

Rebels, Radicals, Revolutionaries: Resistance and Protest in Post-War Europe 1953 – 1989

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Time Slot:	Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

Course Description

In this course we examine the emergence of mainly youth-led resistance and protest movements in post-World War II Europe on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and attempt to understand their origins, their meaning and their effect on the societies in which they occurred.

American counterculture in the 1960s is often associated with rock'n'roll music, drug-taking, 'dropping out' and the Anti-Vietnam protest movement. In Europe the associations are more complex and include countercultures in places like West Germany and Italy that are remembered for planting bombs and joining underground terror cells in the name of the New Left, or more extreme iterations of the New Left. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, in places like Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, anti-government protesters faced a very different, more dangerous existential struggle against authoritarian regimes that utilised torture and detention without trial to mute or prevent social uprisings.

In this course we account for the nature and intensity of post-war European protest movements by examining the historical context of the traumatic impact of recently defeated fascism on the continent, and the division of Europe into spheres of interest reflecting the Cold War world. We examine the post-war socio-economic developments that led to the massive expansion of higher education in Western Europe, promoting a generational divide which saw a radicalized younger generation turn on their parents and other members of the older (Nazi) generation or the so-called system, sometimes in rage and violence, as in the examples of the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy. We compare this to examples in Eastern Europe, where resistance movements against Communist regimes, such as in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, were met with deadly force and violent oppression.

The course keeps as its particular focus East Germany (GDR) and West Germany (FRG), but we will also encounter the student-led uprisings against Sovietized Communism in Hungary in 1956 and during the 1968 'Prague Spring', as well as the complex and germane case of dissident movements in the USSR itself. Throughout the course, the city of Berlin will serve as a backdrop: as a place of often very radical anti-government movements in West Berlin, compared with the muted and hidden resistance to authority over the Berlin Wall in East Berlin. We will also examine how 'resistance' in Western Europe often meant solidarity with anti-colonial movements in the Middle East, Africa and South America. Last but not least, we will also discuss the gestation and rise, within these larger movements, of political parties such as the Green Party in Germany.

Some of the major questions in this course will be: how did the concept of 'resistance' and 'rebellion' differ between Western Europe and Eastern Bloc countries? How did dramatic changes after World War II in education, technology and popular culture inspire young people to question authority and choreograph that questioning into mass movements? What were the terms and concepts (the language, the writers and the thinkers) that they utilised to justify their struggle? How did these movements become violent? When were they productive and inspiring, when did they career into nihilism and destruction? What were, if any, the long-term effects on their societies and political institutions? And finally, in our current world of enormous economic inequality and environmental destruction, what can we learn from the radicals and resisters of the second half of the twentieth century in Europe, about the potential for productive protest and resistance today?

As source materials we will read historical accounts and analyses, contemporary sources such as communiques and newspaper articles, watch films, and go on outings in Berlin that will take us to the scenes of some of the most dramatic confrontations of this era. Being at Freie Universität is a good start – it was at this university that some of the most radical student activism of the 1960s occurred.

Learning Objectives

This is a history course first and foremost, and so students will be expected to grasp the facts of these extraordinary stories of idealism and violence, and to understand the historical context of Europe after World War II that generated particular sets of challenges and responses from young people in a rapidly changing world. You will gain a better understanding of the Cold War world that created the fault lines still effecting the geo-politics of our world today. You will also be able to situate the explosion of 'youth culture' embodied by hippies and rock'n'roll in a broader global context, and to identify the far-ranging effects of this social revolution beyond their enduringly influential pop cultural manifestations. In your assignments, you will be invited to utilise your own training, for example in economics or philosophy or gender studies, to analyse and assess themes in the course that you are inspired to work on, including situating/evaluating these movements in relation to major movements today, such as the Environmental Movement and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Active Participation: 150 Points

Independent Project Report: 150 Points

Midterm exam: 250 Points

Term Paper: 350 Points

Final Presentation: 100 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Term Paper is needed for a grade.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

Attendance

Attendance in class is mandatory. We also expect you to be punctual out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please report sick to the FU-BEST office (info@fubest.fu-berlin.de) and to your instructor by e-mail before class.

