

HIST 411: Greenwich Village and Weimar Germany (Reacting to the Past)
University of Oregon – Spring 2019– CRN [36372](#)

Instructors: Profs. Ian F. McNeely (History) and Dorothee Ostmeier (German)

Meeting times: TR 2:00-3:50 in 151 MCK

Office hours: TR 1:00-2:00 in 319 MCK (McNeely) and MR 3:30-4:30 in 215 FR
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Course webpage: <https://canvas.uoregon.edu/courses/133251>

Description

This course employs an exciting approach to learning called [Reacting to the Past](#), or simply “Reacting.” Reacting courses consist of elaborate games, set in the past, in which students are assigned roles informed by historical texts. In this class, you will learn to construct arguments from these texts and then support your positions through reasoned, sometimes impassioned, writing and speeches. As you take control of an unfolding historical drama and struggle for your characters to prevail, you will become deeply engaged, both intellectually and emotionally, with the subject matter. The instructors will act as gamemasters, determining your roles, preparing you to play, grading your work, and occasionally nudging the games as they develop.

We will be playing **two** games over the ten-week term. Each in different ways sheds light on the clash of ideologies—from feminism to socialism, from communism to fascism—during the first decades of the twentieth century in the USA and in Germany.

(1) Greenwich Village 1913: Suffrage, Labor, and the New Woman takes students to the beginning of the modern era when urbanization, industrialization, and massive waves of immigration were transforming the U.S. way of life. As the game begins, suffragists are taking to the streets demanding a constitutional amendment for the vote. What, they ask, is women’s place in society? Are they to remain in the home or take an active role in the government of their communities and their nation? Labor has turned to the strike to demand living wages and better conditions; some are even proposing an industrial democracy where workers take charge of industries. Can corporate capitalism allow an economically just society or must it be overturned? African-Americans, suffering from the worst working conditions, disenfranchisement, and social segregation, debate how to support their community through education and protest, thereby challenging their continuing marginalization in both the South and the North. Members of all these groups converge in Greenwich Village to debate their views with the artists and bohemians who are in the process of remaking themselves into the new men and new women of the twentieth century. Their spirited conversations not only show a deep understanding of nineteenth-century thinkers like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Karl Marx; they are also informed by such contemporaries as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Jane Addams, W.E.B. Du Bois, Emma Goldman, John Dewey, Franz Boas, and Sigmund Freud. The game asks what social changes are most important and how one can or should realize these goals.

(2) *Democracy in Crisis: Germany 1929-1932.* At only one moment in history do all of the great ideologies of the modern West collide as roughly equal and viable contenders: Germany during the so-called Weimar Republic, 1919–1933. For over a decade since World War One, liberalism, nationalism, conservatism, social democracy, Christian democracy, communism, fascism, and every variant of these movements have contended for power in Germany. Although the constitutional framework boldly enshrines liberal democratic values, the political spectrum is so broad and fully represented that a stable parliamentary majority requires constant compromises – compromises that alienate supporters, opening the door to radical alternatives. Along with intense parliamentary wrangling, players, as delegates of the Reichstag, must contend with street fights, trade union strikes, assassinations, and even insurrections. Our game begins in late 1929, just after the US Stock Market Crash and as the German Reichstag (Parliament) deliberates on the Young Plan (a revision to the reparations payment plan of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War One). The players are mostly Reichstag delegates belonging to the various political parties. They must debate these matters and more as the combination of economic stress, political gridlock, and foreign pressure turn Germany into a volcano on the verge of eruption.

Learning objectives

1. Develop critical thinking skills by analyzing individual texts/films/art work and placing them in their larger cultural contexts.
2. Transform theoretical comprehension into creative expressions and role playing.
3. Practice well-focused, well-organized presentation of ideas in discussions and debates in small group settings.
4. Practice well-organized and creative presentation of your ideas and your agenda in writing and other creative expression (speeches, musical/theatrical performances, drawing, painting, organization of pageants or strikes, creative writing, etc.).
5. Have fun experimenting, simulating, and playing.

Workload

The readings at the beginning of each game are challenging by design, intended to familiarize you very rapidly with complex historical, political, and moral dilemmas. Don't be alarmed or discouraged; this is part of the plan. Nor should you be fooled by the dropoff in reading assignments in the weeks when the game is being played. During this time, you will be frantically caucusing with other members of your factions (both online and in person), drafting speeches and writing assignments using arguments derived from course texts, rebutting and co-opting your fellow students' own speeches and writings, and repeatedly delving back into the course material to fashion new arguments and develop an ever deeper understanding of the issues. Many students become so immersed in their roles that they devote extra time to the course over and above the formal requirements. Don't hesitate to get involved in this way—it's part of what Reacting is all about—but don't let other obligations fall by the wayside!

Grades and assignments

Greenwich Village (see p. 93 in the Game Book for more)

- 10% Brief comprehension quizzes (4/4 and 4/9)
- 10% 3-5 page position paper (4/11, 4/16, or 4/18 depending on your faction)
- 5% Contributions to *The Masses* (4/23)
- 15% Oral participation

Democracy in Crisis (see pp. 84-85 in the Game Book for more)

- 10% Brief comprehension quizzes (5/7 or 5/9 [pop quiz], and 5/14)
- 30% Three 3-page papers (5/21, 5/28, and 6/4)
- 5% Election poster (6/6)
- 15% Oral participation

There is no final exam and no assignments are due during exam week, but there is a required debriefing session/class party during our final exam time slot.

