

**German Big Business:  
Cars, Steel, Chemicals, and Criminals**  
History 423 / Spring 2017

Dr. William Glenn Gray

German companies are the envy of the world. Mercedes, BMW and Volkswagen (automobiles); Bayer and BASF (chemicals); Krupp, Thyssen, and Heckler & Koch (steel and weapons); Siemens, Braun and Miele (electronic, household, and medical devices) – these are legendary firms whose exports had global reach. However, German industry is also notorious for its collusion in military aggression during World War I and genocide during World War II. More recently, German companies have faced negative publicity for engaging in bribery and for cheating U.S. environmental standards. This course explores how entrepreneurs helped to shape Germany’s fate – for good and for ill – from the 19th to the 21st Centuries.

**Course Objectives (Learning Outcomes)**

Aside from conveying an understanding of the course material, this reading seminar is designed to improve students’ ability to communicate their ideas in a small classroom setting; enhance students’ ability to analyze historical scholarship critically; and improve students’ research skills in examining case studies in business history.

**Course requirements**

Participation (10% of course grade). This is a small-class environment, and it is essential that you join in classroom discussions. Occasional reading quizzes will also factor into your participation grade.

First paper (20% of course grade). You will write an analytical paper in response to our case study on Krupp (due Feb. 20).

Second paper (20% of course grade). Here again, we will take a case study as the basis of our essay prompts – in this case the IG Farbel cartel (due March 26).

Research paper (30% of course grade). For the final paper, you will choose a case study with one of the following emphases: (1) exploring how a company investigated and, where applicable, paid reparations for exploitative behavior during the Third Reich; (2) analyzing the post-1945 strategic decisions of a major German company using English-language media sources. The resulting paper should be 2,000 words in length, approx. eight pages (due April 30).

Final exam (20% of course grade). This will feature in-class written essays designed to synthesize key themes of the course.

**Course Policies**

Attendance is essential. You are allowed four unexcused absences; after that, each absence will be counted against your participation grade. It is not my job to “approve” absences one way or another, but if you expect to be representing the university in an official capacity (sports, band, etc.), please let me know in advance.

Common courtesy suggests that you should arrive on time. If you must leave early, please inform us ahead of time and then raise your hand at the appropriate time. A classroom discussion is not the same thing as a television viewing! Your coming and going may represent a significant distraction.

Academic integrity: The assignments in this course require you to formulate complex thoughts **in your own words**. Attempts to pass off another's words as your own – be it on an exam or in a paper – will carry harsh penalties. Plagiarized papers will earn a “zero” for the assignment and may lead to further consequences, including notification of the Dean of Students Office. The “University Regulations” handbook contains further information on academic dishonesty.

Disclaimer: In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email or phone.

### **Course Books (please purchase, except for the Harold James book)**

Audretsch, David B. and Erik E. Lehmann *The Seven Secrets of Germany: Economic Resilience in an Era of Global Turbulence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-190-25869-6. [Also available as an e-book through Purdue Libraries]

James, Harold. *Krupp: A History of the Legendary German Firm*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-691-15340-7. [Available as an e-book through Purdue Libraries; because of the book's high cost, I did not order it through the bookstores]

Jeffries, Diarmuid. *Hell's Cartel: IG Farben and the Making of Hitler's War Machine*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-805-09143-4.

Rieger, Bernhard. *The People's Car: A Global History of the Volkswagen Beetle*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0674050914.

### **Supplemental Articles (to be posted on Blackboard Learn)**

Harmut Berghoff, “Harmonicas for the World: The Creation and Marketing of a Global Product,” in Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, eds., *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (London: German Historical Institute and Oxford, 2001), 321-355

Jonathan Wiesen, “Overcoming Nazism: Big Business, Public Relations, and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1950,” *Central European History* 29, 2 (June 1996): 201-226

Werner Bührer, “German Industry and European Integration in the 1950s,” in Clemens Wurm, ed., *Western Europe and Germany: The Beginnings of European Integration, 1945-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 87-114.

Robert Mark Spaulding, “‘Reconquering Our Old Position’: West German Osthhandel Strategies of the 1950s,” in Volker Berghahn, ed., *Quest for Economic Empire: European Strategies of German Big Business in the Twentieth Century* (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1996), 123-143

Volker Berghahn, "Lowering Soviet Expectations: West German Industry and Osthandel during the Brandt Era," in Berghahn, ed., *Quest for Economic Empire*, 145-157

Lisa D. Heineman, "The Economic Miracle in the Bedroom: Big Business and Sexual Consumption in Reconstruction West Germany," *Journal of Modern History* 78, 4 (Dec. 2006), 846-877

Jonathan Zatin, "The Vehicle of Desire: The Trabant, the Wartburg, and the End of the GDR," *German History* 15, 3 (1997): 358-380

### **Contact Information**

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Office hours in University Hall 328:  
MW 1:30 - 3:00 pm (or by appointment)  
Office phone (765) 494-2772

<b>Date</b>	<b>Course topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
9 January	Intro: why business history?	
11 January	Germany's mid-sized powerhouses	Audretsch, 1-45
13 January	Education and research in Germany	Audretsch, 46-76
16 January	NO CLASS	
18 January	Mobility and infrastructure	Audretsch, 77-121
20 January	German economic policy	Audretsch, 122-171
23 January	The rise of Krupp (1)	James, 1-42
25 January	The rise of Krupp (2)	James, 42-88
27 January	Case study: Höhner harmonicas	Berghoff chapter
30 January	The hubris of Imperial Germany	James, 89-122
1 February	Krupp and the Great War	James, 123-144
3 February	Krupp in the Weimar Republic	James, 145-171
6 February	Steel in the Third Reich	James, 172-204
8 February	Krupp and the Second World War	James, 204-225
10 February	Seeking excuses for the past	Wiesen article
13 February	Returning to world markets	James, 226-255
15 February	Krupp in crisis	James, 255-296
17 February	[Work on papers]	1ST PAPER DUE, 5:00 pm
20 February	An empire built on dyes	Jeffries, 9-50
22 February	Gas for the trenches	Jeffries, 51-76
24 February	Birth of the cartel	Jeffries, 74-118
27 February	Accommodating the Third Reich	Jeffries, 119-163
1 March	Chemistry and autarky	Jeffries, 164-211
3 March	Expansion in the West	Jeffries, 212-232

6 March	Zyklon B, Buna, and the Final Solution	Jeffries, 233-284
8 March	IG Farben on trial	Jeffries, 285-342
10 March	[Work on papers]	2ND PAPER DUE, 5:00 pm
20 March	Looking West: European integration	Bührer chapter
22 March	Looking East: <i>Osthandel</i> and <i>Ostpolitik</i>	Spaulding, Berghahn chapters
24 March	Case study: mail-order sex supplies	Heineman article
27 March	The car industry in Germany	Rieger, 1-41
29 March	The birth of Volkswagen	Rieger, 42-91
31 March	Denazifying Volkswagen	Rieger, 92-122
3 April	VW and the “economic miracle”	Rieger, 123-187
5 April	Exporting the miracle	Rieger, 188-232
7 April	Cars in the other Germany	Zatlin article
10 April	A global car	Rieger, 233-291
12 April	The “new beetle”	Rieger, 292-335
14 April	The VW scandal: lying to America	
17 April	[Project work week]	
19 April		
21 April		
24 April	Project presentations I	
26 April	Project presentations II	
28 April	Project presentations III	