

Online course title:	20th Century Berlin: People, Places, Words
Instructor:	Lauren Van Vuuren, Ph.D.
Email address:	vanvuurenster@gmail.com
Course days:	Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	The coursework corresponds to an on-site course amounting to 48 contact hours.
ECTS credits:	4
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2), preferably even higher. Interest in Berlin, and its extraordinary recent past.
General requirements:	Please make sure to be online approximately from 8 am CET to 12:30 pm CET on the respective course days! Therefore, please check the possible time difference between Germany and your country of residence. We also recommend that you make sure to have a quiet and appropriate working space. To ensure a comfortable learning environment for all, please adhere to general netiquette rules.
Technical requirements:	- stable internet connection - fully functional device, such as computer, laptop or tablet (use of smart phones not recommended), headset recommended - recommended operating systems: Windows 7 or higher or Mac OS X 10,13 or higher, avoid using a VPN

Course description

This course is about Berlin, and the story of its tumultuous and epoch defining twentieth century. We examine this history through various lenses: the biographies of individuals, the words of writers who bore witness to the vertiginous social, political and physical changes the city underwent, and buildings and monuments whose physical construction, destruction and reconstruction reflected the ideological turmoil and conflict of twentieth century Berlin.

Famous Berliners we will meet include the murdered Communist leader Rosa Luxemburg, the artist Käthe Kollwitz, the actress Marlene Dietrich, the Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, the adopted Berliner David Bowie and the famous East German dissident musician Wolf Biermann. The contextualized stories of these individuals will offer us unique perspectives politically, artistically and socially into the tumult and struggle that marked their times in the city. These figures occupy a range of different position(s) as Berliners, as radicals, as artists of resistance to or collaboration with Nazism, and Communism, as drifters and exiles whose stories reflect Berlin's unique position in the twentieth century as 'no man's land, frontier, a city adrift in the sands of Central Europe.'

In a similar way, we will examine the words of writers who bore witness to the extremism and societal upheaval that marked twentieth century Berlin. From the witnessing of Roth and Isherwood to life in Weimar and Nazi Berlin, to the social and political commentary by Christa Wolf on the moral struggles of life lived on different sides of the Berlin Wall, we will assess their writings in their historical contexts. We will assess their words as evocations of Berlin, but also as potential or overt acts of resistance to the extremism they lived under, that attempted to maintain a solidarity with the idea of Berlin as a place of artistic and social freedom and permissiveness.

Finally, we will discover the story of places in Berlin whose physical building, destruction and rebuilding can be situated in the wider systems of ideology, power and social relations that so cataclysmically defined the physical landscape of Berlin after 1933. In this, we will focus on the story of Potsdamer Platz, the Palace of the People and as an opposite postscript to Berlin's twentieth century, the Holocaust Memorial in Mitte.

This course does not seek to provide a 'grand narrative' of Berlin's twentieth century history. Instead, it follows a thread that weaves through the history: the thread left behind by those who bore witness to their times. By tracing the stories of contemporary witnesses, left for us in books, films and songs, and in the physical construction of the city, we open up a human dimension that enriches and challenges our understanding of Berlin's traumatic recent past. Structured largely chronologically, the course will work with films and novels whilst building on a clear historiographical base provided in class seminars. Guest speakers, class discussion, assigned reading work and individual research will form the basis for a seminar paper that students will be required to submit at the end of the course. This history course approaches the story of Berlin through the reflections and refractions of individual humans' lives who struggled upon the immense stage of a city at the very symbolic and literal heart of the catastrophes of the twentieth century.

Student profile

This course is for university level students with open minds and incurable curiosity about the world around them.

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced Intermediate level (Mittelstufe II) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR):

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>

Course Requirements

Attendance and the careful reading of the assigned course materials are most important. The reading pack will be divided into compulsory and supplementary readings. The course will engaged discussion of the material in class (online) that shows you have completed the required reading, and the completion of a final paper on a topic related to the course but decided by yourself in discussion with the lecturer. Guidelines for the papers as well as suggested topics will be distributed during the first session. The instructor will be available for student consultations should any further guidance be required.

