

HIST:4100:0002

Final Assignment Details & Timetable

The Default Assignment

Your default assignment will be an essay of about 1000 words along the lines of the well-informed opinion pieces we've read in this class. Note that in a high-quality publication, the term "opinion piece" refers to a position on a controversial topic which you back up with convincing evidence and analysis.

Your opinion piece will grapple with the presidential campaign and/or the Trump presidency in light of German history. You may argue in favor or against a particular parallel – but you may find it more fruitful to use the process of comparison to shed light on something more subtle than a "yes" or "no" on the question of parallelism. (Consider the way [Gregor](#) uses the process of comparison to think more deeply about race and xenophobia in both the historical and present-day cases.) Or you may find that the process of comparison exposes a set of questions about the present day (or, for that matter, German history) that we otherwise wouldn't think to explore.

Opinion pieces are typically built on the premise that the insights they contain matter – and thus that we should take action accordingly. Thus they often include a call for action, even if only to learn more about a certain subject, or to rest easy about something that seems to be provoking a lot of anxiety. Your piece may include a call for action, but this is not required.

Schedule

Our aim is for each of you to end up with a publishable piece. Whether you publish it is your choice – but that's the quality we're looking for. (If you are interested in seeking an outlet for publication, I will help you to think about possibilities.) That means our schedule includes time for serious research, criticism, and rewriting.

4/3 Deadline for submission of proposal for an alternative assignment. I am open to alternative formats including digital or creative products, as long as they grapple with the historical and contemporary questions in relationship to each other. Please present me with a proposal of 250 words by this date. I will grant approval, suggest revisions, or recommend sticking with the default assignment within 48 hours.

4/10 Pitch for your essay. A "pitch" is intended to interest an editor in commissioning a fully-developed essay (or book, or article) from you. It must convince the editor (me) that it will be astute, timely, and well-written. Your pitch should contain the basic gist of your essay (theme, argument, an example or two of evidence), but in ca 150-200 words, so it won't yet be fully fleshed out. It must also convince the editor that you're a good writer – so use your best formulations and edit carefully. (A real pitch for an editor would include some other information, such as your qualifications and a proposed timetable.)

4/17 Submission of your essay. Although we will critique and revise, this should be your *best work*. An editor will work with you to improve a good essay before publication, but the editor might also decide at this point to say “thanks, but no thanks” – so you need to put your best foot forward. Append a bibliography of works that shaped your essay, including (1) readings from 0001, (2) readings from 0002, and (3) news articles from the spreadsheet or supplementary news articles.

4/24 Written critique of classmates’ essays. (I’ll assign each of you a couple of essays to critique.) Imagining that the essays will be published, it’s your job to help your classmates gain accolades by presenting the sharpest possible work – which might incorporate new insights that you bring to the table after reading it. You certainly want to protect your classmates from public embarrassment by publishing something with shaky evidence (including overlooking contrary evidence), analytic flaws, or unconvincing rhetorical strategies. You should (re-) read the items in their bibliography to make sure the authors aren’t missing or misrepresenting anything, and your critiques might refer the authors to additional references (eg more recent news items if any of their evidence is out of date). Your critique should also make note of especially insightful points or good formulations, which will help the authors to know where they are most effective with the reader (that is, you). Prepare a marked-up version of the essay (noting any technical errors as well as particularly excellent formulations) as well as a written commentary of at least one page. In the publishing world, such critiques are polite in tone, but they don’t beat around the bushes when it comes to insuring that the essay be of the highest quality.

5/1 Final essay due.

Grading:

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| Spread sheet entries | 5% |
| First version | 5% |
| Peer critiques | 10% |
| Final submission | 20% |
| Total: | 40% of final grade |