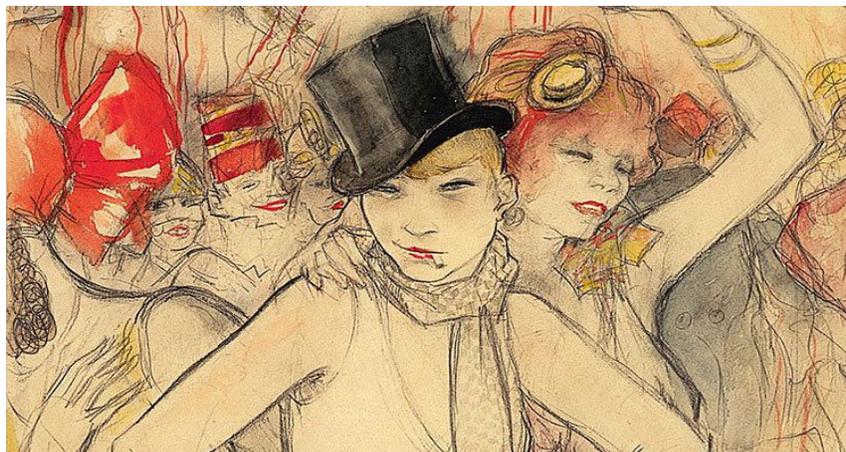
SOURCES AND RESOURCES:

[I am including my course introduction, required reading list, and Week One as an example that most students followed for their own syllabi]

HIST 5400-01: Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy

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(Source: Jeanne Mammen, *Sie repräsentiert*, ca. 1928)

Course Introduction:

Peter Gay writes in the opening chapter of his *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* that the “Weimar Republic was an idea seeking to become reality.” After four years of war, economic ruin, and social strife, Weimar symbolized “a prediction, or at least a hope, for a new start.”

Women attained the right to vote a full year before the United States ratified the 19th Amendment. Religious minorities practiced their faiths without fear of state interference. Gay men and lesbian women found new freedom in Berlin, which was unofficially known as the “gay capital” of the world. Magnus Hirschfeld revolutionized sex education in his Institute for Sexology. Federal programs guaranteed financial, health, and unemployment benefits to urban and industrial workers,

while artists, writers, architects, and musicians created stirring masterpieces that continue to inspire onlookers today. The prewar “outsiders became insiders,” a historic change that shifted the scope of German society in a more open direction.

Nevertheless, the dangerous potentials of the postwar period also galvanized right-wing and *völkisch* movements that sought the revocation of the so-called “*Diktat of Versailles*,” a return of all forfeited territories in Europe and overseas, the right of national self-determination, and, for some, the expulsion of all internal “foreign elements” beyond Germany’s borders. The eventual rise of the Nazis to power emerged from this hyper-nationalist milieu, a disastrous representation of Weimar’s incredible potential and tragic outcome. This course will engage with Weimar Germany’s triumphs and achievements, as well as its limitations and calamities, both as a means to illuminate its considerable potential and to learn from its ruinous downfall.

Required Texts:

Ankum, Katharina von, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*. New York: Knopf, 2015.

Canning, Kathleen, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds. *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*. (New York: Berghahn, 2010.

Gay, Peter. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.

Hochman, Erin R. *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016.

Isherwood, Christopher. *The Berlin Stories*. New York: New Directions, 2008.

Jones, Mark. *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Lutes, Jason. *Berlin*. Berlin: Drawn & Quarterly, 2018.

Marhoefer, Laurie. *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Peukert, Detlev. *The Weimar Republic*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993.

Sneeringer, Julia. *Winning Women’s Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Course Webpage:

Along with the required texts, please find supplementary materials on the course webpage. These readings will often comprise the entire source base for the week. Also note that some of these readings are primary sources, so think about how they fit into the themes of the course. Students must complete all readings before the start of each class.

Week One: Democratic Potentials and “Pre-revolutionary Traditions”

05 September 2019

Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987).

Erin R. Hochman, *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 21-130.

Kathleen Canning, “Introduction: Weimar Subjects/Weimar Publics: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s,” in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds. (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 1-30.

Manuela Achilles, “With a Passion for Reason: Celebrating the Constitution in Weimar Germany,” *Central European History* 43 (2010): 666-689.