

<b>Course title:</b>	<b>Seduction and Terror: Hitler's Germany</b>
<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Robert G. Waite
<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:bwaite9@hotmail.com">bwaite9@hotmail.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:waite@gdw-berlin.de">waite@gdw-berlin.de</a>
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>Contact hours:</b>	48 (6 per day)
<b>ECTS credits:</b>	6
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

---

### **Course description**

The 'Thousand Year Reich' promised by Hitler when he became Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, lasted but 12 years. During this time, Hitler and his Nazi Party came to dominate the nation and the continent. His regime terrorized vast numbers of Germans and Europeans, launched a devastating war, controlled and laid waste to much of Europe. It also orchestrated the murder of more than five million Jews. Despite the repression, terror and vast destruction, Hitler and the Nazi Party gained and retained the active support and involvement of most Germans. How was this possible? How was the domination sustained? What roles did seduction and terror, consent and coercion, play?

This class addresses these questions and focuses on Hitler's Germany, its origins, its structure, and the aftermath of its 12 years of rule. We begin with the 19<sup>th</sup> century background. Central to this session are the broad political currents, the special interest groups that gained support and influence, the agitators and petty demagogues who fueled dissatisfaction and who spread it widely. We will also examine the popular literature that Hitler and many of his supporters read and absorbed.

Crucial to understanding the lure of Hitler and the Nazi Party is Germany's experience in the Great War, 1914-1918, a conflict that decimated a generation and destroyed Europe as it was known. In its wake it left a shattered, humiliated, and deeply torn Germany. In this climate of uncertainty and despair, Hitler and the Nazi Party grew from a small group on the fringe of radical politics in Munich into a national force. This development is of central importance to this session. Those traits of Hitler crucial to his success, particularly his charisma, will be defined and analyzed within the broader context of the political and cultural life of the Weimar Republic.

On January 30, 1933, Hitler gained his long desired but elusive goal: he became chancellor of Germany, the leader of a coalition government. The political intrigues leading to his appointment will be discussed. Much attention will be paid in this session to how Hitler, his cabinet, and supporters were able to consolidate control over the state and society within a matter of months, how they were able to carry out what they termed "a national revolution." This

came at the cost of political liberties, through the growing use of terror, oppression, and intimidation. Yet, Hitler gained supporters as he seemingly offered economic stability and a new unity to the German people. How did the regime solidify its control over society and over political life? Was it seduction or terror, consent or coercion?

A key element of Hitler's rule was the concentration camp system, what came to be a vast network of prisons, centers of ruthless exploitation, oppression, and death. How this developed from the hundreds of small concentration camps set up in Berlin and across Germany shortly after Hitler's takeover of power in 1933 to the well-organized and highly centralized system by 1939 will be the focus of this session. During the war, the concentration camp system spread across Germany and occupied Europe and was central to the Nazi war effort.

Hitler's ambitions, the conquest of 'living space' in Eastern Europe, the ruthless exploitation of these territories and the annihilation of the Jews, motivated his foreign ambitions and led directly to World War II, the most destructive conflict in human history. Along with these issues we will discuss in this session the measures taken against POWs, the handicapped, homosexuals, Sinti and Roma within Germany and in the occupied territories. The Holocaust, the all-out effort to murder the Jews of Europe, will be examined in depth.

In Germany and in occupied Europe opposition and resistance emerged and challenged Nazi rule. Opponents were motivated by a variety of factors, some personal, some political. These too will be discussed as well as the regime's ruthless efforts to eradicate all opposition, all dissent, real or imagined.

Lastly, the class will examine the end of the war, the so-called 'zero hour', the destruction and collapse of Nazi Germany. Shortly thereafter, the reckoning with the Nazi past through investigations and criminal prosecutions and the widespread non-reckoning among the German public, began. Only since the late 1960s, however, has Germany looked openly and critically at its Nazi past. Only then came the establishment of a series of memorials and monuments, a number of which we will be visiting.

