

# **Jewish Intellectuals in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany: A Family Case Study**

**Instructor:** Don Salisbury  
Moody Science 107  
X2480  
dsalisbury@austincollege.edu

Max Bergmann was the son of a prosperous merchant in Fürth, where at the turn of the century roughly one quarter of the population was Jewish. He was the first director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Leather Chemistry in Dresden, where he became a pioneer in the emerging science of protein chemistry. Following his dismissal when the National Socialists assumed power in 1933 he emigrated to the US where he continued his groundbreaking research. His first wife and her sister were founding members of the Montessori schooling movement in Germany. His son Peter Bergmann was forced to pursue his physics doctoral studies outside Germany. He then joined Albert Einstein in Princeton, leading the attempt in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to unify gravity and quantum mechanics. This course will examine both the roots and some of the content of the Bergmann family achievements. In particular, we will focus on the special challenges confronting Jews during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, during the short-lived Weimar Republic, and during the Nazi dictatorship from 1933 through 1945. I will draw on substantial archival material collected before and during a sabbatical appointment in 2008 at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin.

## **Course Themes**

- German Political and Social History 1871 – 1945
- Origins and manifestations of German antisemitism
- German Jewish intellectuals as creative agents, stimulators, and challengers within German intelligentsia
- Special Jewish social context of scientific discovery
- Jewish German women in medicine in the early 20th century
- German Jewish contributions to educational reform and the Montessori movement
- Max Bergmann and the beginnings of protein chemistry
- Exile of German Jewish scientists and the Holocaust

## Course Requirements

### *Required reading*

Amongst the sources from which I will draw daily assigned readings are the following

*The Pity of it All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933* by Amos Elon

*A History of Modern Germany: 1871 to Present* by Dietrich Orlow

*The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century* by Peter Watson

*Einstein's German World* by Fritz Stern

*As if it were a Part of Myself* by Carl Zuckmeyer

*Jews in Germany: From Roman Times to the Weimar Republic*, Nachum T. Gidal, Könemann

Additional readings will be made available on the Moodle class web site

### *Paper*

You are asked to research and write a paper on a topic related to the course theme. You must obtain my approval of the topic. The paper must have a length of ten to fifteen pages double-spaced, with additional pages for the title and bibliography. Sources must include at least two web sites, two journals, and two books (other than the required readings). The paper is due on the final day of class.

### *Oral report*

You are required to give a report on your research at a time to be determined at the beginning of the fourth week of class.

### *Participation*

You are asked to carefully read the assigned materials – and invited to follow up where you feel so inspired by consulting the extensive bibliography that will accompany my daily presentations. You are

required to attend all daily class meetings and to actively engage in discussion.

## Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows

Class participation	50
Paper	30
Oral Report	20

## Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Reading Assignments
Mon 1/5	Introduction and Overview	
Tue 1/6	Wilhelmine Germany – political history	Craig Chapters 1-3
Wed 1/7	Wilhelmine culture – industrialization, intellectuals, arts	Craig Chapters 4-6
Thu 1/8	Judaism – history and Jews in the empire Fürth	Gidal pp. 22-109
Fri 1/9	Wilhelmine Jewish science and medicine Emmy Bergmann Haber and Einstein	Craig Chapters 7-8
Mon 1/12	Conditions Leading to World War I	Craig Chapter 9
Tue 1/13	World War I	Craig Chapter 10
Wed 1/14	The German Revolution and the Foundation of the Weimar Republic	Craig Chapter 11-12
Thu 1/15	Weimar culture	Craig Chapter 13 Gidal pp. 112-231
Fri 1/16	Party Politics and the End of Weimar	Craig Chapters 14-15
Mon 1/19	German Montessori movement – Clara Grunwald and Emmy Bergmann	
Tue 1/20	Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes - Max Bergmann appointment and reception in Dresden	
Wed 1/21	Max Bergmann and protein chemistry	
Thu 1/22	Nazi dictatorship Peter Bergmann – general relativity	

Fri 1/23	Holocaust	
Mon 1/26	Student Reports	
Tue 1/27	Student Reports	