

Name:	Dr. Lilla Balint
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Course title:	Berlin, 1900-2017: Literature, Culture, and Politics
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	72 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	6

Course description

“Berlin, the greatest cultural extravaganza that one could imagine,” exclaimed the artist David Bowie, who lived in the divided city in the 1970s. To determine whether Bowie was indeed right, we will explore Berlin’s rich artistic production from the turn of the twentieth century to the contemporary. Taking a cultural studies approach, the course draws on a wide range of materials—including literary and philosophical texts, films, and works of visual arts—to examine various responses to the city and to explore, at the same time, how these works have shaped the ways in which we experience the city today. Thus, our focus will be both historical, focusing on the immense creative output that the city has spurred in the twentieth century, and directed at the contemporary moment to examine the lasting effect of these works. Moreover, we will also direct our attention to new ways of living and artistic forms that have emerged in the Berlin Republic.

The course starts with the methodological question of how to experience a city and traces modes of urban exploration; then we will follow a roughly chronological trajectory from the Weimar Republic to the reunified city, focusing on questions such as the city in relation to the individual and the masses; modes of narrating the city in film and literature; and gendered urban spaces.

In a series of field trips that will take us to canonical sites in Berlin, including the Brecht-Weigel-Museum, the Wall Memorial, the former airport Tempelhof, and the famous department store KaDeWe, as well as to lesser-known destinations such as the Siemensstadt, we will gain first-hand experience with the places that assume importance in the works that we read, watch, and analyze. The aim of this course is to provide students with tools how to read and make sense of a city in its historical dimensions and to gain familiarity with the city in relation to its artistic representations.

Student profile

The course is open to all students who are interested in deepening their experience of Berlin through this interdisciplinary exploration of the city. No prior knowledge required. Students must be willing to participate actively in class discussions and field trips to museums and other sites around the city. Attendance is crucial; no unexcused absences.

Prerequisites

Minimum language proficiency of B2 in English is required. No German is required for this course. All readings, course materials, and discussions will be in English.

Course requirements

For the successful completion of the course, students have to (1) attend the course and participate actively in class discussions and field trips; (2) write three two-page response papers and present them in class; (3) take a final exam in form of a take-home essay.

Grading

Attendance, participation, preparation: 30%
 Short essays: 30%
 Presentations: 15%
 Final exam: 25%

Reading

A reader will be provided at orientation.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, June 6, 2017	<p>Introduction to the Course</p> <p>The City and Metropolitan Modes of Exploration</p> <p>Georg Simmel: "Metropolis and Mental Life" (selections)</p> <p>Walter Benjamin: <i>Berlin Childhood around 1900</i> (selections)</p> <p>Walter Benjamin: <i>The Flaneur</i> (selections)</p> <p>Field Trip: Walter Benjamin's Berlin (Savignyplatz, Benjamin-Haus, Tiergarten, Siegessäule)</p>
Friday, June 9, 2017	<p>The City and its Expressions</p> <p>Jakob van Hoddis: "End of the World"</p> <p>Georg Kaiser: <i>Gas II</i></p> <p>Else Lasker-Schüler: <i>Hebrew Ballads</i> (selections)</p> <p>Field Trip: Berlinische Galerie Museum of Modern Art (Exhibit: Art in Berlin 1880-1980)</p>
Tuesday, June 13, 2017	<p>The Metropolis and its Masses</p> <p>Siegfried Kracauer: <i>The Salaried Masses</i> (selections)</p> <p>Screening: <i>Berlin: Symphony of a Great City</i> (Walter Ruttmann, 1927, selections)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Sabine Hake: "Urban Spectacle in Walter Ruttmann's Berlin"</p> <p>Field Trip: Siemensstadt (Guided tour)</p> <p>RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE</p>

<p>Friday, June 16, 2017</p>	<p>Narrating the Modern Metropolis Alfred Döblin: <i>Berlin, Alexanderplatz</i> (1929; excerpts) Screening: <i>Berlin, Alexanderplatz</i> (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1980; selections)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Sabine Hake: "Deconstructing Modern Subjectivity: On Berlin Alexanderplatz" (selections); Klaus Scherpe: "The City as Narrator" (selections)</p>
<p>Tuesday, June 20, 2017</p>	<p>Aesthetics and Politics I Bertolt Brecht: "The Modern Theater is the Epic Theater" Bertolt Brecht: <i>The Threepenny Opera</i> (selections) Screening: <i>The Threepenny Opera</i> (G.W. Pabst, 1930)</p> <p>Field Trip: Brecht-Weigel Museum and Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof (Berlin-Mitte)</p>
<p>Friday, June 23, 2017</p>	<p>Gender and the City: The "New Woman" Irmgard Keun: <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> (selections)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Katharina von Ankum: "Gendered Urban Spaces in Irmgard Keun's <i>Das kunstseidene Mädchen</i>"</p> <p>Field Trip: Kurfürstendamm, KaDeWe (Guided tour)</p>
<p>Tuesday, June 27, 2017</p>	<p>Aesthetics and Politics II Watch: Leni Riefenstahl: <i>Olympia</i> (Part I)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Leni Riefenstahl's "Olympia": Brilliant Cinematography or Nazi Propaganda; Fascist Aesthetics (Podcast, selections)</p> <p>Field Trip: Topography of Terror, Tempelhof Airport</p> <p>RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE</p>
<p>Friday, June 30, 2017</p>	<p>Aesthetics and the Divided City I Christa Wolf: <i>Divided Heaven</i> (selections), "What remains" (selections) BACKGROUND READING: "Remembering Christa Wolf" (New Yorker)</p>

<p>Tuesday, July 4, 2017</p>	<p>Aesthetics and the Divided City II Peter Schneider: <i>The Wall Jumper</i> (selections) Screening: <i>Wings of Desire</i> (Wim Wenders)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Pertti Ahonen, "The Berlin Wall and the Battle for Legitimacy in Divided Germany"</p> <p>Field Trip: Berlin Wall Memorial Bernauer Str.</p> <p>RESPONSE PAPER 3 DUE</p>
<p>Friday, July 7, 2017</p>	<p>Aesthetics and the Reunified City: New Subjectivities Judith Hermann: <i>Sommerhouse, later</i> (selections) Wladimir Kaminer: <i>Russian Disco</i> (selections)</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Stuart Taberner: Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic (selections)</p>
<p>Tuesday, July 11, 2017</p>	<p>The Berlin Republic: Multicultural? Watch: <i>Head-On</i> (Fatih Akin, 2004) Emine Sevgi Özdamar: "My Berlin"</p> <p>BACKGROUND READING: Leslie A. Adelson: The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration (selections)</p> <p>Field Trip: Turkish Market Maybachufer (Kreuzberg)</p> <p>FINAL TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE</p>
<p>Friday, July 14, 2017</p>	<p>Alternative Lifestyles, New Utopian Spaces? Screening: <i>Live Your Changes</i> (Sebastian Riehm, 2015) Course wrap-up 2:00 PM: FUBiS Farewell Ceremony</p>

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.