

# HTST 508 – Topics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century German History

## (German Nationhood and Forced Migrations in twentieth-century)

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Tuesdays from 14:00 – 16:45 in SS 623



Europe's ethnic landscape began to change dramatically after the rise of Hitler and Stalin to power. In the middle of Europe, in s.c. bloodlands (T. Snyder) the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some 14 million civilians. Over 80 million people were forced to leave their homelands. While according to the Third Reich's racist ideology, Jews, Sinti and Roma had to be exterminated and the Slavic speaking population of Europe was to be treated as a slave labor force. In their "General plan Ost," Nazi planners envisioned a new, German dominated Europe with settlements far in the east. By 1944 millions of Germans fled away and the Red Army occupied their homelands. Ethnic cleansing, started by Germany in 1933, had reached its culmination.

In this course, we will analyze the twentieth century changes in the ethnic landscape of East Central Europe. We will focus on German speaking populations, having settled vast areas in East Central Europe since the middle ages. The loss of „the German East“ resulted in a veritable mass-trauma in Germany: while ignoring their own guilt for the cruelties of the war, some Germans refused to accept the loss of their homelands. The population of expellees hindered rapprochement with Poland and Czechoslovakia well into the 1990s. But German expellees were not alone in their refusal to accept responsibility for former atrocities: the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic only officially apologized for violence against Germans in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Here we will explore the important legacy of „the German East" on both German and European cultural history, past and present.