

An Iron Kingdom? - History and Legacy of the Prussian Expansion

14 June – 9 July 2021

CATEGORY History and Culture

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course offers 45 contact hours, the equivalent to an on-site course. The study time is comprised of:

- virtual classroom lessons with the lecturer and the fellow students (50%)
- group exercises (25%)
- assignments and self-study (25%)

TRACK C – WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF VIRTUAL CLASSROOM LESSONS

- Course days: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
- Time: 4.15 pm – 6.30 pm (Berlin time, UTC+2)
10.15 pm – 0.30 am (Beijing time, UTC+8)
0.15 am – 2.30 am (Sydney time, UTC+10)
9.15 am – 11.30 am (Chicago time, UTC-5)

COURSE LANGUAGE

This course is taught in English, including the readings. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class, language-level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.

TARGET GROUP

International undergraduate students of all relevant subjects with a strong interest in the course topic.

CREDITS = 5 ECTS

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

- Recommended hardware: external headset for better sound quality

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Learning extends beyond your virtual course! As a participant in HUWISU, you are invited to join cultural, social, and academic programs. Cultural activities are designed to help students meet fellow international students, learn more about Berlin, and practice German language abilities. Apply what you learn in class, share your extracurricular interests, and expand your social network beyond your course through these programs!

VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES

With the support of the online format, HUWISU introduces new cultural and social activities. The cultural activities will be both synchronous and asynchronous.

Our scheduled live meetings might include games, cooking/baking together, or a trivia night. You still have the unique opportunity to build community across time zones and meet your fellow international students through synchronous programming. More information about the specifics is TBA.

Learn and read about Berlin history or German culture in between classes! No matter your field of study or interests, Berlin has artistic, political, and cultural significance. Take a look at the eBook "Perspectives on Berlin". It will include an extensive collection of digital resources about Berlin. Although you may be oceans away from Germany, connecting ourselves to Humboldt-Universität's culturally and historically rich location is still incredibly valuable.



EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions in the virtual classroom: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment in online-class: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

Attendance policy: No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prussia still casts a long shadow over Berlin. The historical reasons are obvious, but Prussia now again plays a prominent role in the public imaginary, through a more recent resurgence of Prussian memory in the city center, as manifested in the reconstructed Prussian City Palace, opposite Museum Island and the Berlin Protestant cathedral, two other important Prussian artefacts.

This online course will try to explain this comeback by giving an overview of the history, the legacy, and the memory of the "Iron Kingdom". It will embed Prussia into the history of both Germany and Europe more broadly – explaining the continuous rise of this entity by looking at its geopolitics, as well as its geography, economy, military, religion, science, and culture.

We will follow the development of Prussia from a small duchy beyond the Eastern periphery of the Holy Roman Empire to one of the most powerful kingdoms at the center of Europe. Much of European history since the Thirty Years' War can indeed be understood as a function of this "Prussian Expansion", a fateful development that upended the traditional balance of power and ultimately led to the creation of a monster at the heart of Europe: Imperial Germany, hell-bent on acquiring the great power status it so desperately thought it deserved.

But there is another, less tragic story that can also be told about Prussia: One of enlightened culture, of world-renowned education and universities, of state modernization and democratic rights that resonates until today. Between Königsberg, Potsdam and Berlin a particular worldview took shape that was both distinctly Prussian, German, and cosmopolitan.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- describe Prussian political and social history since the 17th century;
- understand the history of Europe as a function of that expansion;
- embed Prussian history into German history more broadly;
- contextualize remnants from the Prussian history of ideas present in Germany today;
- analyze modern narratives and collective memory in Berlin regarding Prussia.

READINGS

Required:

Reading materials will be provided online at the beginning of the course.

Suggested:

Christopher Clark: *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia*, Penguin 2007.

Brendan Simms: *Europe. The Struggle for Supremacy*, Penguin 2014.

Peter Wilson: *The Holy Roman Empire*, Penguin 2017.

Heinrich August Winkler: *Germany. The Long Road West*, Oxford 2006.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

In order to gain 5 ECTS, you are required to attend class regularly, read all assigned texts, hold a brief presentation (20 min) and most importantly: to participate actively in our discussions. The topic of your presentation will be decided during our first class meeting.

In addition, you ought to hand in an essay of at least 2,000 words as follow-up work of the course. Criteria for the grading of the essay will be: coherence of argument; interaction with literature presented in the course; depth of understanding of concepts presented in class; empirical understanding of the relationship between Prussia and modern-day Germany; quality of recommendations.

The final grade will be composed by evaluating the in-class presentation (30%) and the essay (40%). Active participation during class discussions will be taken into account as well (30%).

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Mr. Christian E. Rieck is Assistant Professor in Contemporary History and International Relations at the University of Potsdam and Senior Analyst for Regional Powers and Regional Integration at the Global Governance Institute in Brussels. He also teaches regularly at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid.

Previous posts in applied research include the foreign policy think tank at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the European Foresight Program at the technology think tank Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, the Latin American Institute of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies GIGA, as well as a Carlo Schmid Fellowship in the area of competition policy at the United Nations in Mexico City.

Christian has also taught international relations, global governance and foreign and development policy at renowned universities throughout Latin America as well as in Canada, France, Greece, Ireland and Singapore – and continues to be a country tutor at the Academy for International Cooperation at GIZ in Bonn. He was a member of the Think Tank 20 process of the G20.

The area studies specialist holds a postgraduate degree in Latin American Studies by the University of Oxford. Before that he studied law and economics in Bayreuth and Seville, then European and international public law at HU Berlin as well as at the European University Institute in Florence. His prize-winning work on European integration was awarded, among others, the Prize on the Future of Europe from the German Council on Foreign Relations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

A detailed syllabus containing the concrete topics, research questions, readings and assignments for every class will be made available online before the start of the course.

The course will include online field trips to Prussian historical sites in Potsdam and Berlin, as well as talks by guest speakers from relevant museums and research institutes.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 21 April 2021