The **quizzes** test your understanding of background history and/or game dynamics and draw on assigned readings; they will be objective in format, with multiple-choice and/or short answer questions.

The **papers** you are responsible for depend on your role; more guidance will be given in class and on role sheets. You may be called upon to read yours aloud in class. While papers need not (and probably should not) be written in traditional academic style, they should still cite evidence, make logical arguments, consider the views of others, and exhibit good style and perfect grammar and spelling. General grading standards will be discussed in class.

Details on contributions to *The Masses* will be announced in class. For guidance on the **election poster**, see p. 85 in the Game Book for “Democracy in Crisis.”

The **oral participation** component of your grade is based not only on how *successfully* you play your assigned role, but also on how *faithfully* you do so. Do not be tempted into being untrue to your character purely to advance your victory objectives, or to avoid a disappointing or tragic end of the game. It will cost you if you do so.

In determining your participation grade, we’ll be paying close attention to a number of factors: the quality and quantity of your formal presentations and informal speeches and comments during open discussions and faction meetings, your ability to make alliances—and handle disagreements—with other players, and the depth of your engagement with course readings. Lastly, you may be rewarded for winning the game and achieving your victory objectives, but this is a small component of the participation grade since the game is to some extent biased toward certain outcomes.

As a practical matter, we maintain a log with a record of each student's participation. We also keep track of what students are doing outside of class in preparation for the game. Because we will be in frequent communication with game players, we have a good idea of what different individuals and different factions are doing and thinking about doing.

Class attendance is required: the games simply will not function in your absence. You will not be able to properly play your roles without attending the pre-game sessions. Missing two sessions of the games themselves without a valid excuse will result in failure for the course.

Readings and films

Two books are required for the course and will be available for purchase at the UO Duckstore.

Mary Jane **Treacy**, *Greenwich Village, 1913: Suffrage, Labor, and the New Woman* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015).

Robert **Goodrich**, *Democracy in Crisis: Germany, 1929-1932*. (draft 1.2, 2019).

NOTE: This is not at the DuckStore yet; we will let you know when it is.

In addition, the following readings will be posted on Canvas in the "Files" section:

Philipp **Blom**, *Fracture: Life and Culture in the West, 1918-1938* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 173-77, 249-66.

Anton **Kaes**, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 198-203, 230-31, 334-37, 560-62, 622-23, 676.

Of the following films, some are optional and others (with a *) are required. Guidance will be given in class on which excerpts to watch. Hyperlinks are given for those that are streamable on the web; others will be available at the Yamada Language Center (=YLC, in 175 MCK) at dates and times we will announce in class.

The Great Confusion: The 1913 Armory Show (YLC; date/time TBA)

[The Wobblies](#) (also see this episode of [The Oregon Experience](#))

[Emma Goldmann: An Exceedingly Dangerous Woman](#)

*[Fritz Lang, Metropolis \(1927\)](#) (also ordered for YLC)

*[Lewis Milestone, All Quiet on the Western Front \(1930\)](#) (also ordered for YLC)

Date	Activity	Homework (complete before class)
GAME 1: GREENWICH VILLAGE, 1913 (Ostmeier leads)		
4/2	Women's rights and suffrage	Treacy, 3-30, 101-04 <i>if you have time</i>
4/4	Labor and labor movements	Treacy, 31-50, 153-61
4/9	The spirit of the new (distribution of roles)	Treacy, 51-99, 210-15, 220-25; <i>optional:</i> watch "The Great Confusion: The 1913 Armory Show"
4/11	The suffrage cause (game begins)	Treacy, 104-17, 120-28; position paper & speeches due for suffrage faction
4/16	Labor has its day	Treacy, 168-72, 180-87; position paper & speeches due for labor faction; <i>optional:</i> watch "The Wobblies"
4/18	The feminist mass meeting	Treacy, 194-204, 216-19; position paper & speeches for villagers & friends (per role sheets)
4/23	Mabel Dodge's evening	Readings TBA (Mabel Dodge's choice); contributions due for Max Eastman's <i>The Masses</i>
4/25	Thus speak <i>The Masses</i> (vote)	Prepare (!); <i>optional:</i> watch documentaries on Emma Goldman
4/30	1917: Facing the future (debrief)	<i>The Quill</i> (1917) (handout)
GAME 2: DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS: GERMANY, 1929-1932 (McNeely leads)		
5/9	Introduction and distribution of roles	Goodrich, 3-57, 88-107
5/14	Communism and Nazism	Goodrich, 107-69, 175-76
5/16	Game mechanics; faction meetings	Goodrich, 58-87, 181-84
5/21	Reichstag session 1 (game begins)	Paper #1 due
5/23	Reichstag session 2	
5/28	Reichstag session 3	Paper #2 due
5/30	Reichstag session 4	
6/4	Reichstag session 5	Paper #3 due
6/6	Reichstag session 6 and post-mortem	Election poster due
6/10	Class party and debrief (2:45-4:45pm, in lieu of our scheduled final exam)	None!