Grading

Class participation: 20%

Short presentation: 20%

Research paper: 60%

‘Class Participation’ will mean active participation in class discussion. ‘Short Presentation’ will be a brief presentation whereby students will describe the topic they have chosen for their research paper, and link their choice to themes in the course that they have found interesting. It will provide a useful chance for feedback and discussion within the group as a whole.

Reading

A course reader will be provided online as PDF file.

Course schedule

Date	Program
Friday, January 8, 2021	<p>Introduction Session: Setting the Scene</p> <p>Revolutionary Berlin 1918: The Mourning Artist, and the Murdered Activist</p> <p>Rosa Luxemburg and Käthe Kollwitz</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Eric Hobsbawm, <i>Age of Extremes</i> (Abacus, 1995), pp. 54-84</p> <p>David Clay Large, <i>Berlin</i> (Basic Books, 2000), introduction</p> <p>Claire C. Whitner, ‘Käthe Kollwitz and the Krieg Cycle’, <i>Käthe Kollwitz and the Women of War</i> (Yale University Press), 2016</p>
Monday, January 11, 2021	<p>The “Golden” Weimar Years: Literary Witnesses to Babylon Berlin</p> <p>Joseph Roth and Christopher Isherwood</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Extracts from Joseph Roth, <i>What I saw: Reports from Berlin 1920 - 1933</i> (London, 2013: Granta Books)</p>
Wednesday, January 13, 2021	<p>Nazi Berlin: The Defiant Actress, and ‘Hitler’s Filmmaker’</p> <p>Marlene Dietrich and Leni Riefenstahl</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Rory Maclean, <i>Imagine a City</i> (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2014), pp. 199 - 235</p> <p>Screening: <i>The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl</i> (1993)</p>

<p>Friday, January 15, 2021</p>	<p>The Divided City: The Berlin Airlift of 1948 - 1949</p> <p>An examination of the ‘Cuban Missile Crises’ of its day that placed Berlin in the eye of the Cold War storm. We look specifically at the propoganda aspects of the Airlift and how the success of America and Britain in keeping West Berlin fed despite Stalin’s Iron Curtain led inevitably to the building of the Berlin Wall 12 years later.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Extracts from Tony Judt, <i>Postwarx: A History of Europe since 1945</i>, (London, 2010: Vintage Books)</p> <p>George Clare, <i>Berlin Days</i> (Macmillan London Limited, 1989), 91 - 108</p>
<p>Monday, January 18, 2021</p>	<p>The Divided Heaven: Literature as Resistance in East Berlin</p> <p>Christa Wolf</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Extracts from Christa Wolf, <i>The Divided Heaven</i> (University of Ottawa Press, 2013)</p> <p>Extracts from Christa Wolf, <i>City of Angels, or The Overcoat of Dr. Freud</i> (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 2010</p> <p>Screening: <i>The Lives of Others</i> (2006)</p>
<p>Wednesday, January 20, 2021</p>	<p>Dreamers and Dissidents in East and West Berlin</p> <p>David Bowie and Wolf Biermann</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Extracts from Stuart Braun, <i>City of Exiles: Berlin from the Outside In</i>, (Berlin 2015, Noctua Press)</p> <p>Jeff Hayton, ‘Härte gegen Punk: Popular Music, Western Media, and State Response in the German Democratic Republic’ in <i>German History</i>, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 523-549</p>

<p>Friday, January 22, 2021</p>	<p>After the Wall: Rebuilding Berlin after 1989</p> <p>Palace of the Republic (Palast der Republik), Potsdamer Platz, the Holocaust Memorial</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Extracts from Brian Ladd, <i>The Ghosts of Berlin</i>, (University of Chicago Press, 1997)</p> <p>Extracts from Peter Schneider, <i>Berlin Now</i>, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014)</p>
<p>Monday, January 25, 2021</p>	<p>The Gentrification Wars: 2000 – the Present</p> <p>Final class discussion and submission of papers.</p>