

Kaiserreich to Versailles

Ecstasy of Unification (1871) to the Agony of Defeat (1919)



Starts 27 September 2018

Thursdays, 7 to 9 pm

DANK Haus, 4740 N. Western Ave.

(Free parking at MB Bank)

Moderator Mike Haas

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(M.A. History, DePaul University Chicago)

An insightful, fact/fun filled evening

Come & learn/come & share

Power point/visual/video presentation

Fee: \$220 for 16 weeks

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Kaiserreich to Versailles Syllabus

Join us as we explore the lives and times of the *Kaiserreich* (German Empire or 2nd Reich) of Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm I & II from the ecstasy of unification (1871) to the agony of defeat at Versailles (1919).

- We'll look at the *Kaiserreich* as *Kulturnation*. Delve into the science, philosophy, music and literature that made this epoch in German history so remarkable: Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Robert Koch, Max Weber, Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Richard Strauss, Thomas Mann, Theodor Fontane.
- Why Bismarck expelled and imprisoned German Socialists and banned trade unions yet introduced social legislation of his own which provided compulsory healthcare, insurance and state pensions—what critics derided as *State Socialism*.
- Discuss the *Kulturkampf* Bismarck directed against Prussian/German Catholics in the years immediately following German unification and the founding of the *Kaiserreich*. How and why Bismarck attempted to break Rome's hold on Catholics and coerce them into submission to the Prussian state.
- Why so many Germans left the *Kaiserreich* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—destination USA—in search of cheap land and a better life. How some religious orders and radical socialists ended up in the US after fleeing Bismarck's wrath. What role the expelled Catholic *Redemptorist Order* played in building and ministering to German Chicago's two flagship parishes on the *Nord Seit*, St. Michaels in Old Town and St. Alphonsus in Lakeview. How German Socialists factored in Chicago's infamous labor riot in Haymarket Square on Chicago's near West side in 1886.
- What events in the fledgling *Kaiserreich* led to *The Jewish Question* during the 1870s and '80s, when the term *Anti-Semitism* was first coined. Why renowned German professor Heinrich von Treitschke stated, *Die Juden sind unser Unglueck/The Jews are our misfortune*. Why imperial court chaplain Adolf Stoecker practiced the politics of cultural despair against rising Jewish influence in Germany.
- How the *Scientific Racism* of the late 19th and early 20th centuries grew out of Charles Darwin's evolutionary thought. How such concepts as *Struggle for Existence* and *Survival of the Fittest* morphed into *Lebensraum* (living space), *Uebermensch* (superman) and *Herrenrasse* (master race) in the *Kaiserreich*. But also why hyper-nationalism was not just a phenomena in Germany.
- What role the *Kaiserreich* played in the *Scramble for Africa*, when land grabbing for colonies amongst other European powers in sub-Saharan Africa. Why the Kaiser thought he needed a much stronger *Kaiserliche Marine* (Imperial Navy) to rival the vaunted Royal Navy of Great Britain.
- We'll review the *Wihelmine Era* in the years leading up to the *War to End all Wars*. What Pope Benedict XV called the *Suicide of Europe*. The secret treaties and diplomatic machinations of the various European powers. How the *Unterseeboote* (submarines) of the *Kaiserliche Marine* attempted to prevent the Royal Navy's blockade of a starving Germany. The impact of unrestricted submarine warfare on US entry into the war. How and why the *Kaiserreich* lost the war despite defeating Russia in 1917 and the *Deutsches Heer* (German Army) lying only 60 miles outside of Paris when the Armistice was signed on 11/11/1918.
- Concluding with the debacle of the Treaty of Versailles which ignominiously buries the *Kaiserreich* for eternity. What British economist John Maynard Keynes termed a *Carthaginian Peace*, forcing Germany to admit war guilt, shed 25,000 square miles of land and 7 million people and pay an exorbitant sum of 132 billion marks in financial war reparations.