Absences are **excused** in case of **illness**; however, for the fifth sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative, counted not per individual course but for the program overall), you will need to turn in a doctor's notice ("Attest" in German) to the FU-BEST office in order for them to count as excused, too.

If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper deadline extension. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss more than half of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as unexcused).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in an "F" (5.0) on the transcript.

An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

Literature

Digitized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
Session 1	Topic: Post-War Western Europe and the Demographic Explosion Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric Hobsbawm, <i>Age of Extremes</i> (Abacus, 1995), pp. 288-300.
Session 2	Topic: Facing the Past in East and West Germany: coming to terms with the Holocaust and Nazism (or not), Part 1 Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herf, Jeffrey, <i>Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys</i> (Harvard University Press, 1997), selected readings.
Session 3	Topic: Facing the Past in East and West Germany: coming to terms with the Holocaust and Nazism (or not), Part 2 Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herf, Jeffrey, <i>Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys</i> (Harvard University Press, 1997), selected readings. • Adorno, Theodor, 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past' in Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed), <i>Critical Models: Intervention and Catchwords</i> (Columbia University Press, New York, 1998), pp. 89 -103.
Session 4	Topic: Student Politics and the Rise of the Extra Parliamentary Opposition (APO) in West Germany Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael A. Schmidtke, "Cultural Revolution or Cultural Shock? Student Radicalism and 1968 in Germany." <i>South Central Review</i>, vol. 16/17, 1999, pp. 77-89.

Session 5	<p>Topic: West Berlin: the Death of Benno Ohnesorg and the Days of Infamy: 1967-1969</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard L. Merritt, "The Student Protest Movement in West Berlin." Comparative Politics, vol. 1, no. 4, 1969, pp. 516-533. • Dirk Kurbjuweit, Sven Röbel, Michael Sontheimer, Peter Wensierksi, Der Spiegel Online, 20.05.2009, 'The Truth about the Gunshot that Changed Germany'.
Session 6	MIDTERM EXAM
Session 7	<p>Topic: Formation of the RAF (Baader-Meinhof Gang): Key figures and moments</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Smith and André Moncourt, The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History (Kerspledeb, 2009) pp. 2-44.
Session 8	<p>Topic: Extended Classroom: 'Baader-Meinhof Tour' of Berlin</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karrin Hanshew, "'Sympathy for the Devil?' The West German Left and the Challenge of Terrorism." Contemporary European History, vol. 21, no. 4, 2012, pp. 511-532.
Session 9	<p>Topic: Totalitarianism/Post-Totalitarianism? Understanding Eastern Europe in the context of the Soviet World</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Lovell, 'Coercion and Participation' in The Soviet Union: A Very Short Introduction (2009, Oxford University Press), pp. 37-57.
Session 10	<p>Topic: Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain: the Hungarian Uprising of 1956</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannah Arendt, Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution, The Journal of Politics, Feb., 1958, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Feb., 1958), pp. 5-43.
Session 11	<p>Topic: Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain: the Prague Spring of 1968</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milan Svec, "The Prague Spring: 20 Years Later." Foreign Affairs, vol. 66, no. 5, 1988, pp. 981-1001.
Session 12	<p>Topic: "To The Success of Our Hopeless Cause": Standing up to the Kremlin in Post-Stalinist USSR</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bergman, Jay. "Soviet Dissidents on the Russian Intelligentsia, 1956-1985: The Search for a Usable Past." The Russian Review 51, no. 1 (1992): pp. 16-35. <p>Final Presentations Slot I</p>
Session 13	<p>Topic: Dissent in East Germany: Writers/singers/activists/ prisoners of conscience</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy S. Brown, "'1968' East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History." The American Historical Review, vol. 114, no. 1, 2009, pp. 69-96.

- Celia Donert, “‘Since Makarenko the Time for Experiments Has Passed’: Peace, Gender, and Human Rights in East Berlin during the 1980s.” *Making Sense of Dictatorship: Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945*, edited by Celia Donert et al., Central European University Press, 2022, pp. 153-76.

Final Presentations Slot II