To augment the in-class sessions, we will be touring local museums, historical sites, and locations that reveal and characterize the operations of Nazi rule and how post-war Germany has dealt with that experience. These visits to sites in and near Berlin are a key element of the class and central to the experience of studying here. Please note that field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers; also on field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.

### **Student Profile**

No prior knowledge necessary. We welcome students from all disciplines who are interested in gaining an insight into the operations and dynamics of Nazi rule in Germany, its attempt to annihilate the Jews and to dominate the continent.

### **Course requirements**

Attendance in class, the careful reading of the assigned course materials, participation in the field trips, the discussion of the material in class, the completion of one short research paper (3-5 pages), and the final examination. Guidelines for the papers as well as suggested topics will be provided during the first session.

### Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced Intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>).

### Grading

Class participation	30%
One-short paper	30%
Final exam	40%

### Readings

A digital course reader will be provided. This includes sections from recent monographs on Nazi Germany, a selection of articles offering the newest research and insights, excerpts from original documents (in translation), and a weekly schedule of the readings. At the orientation a guide to the readings, a series of questions to guide through each of the texts, will be provided. The first quarter of each session will be devoted to the discussion of the assigned reading for that date.

### Course schedule

Date	Program*
Wednesday, January 7, 2026	<b>Session 1</b> Introduction. Imperial Germany – the 19 <sup>th</sup> century background. Politics, society, and economic growth. Germany as a world power <b>Session 2</b> The Great War and its aftermath. Political chaos and revolution: the early years of the Weimar Republic. Hitler and the beginnings of the NSDAP, 1919-1924 <b>Session 3</b> Field trip: Topography of Terror
Thursday, January 8, 2026	<b>Session 1</b> The Weimar Republic, 1925-1933. Hitler and the rise of the NSDAP, 1924-1933 <b>Session 2</b> The Nazi seizure of power: Hitler as Chancellor, 1933-1935; seduction and terror as instruments of rule <b>Session 3</b> Field trip: Pape Street Memorial Site – early SA concentration camp
Monday, January 12, 2026	<b>Session 1</b> Hitler and the Nazi Party in power: remaking society and political life. Anti-Semitism as state policy, 1933-1939

	<p><b>Session 2</b> Hitler's 'national community'. State and society: women and youth. Insiders and outsiders – 'national comrades' and 'community aliens'</p> <p><b>Session 3</b> Field trip: House of the Wannsee Conference</p>
Wednesday, January 14, 2026	<p><b>Session 1 to Session 3</b> The concentration camp system: its evolution and development from 1933 to 1945. Field trip - Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Center</p>
Thursday, January 15, 2026	<p><b>Session 1</b> Hitler's ambitions abroad: Nazi foreign policy, Europe, and the outbreak of war in 1939</p> <p><b>Session 2</b> War and German society: solidarity and defiance, euphoria and despair</p> <p><b>Session 3</b> Field trip: German Resistance Memorial Center</p> <p><b>Paper due – 3-5 pages</b></p>
Monday, January 19, 2026	<p><b>Session 1</b> The Nazi regime and total war: Barbarossa, the eastern front and the battling the world</p> <p><b>Session 2</b> Nazi occupation policies in western and eastern Europe</p> <p><b>Session 3</b> Field trip: Museum Berlin-Karlshorst (formerly, German-Russian Museum Karlshorst)</p>
Wednesday, January 21, 2026	<p><b>Session 1</b> Holocaust: the annihilation of the Jews of Europe</p> <p><b>Session 2</b> Opposition and resistance to the Nazi regime. The war in Europe ends. Zero Hour</p> <p><b>Session 3</b> Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, Memorial for the Persecuted Homosexuals, and Memorial for the Murdered Sinti-and Roma</p>
Thursday, January 22, 2026	<p><b>Sessions 1 and 2</b> Final Exam</p> <p>FUBiS Farewell Ceremony</p>

\*Field trips may be subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, adaptation of class times is possible.