This course seeks to introduce students to modern German culture through the works of emblematic figures whose ideas and art have helped shape, for good and for ill, that culture over the past century and continue to do so to varying degrees in our own day. We begin with Lessing and Kant, Enlightenment thinkers whose values in part provide the legitimacy for today’s democratic Federal Republic of Germany, then turn to Schiller and Goethe, together considered the country’s equivalent to Shakespeare. Heinrich Heine, one of the greatest poets in the German language, also defended Enlightenment ideas under the very different political conditions of the German Vormärz. Next we examine the case of Richard Wagner, perhaps the most influential artistic figure of the 19th century, who saw his own masterpieces of music drama as proof of German cultural superiority and whose theoretical writings provided the basis for the racist national socialist theory of culture. From music and philosophy, we turn to literature and sample prose works by two of Germany’s greatest novelists, Theodor Fontane and Thomas Mann. Finally, we turn to the traumas of 20th century German history as reflected in the work of an historical witness, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich.

Course requirements: Class members are expected to attend all zoom sessions live with their cameras on, to do the reading on time, and to lead class discussion on one reading (30% of grade). In addition, students will write 5 two-page response papers (double-spaced, 12 point) on the readings. Each paper should address some aspect of the session’s texts that the student finds surprising, provocative or inspiring. These papers should be submitted via Turn It In on the following days by 12 Midnight EST and no later!: May 30, June 6, June 13, June 20 and June 27 (40% of grade). Finally, a 4-5 paper on a topic suggested by the instructor is due on Thursday, July 1 by 9am EST. Topics will be distributed on Wednesday, June 30 at 9am EST and you will thus have 24 hours to complete the papers (30% of grade). All papers are to be based ONLY on the assigned readings. Any cases of plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment in question and the reporting of the incident to the appropriate dean of your college.
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

**Week 1:**  (Monday, May 24): Class Introduction/Frederick the Great and Kant

Reading:  Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” available on the web at:  

(Wednesday, May 26): Lessing and the Enlightenment


**Week 2:**  (Monday, May 31): Schiller and *Sturm und Drang*


(Wednesday, June 2): Schiller in Weimar


**Week 3:**  (Monday, June 7): Goethe in Weimar.


(Wednesday, June 9): Heinrich Heine and the German *Vormärz*

Week 4: (Monday, June 14): Richard Wagner: The Most German of Artists?

(Wednesday, June 16): Richard Wagner: The Most German of Artists?
Reading: No new reading.

Week 5: (Monday, June 21): Theodor Fontane and the German Empire
Reading: Theodor Fontane, Cécile (1887), entire. Available online through NYU Bobcat.

(Wednesday, June 23): Thomas Mann and the Weimar Republic

Week 6: (Monday, June 28): The Third Reich.

(Wednesday, June 30): No Class. Work on final paper.

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON THURSDAY, JULY 1 AT 9am EST