

# German Thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: History – Language – Technology

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The history of German philosophy and thought in the 20th century is a problematic one. Against the backdrop of Germany's political decline into atrocity and disaster, the German intellectual tradition became radically fragmented and dislodged. While German Jewish thinkers were persecuted and had to escape into exile, other philosophers remained active in Germany, some even supported the Nazi regime. In the course of the semester, we will study some of the towering proponents of German thought, including vexing figures like Martin Heidegger and tragic ones like Walter Benjamin as students become familiarized with some of their most impactful works. The course's guiding concepts—*history, language, technology*—allow us to cover a broad spectrum of questions while at the same time prompting the analysis of specific issues with precision and acuity, from the “language crisis” inherited from the 19th century through post-humanist concerns raised with regard to the so-called “Question Concerning Technology.” While the course's main goal is to convey a broad understanding of German thought and its recent history, it will also acquaint students with a variety of fields of inquiry including hermeneutics, philology, historical materialism, logical positivism, and cybernetics, as well as introduce important methods of textual analysis and close reading.

MW5, 5–6:20pm, hybrid  
M in CA A5; W on Zoom

German: 01:470:390:01

Comparative Literature: 01:195:395:01

Philosophy: 01:730:375:01

Counts toward the Holocaust Studies Minor