Introduction to Modern German History

1. What’s German about German History?

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Guido Thiemeyer
Tobias Winnerling
Organizational Matters

Slides for download:

- [http://www.geschichte.hhu.de/lehre/introductory-lecture-modern-german-history.html](http://www.geschichte.hhu.de/lehre/introductory-lecture-modern-german-history.html)

- Basic literature:

  Neil MacGregor: Germany. Memories of a Nation, London 2014

  [ULB: 02 his n 041.m147](mailto:ULB:02 his n 041.m147)
Introduction to Modern German History: 1. What’s German about German History?

Lecture Plan I

- What’s German about German History?
- Emperor, Empire, Reform, and Reformation: 1486–1555
- Confession, Faith, and Princely Power: 1555–1618
- War and Statebuilding: 1618–1688
- Between Baroque, Cameralism, and Enlightenment: 1688–1740
- Refashioning Old Orders: 1740–1815
Lecture Plan II

- Founding a Nation State: 1815–1880
- The Birth of Modern Germany: 1880–1918
- Experiment in Democracy: 1918–1933
- National Socialist Germany: 1933–1945
- The Division of Germany: 1945–1990
- German Reunification
- A European Nation State? 1990–2018...
1.0 Organizational Matters

1.1 The German People

1.2 The Holy Roman Empire

1.3 The German Language

1.4 German Nation(s)

1.5 Someone/-thing German Still Outside Our Borders?

1.6 Someone Else Inside Our Borders?

The German People
1.0 Organizational Matters

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Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493
("Schedelsche Weltchronik")
Title Page
Late 15th century German intellectuals had no clear definition of “German People” or “German Nation”. Both were used to describe:

- People descended from ancient Germans
- People inhabiting specific German regions
- People speaking German
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Nuremberg Chronicle, Ancient German Lands
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Nuremberg Chronicle, Larger German Lands
The Holy Roman Empire
Holy Roman Empire

- Far larger than modern Germany
- Incorporating many non-German regions

Holy Roman Empire, c. 1500, superimposed on modern borders
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“German Emperorship”
“teutsches kayserthumb”

Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation
Heiliges Römisches Reich deutscher Nation

Holy Roman Emperor seen as successor of the Ancient Roman Emperors and heir of Charlemagne

Right to elect the Emperor seen as God’s gift to the Germans
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Imperial Election of 1519

Francis I, King of France

Carlos I, King of Spain; Elected King of the Romans Charles V (Karl V.)

Henry VIII, King of England
Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (until 1806)

- No nation-state
- No unified state
- But: More than just a loose federation of principalities
- Seen by many of its inhabitants as a mixed political order combining the best of monarchy, aristocracy, and republicanism
- Imperial Patriotism ("Reichspatriotismus")
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The German Language
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German-speaking area around the year 962
(Red: borders of the Holy Roman Empire)
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Language or Dialect?
1. Organizational Matters

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- Main division between Low German ("Niederdeutsch") and Upper German ("Oberdeutsch")

- Language status is a political matter: In the 16th century Dutch is still counted as a German dialect ("Duytsch")

- German as a language is considered of low value even by German native speakers during early modernity

- Latin is the language of learning, German the language of the law; the imperial institutions record their proceedings in German
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„Germany? But where is it? I cannot find the land, where the learned begins, the political ends.“

Friedrich Schiller

„Deutschland? Aber wo liegt es? Ich weiß das Land nicht zu finden, wo das gelehrt beginnt, hört das politische auf.“
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- Intellectual Utopia: A German National State
- Political Reality: A Collection of Territories
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➢ Question of Borders
➢ Question of Constitution
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German Confederation
*(Deutscher Bund)*
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North German Confederation

1867-1871
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**German Empire (NS Germany)**

*Summer 1938*
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German Empire (NS Germany)

September 1939
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**Occupied Germany**

[Map of Occupied Germany showing different zones with flags of US, UK, France, and Soviet Union, with a date 1945 highlighted.]
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Divided Germany

Federal Republic of Germany

German Democratic Republic

West Berlin

Saar

1949-1957
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Divided Germany

1957-1989
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Reunified Germany

Since 1990

Federal Republic of Germany
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- Question of Constitution
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Someone/-thing German Still Outside Our Borders?

➤ The “Austrian Question”
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➤ Overseas: German Migration Abroad

- Canada > 90%
- USA ca. 5.4 million
- Brazil
- Argentina
- Australia
- Southeastern Europe
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> **Overseas: German Colonies**
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- Eastern Europe
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- Eastern Europe
- “Mitteleuropa” / “Central Europe”
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➤ Eastern Europe: “Deutscher Kulturboden” / German “Cultural Ground”
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- Eastern Europe: “Verlorene Ostgebiete”
  “Lost Eastern Territories”

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➢ Catholics
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- Poles, Danes, Alsatians
- Catholics
- Jews
- Muslims
- Migrants
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Italian construction workers in Germany (ca. 1900)
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Forced labour during World War II
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- Poles, Danes, Alsatians
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German refugees from the east after 1945

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Turkish and other “guest workers” (since 1960s)
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- Migrants

Asylum seekers (since 1970s)
A Country of Immigrants?

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