

Seminar

University of Bremen
Spring 2026

German Capitalism (08-26-M14-4)

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Office hours by appointment via email

Meets Fridays 10:00–12:00 in UNICOM 7.4680 (SOCIUM – Mary-Somerville-Str. 3).

Course Description

The class introduces students to the literature on the interplay between institutions and the economy based on the influential model case of German capitalism. Based on exemplary historical, institutionalist, and quantitative research, the class features discussions of the origins, sources of stability, and sources of change of a distinctively German variety of capitalism. Institutional fields at the core of the seminar are the financial system, the production system, education and training, corporatism, the labor market, Federalism, and corporate governance.

Participation in the seminar

Discussion of the readings will make up the core of the seminar sessions. Students are expected to read all assigned texts and to participate regularly and actively. To get credit (6 CP), students must (1) do all assigned readings (documented through abstract-length reading reports) and (2) submit term papers (8–10 pages). For the term paper, original research on literature, data, or archival material is required. Term papers have to be written in English or German. All texts are made available on the Stud.IP website of the course.

For organizational matters please contact Timur Ergen (iawlehre@uni-bremen.de).

Readings

April 10, 2026

Introduction

April 17, 2026 – no class

April 24, 2026

German Capitalism as a research problem

Streeck, W. 1997. German capitalism: Does it exist? Can it survive? *New Political Economy*, 2 (2), 237–256.

May 01, 2026 – no class

May 8, 2026

Origins 1: Backwardness

Gerschenkron, Alexander. 1962. “Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective.” In *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*, pp. 5–30. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Plumpe, Werner. 2016. “The Economy of the Kaiserreich: Notes on the Genealogy of German Capitalism.” In *German Economic and Business History in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Werner Plumpe, pp. 167–194. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

May 15, 2026

Origins 2: Corporatism

Abelshauser, Werner. 2005. “Interest Intermediation between Societal and State Corporatism.” In *The Dynamics of German Industry: Germany's Path toward the New Economy and the American Challenge*, pp. 46–74. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Abelshauser, Werner. 1984. “The First Post-Liberal Nation: Stages in the Development of Modern Corporatism in Germany.” *European History Quarterly* 14 (3): 285–318.

May 22, 2026 – no class

May 29, 2026

Origins 3: Skill Formation

Thelen, Kathleen. 2004. "The Evolution of Skill Formation in Germany." In *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*, pp. 39–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

May 29, 2026 (virtual session – 14:00–15:30)

Origins 4: The Welfare State

Manow, Philip. 2020. "Social Insurance and the Origins of the German Political Economy." In *Social Protection, Capitalist Production: The Bismarckian Welfare State in the German Political Economy, 1880–2015*, pp. 15–35. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

June 5, 2026

Modell Deutschland 1: Diversified Quality Production

Streeck, Wolfgang. 1991. "On the Institutional Conditions of Diversified Quality Production." In *Beyond Keynesianism: The Socio-Economics of Production and Full Employment*, edited by Egon Matzner and Wolfgang Streeck, pp. 21–61. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

June 12, 2026

Modell Deutschland 2: Deutschland AG

Deeg, Richard. 1998. "What Makes German Banks Different." *Small Business Economics* 10(1): 93–101.

Vitols, Sigurt. 1998. "Are German Banks Different?" *Small Business Economics* 10(2): 79–91.

June 19, 2026

Modell Deutschland 3: Undervaluation

Höpner, Martin. 2019. "The German Undervaluation Regime under Bretton Woods: How Germany Became the Nightmare of the World Economy." MPIfG Discussion Pa-

per 19/1. Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies.

June 19, 2026 (virtual session – 14:00–15:30)

Modell Deutschland 4: The Mittelstand and regional economies

Herrigel, Gary. 1996. “Return to Regions: The Development of the Decentralized Industrial Order Since 1945” In *Industrial Constructions: The Sources of German Industrial Power*, pp. 143–204. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

June 26, 2026

Erosion 1: Industrial Relations

Hassel, Anke. 1999. “The Erosion of the German System of Industrial Relations.” *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 37(3): 483–505.

July 3, 2026 – no class

July 10, 2026

Erosion 2: Erosion *tout court*

Streeck, Wolfgang. 2009. *Re-Forming Capitalism: Institutional Change in the German Political Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Ch. 2–6]

July 10, 2026 (virtual session – 14:00–15:30)

Models of Capitalism

Crouch, Colin. 2005. “Models of Capitalism.” *New Political Economy* 10(4): 439–456.