Germany from 1871 to the Present

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(Fill this section out if/when your proposal is accepted)
Session:
Dates:
Time:
Location:

Schedule of topics:

Week 1

Germany and the Germans (pre-1871)

The beginnings

Mediaeval Germany

Absolutism

Industrialization

When does the history of “Germany” proper begin?

Historians are flexible about origins of “Germany” proper. It was not until the eleventh century that the term “regnum Teutonicum” was used. Mediaeval Germany was characterized by the feudal organization of society and politics and the development of what was to become the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.” The 1648 Peace of Westphalia settled two conflicts: between Protestants and Catholics; and between the Emperor and the princes. The nineteenth century brought fundamental changes, Germany was transformed into a booming center of industrial capitalism.

Week 2

Imperial Germany (1871-1918)

Unification

Wilhelminian Germany

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Foreign Policy

World War I

The unification of a “small” Germany, under Prussian domination, in 1871, shattered the European balance of power. Germany was the last of the European Great Powers to achieve national unification. The long era of Bismarck’s domination of German affairs came to an end in 1890. Wilhelminian Germany was undergoing very rapid economic and technological development. By the outbreak of World War I in 1914 Germany had achieved its “place in the sun” demanded by the emperor William II. The war ended the old order and the country lost its status as a great power.

Week 3

Democracy and Dictatorship (1918-1938)

The Treaty of Versailles
The Weimar Republic
The collapse of the economy

Gleichschaltung

In November 1918, a parliamentary republic was proclaimed in Germany. The Weimar Republic, associated with a progressive political system, was hampered by a harsh peace settlement, and an unstable economy. Little over fourteen years after its inception, the Weimar Republic was ended when Adolf Hitler, as a constitutionally appointed chancellor, inaugurated the new Germany of the Thousand-Year Reich. Hitler wanted to make Germany into a “pure” racial community; and he wanted to expand German “living-space.”

Week 4

Conquest and Defeat (1938-1945)

Foreign Policy
War
Holocaust
Defeat
In 1938-1945, the Third Reich reached its pinnacles of power and territorial expansion, but the Germans also experienced unprecedented depths of defeat and despair. Hitler and the Nazis left Germany a heavy and wholly negative legacy. Millions had died, the country was in shambles, its cities were smoking ruins. The Holocaust attached a permanent weight of moral guilt to the German name. Hitler had undone Bismarck’s national unity. The “Germanies” were quite literally once again a geographic expression rather than a nation.

Week 5

The two Germanies (1945-1990)

“Zero Hour”
The Cold War
FRG and GDR
1989

In 1945 Germany looked like “the face of the moon.” It soon became apparent, that the Big Four had quite different ideas about their role as occupying powers in Germany. The United States assigned a low priority to the goals of maintaining a united Germany and good relations with the Soviet Union. Two German states emerged in 1949, whereas the East German Democratic Republic (GDR) would eventually collapse, the West German Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) would be recognized as the most successful society in modern German history. In October 1990, the five Länder in the GDR became federal states of the FRG.

Week 6

Germany since reunification (1990-2016)

Euphoria
Disillusionment
Foreign Policy
Prospects

At one minute after midnight on 2 October 1990, Germany once again became a united country. Unity, not separation, had the logic of history on its side. Reunification was the result of joint efforts by East and West Germans, aided and encouraged by the four Allies. The differences between Ossis and Wessis are fading, and the real problems are those facing Germany as whole. The Third Republic, with a
population of 80 million, is the largest country in the EU. The reunited Germany remains a stable democracy and a much bigger player on the international scene.

**Recommended readings for continued learning:**


Other interesting resources:
http://www.dw.com home site of a German government-funded information network (*Deutsche Welle*) with news content in various languages, including German.

https://www.goethe.de/ins/ca/en/sta/ott.html home site of the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Goethe Institut* in Ottawa) promoting the German language, culture and educational programs.


http://www.spiegel.de/international/ English site of *Der Spiegel*, the popular German-language weekly published in Germany.

http://www.dpa-international.com/ English website of the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA), the largest news agency in Germany.

https://www.bundesregierung.de/ home site of the German Federal government, with links to the office of the Federal Chancellor, ministries and state agencies in various languages, including English.

https://www.bundesregierung.de/en English version of the *Deutschland.de* website, about German life, politics, education, business, culture and language in various languages, including English.