By Way of Introduction

In 1945, the year of Nazi Germany’s catastrophic collapse, the British historian A.P.J. Taylor wrote: “The history of the Germans is a history of extremes. It contains everything except moderation, and in the course of a thousand years the Germans have experienced everything except normality. ... Geographically the people of the center, the Germans have never found a middle way of life, either in their thought or least of all in their politics.” In this course, we will probe the accuracy of Taylor’s statement by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and studying images, music, and film clips alongside assigned readings. At the end of the quarter, you will be able to decide for yourself whether early modern German history was indeed a history marked by abnormality and recurrent catastrophe.

Required Texts

Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*


Tryntje Helfferich, ed., *The Thirty-Years War: A Documentary History*

Deborah Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans*

Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*

Wu Ming, ed., *Thomas Müntzer: Sermon to the Princes*

Steven Ozment, *The Serpent and the Lamb*

Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze*

Books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore and have been placed on reserve in the library.
Course Requirements

Midterm: 30 %

Document Analysis / Comparison: 15 %

Image Analysis / Comparison: 15 %

Final: 40 %

Regular attendance is essential to your success in this class. I expect you to be there, to pay attention, and to contribute to the best of your ability. Genuine learning does not happen in isolation or while surfing the net! So please do not bring a laptop to class, and turn off your cell phone. I have created a class website on TED where I will post instructions for the two short papers and study guides before exams. If you run into problems at any time, talk to me, and I will be glad to help you out. Feel free to contact me if you have any suggestions for additional topics or improvements.

“Learning in Reverse Order”

In this class you have the opportunity to be a student-teacher. In lieu of one of the papers, you may volunteer to lead a class discussion or present some of the course materials after consultation with me. You are also encouraged to propose suitable materials such as poems, film clips, art work, etc. for discussion. I am looking forward to working with some of you on this.

Plagiarism

It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. If you have trouble determining if something is a breach of academic integrity, talk to me. Suspected plagiarism will be reported to the academic integrity office.

A final word of advice: don’t do it. It’s bad karma, and you will almost certainly be found out.
Class Schedule

Week 0

27 Sept.    The Course of German History: Problems of Interpretation

Assigned Readings: begin Ozment

Film Clip: Faust

Week 1

2 Oct       The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation on the Eve of Reformation

4 Oct.      Martin Luther: Revolutionary or Reactionary?

Assigned Readings: Engels (chapters I and III / continue Ozment

Week 2

9 Oct.      The Protestant Family and Cranach’s Nudes

11 Oct.     The German Peasant Wars: Germany’s Failed Revolution

Assigned Readings: finish Ozment / Engels (II, IV-VI)

Film Clip: Luther

Week 3

16 Oct.     Discussion: Müntzer and Engels

Assigned Readings: Müntzer (chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)

18 Oct.     Justice in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Michael Kohlhaas

Assigned Readings: Kleist (entire) / Roper (Parts I to III and Epilogue)
Week 4

23 Oct.  Image Analysis due / Discussion: Witchcraft

25 Oct.  The Thirty-Years War I

Assigned Readings: finish Roper (assigned parts) / Helfferich (docs. 1, 3-9, 12-17, 20-22)

Film Clip: The Last Valley

Week 5

30 Oct.  Document Analysis due / The Thirty-Years War II

1 Nov.  Jews in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Glückel von Hameln

Required Readings: Helfferich (docs. 26-29, 33, 35-38)

Glückel (entire) / Hertz (chapter 2)

Week 6

6 Nov.  Midterm – please bring a blue book!

8 Nov.  The Rise of Prussian Absolutism

Music: Johann Sebastian Bach

Week 7

13 Nov.  Frederick the Great and Enlightened Despotism

15 Nov.  The “German Genius” in Philosophy, Literature, and Music

Required Readings: Hertz (chapter 3)

Film Clip: Amadeus

Music: Franz Joseph Haydn / Beethoven
Week 8

20 Nov. The Birth of the German Nation

22 Nov. Thanksgiving Holiday – no class!

*Required Readings: Hertz (chapter 4)*

Week 9

27 Nov. The German Confederation: Time of the *Biedermeier*

29 Nov. *Vormärz* and Revolution

*Required Readings: Hertz (chapters 5 and 6 and epilogue) / Engels (preface and chapter VII)*

*Film Clip: Lola Montes*

Week 10

4 Dec. Blood and Iron: How Bismarck Founded the Second Reich

6 Dec. Bismarck’s Legacy in World History

13 Dec. Final Exam: 3 – 6 pm