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Course title:	Schlüsselwerke der deutschen Literatur von der Klassik bis zur Gegenwart
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	German
Contact hours:	72 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	6

Course description

This course provides an overview of the history of German literature from the 18th to the 21st century. Starting from the knowledge that the psychological sensitivities of an age are reflected in literature, and supported by reading and discussing representative texts - e.g. from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Bertolt Brecht or Bernhard Schlink - the focus of the seminar is based on the following questions: What desires, demands and utopias can be found in the literature? How influential are the developments of the history of thought, social upheavals and technological innovations on literary expression? What interplay exists between art, music and literature? Can fiction also be seen as inspiration for social changes? And: how do the respective authors incorporate literary legacies into their own works?

A valid and living impression of literary development from the classical period to the present will not only be provided through texts, but also through film clips and field trips. For instance, we will visit the Deutsches Historisches Museum and obtain deeper insight into the art of the Romantic period with a tour through the Alte Nationalgalerie.

Student profile

Aside from the language requirements, participants must not exhibit any special knowledge of German literature or history. The seminar is directed toward students of various majors who are interested in German literature and its historical connections from the classic period to the modern day.

Prerequisites

Language skills: Intermediate German B2/advanced level C1

Brief description of the B2 language level:

Able to understand the core content of complex texts on concrete and abstract themes; understands technical discussions in their own field. Able to spontaneously and fluently comprehend that a normal conversation with native speakers is easily possible with no great strain on either party. Able to clearly and precisely express themselves on a broad spectrum of subjects, express a standpoint on a topical question and provide the advantages and disadvantages of various possibilities.

Course Requirements

See Grading.

Grading

30% regular and active participation. Due to the seminar format, regular participation in the discussions is expected.

25% two brief essays (approx. 500 words = approx. 2 pages) on the various core themes of the subject.

20% an oral presentation (approx. 15 minutes). The oral presentation should provide initial insight into the text in question, ask questions and formulate arguments, and stimulate discussion. The subjects will be assigned during the first week.

25% a seminar paper of 6 pages.

Literature

Reader (will be made available at the beginning of the program).

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, June 5, 2018	<p>Introduction to the seminar curriculum</p> <p><u>Sturm und Drang (1756-1785)</u></p> <p>This time was dominated by absolutism, arbitrariness and the society was divided into estates. Writers struggled with and opposed this way of life, which was marked by expediency and rationality; they questioned the rationalism imposed by the Enlightenment and challenged it with the importance of feelings. The young and intelligent society who led the movement rendered homage to the genius and demanded freedom for a productive spirit.</p> <p>Passion, an almost religious sense of nature, critique of society and expressive language are the characteristics which make "Die Leiden des jungen Werther" the pioneering work of the period.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): <i>Die Leiden des jungen Werther</i> (1774)</p>
Friday, June 8, 2018	<p><u>Classical period (1786-1805):</u></p> <p>The French Revolution of 1789 was the predominant event of the period. The struggle with the goals and consequences of the revolution, however, was less political and far more philosophical among German intellectuals and artists.</p> <p>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe sought the harmonisation of all human strength in his poetry. He merged a clear, rational conscience with an anthemic, emotionally oriented world view. A new ideal for poetry and humanity thus arose from the return to antiquity - for in that period, as he and some of his contemporaries believed, the harmony of reason and emotion had already been achieved.</p>

	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): <i>Faust I</i> (1808)</p> <p>Film: Clips from <i>Faust</i> (Dir.: Gustaf Gründgens, 1960)</p>
<p>Tuesday, June 12, 2018</p>	<p><u>Romantic period (1797-1830):</u></p> <p>Napoleon's rise and fall and the resulting restructuring of Europe at the 1815 Congress of Vienna shaped this age. At the same time, the looming industrialisation posed great challenges to the individual with increasing social injustice, unemployment and famine.</p> <p>The authors of the Romantic period no longer found their source of inspiration in antiquity, but rather in the Christian Middle Ages. Seeking to surmount the contradictions created by social and political life, the magical wonderworld of literary fairy tales, or <i>Kunstmärchen</i>, drew back on themes and figures from German folktales. For the Romantics, poetry is the manifestation of the absolute.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857): <i>Mondnacht</i> (1837, poem) <i>Wünschelrute</i> (1835, poem) <i>Die blaue Blume</i> (1818, poem)</p> <p>Novalis (1772-1801): <i>Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren</i> (1800, poem) <i>Heinrich von Ofterdingen</i> (1802)</p> <p>Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853): <i>Der blonde Eckbert</i> (1797)</p> <p><i>Field trip: Alte Nationalgalerie (Paintings of the Romantic period)</i></p>
<p>Friday, June 15, 2018</p>	<p><u>Vormärz (Pre-March) and Young Germany (1830-1850):</u></p> <p>A phase of disenchantment ensued in the period following the Congress of Vienna. Old balances of power re-established and the desire of many people for more democracy and liberality was disappointed. This ultimately led to the Revolution of 1848/49.</p> <p>In their writings the authors of Vormärz and Young Germany demanded the dismantlement of feudalism and a free and republican social order. This came with a new literary mindset: The idealistic world view of the classical and Romantic periods should be replaced by fiction with the goal to grant the citizen a living connection with the political, ideological and social present.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Heinrich Heine (1797-1856): <i>Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen</i> (1843)</p>

	<p>Georg Büchner (1813-1837): <i>Woyzeck</i> (1837)</p> <p>Film: Clips from <i>Woyzeck</i> (Dir.: Werner Herzog, 1979)</p>
<p>Tuesday, June 19, 2018</p>	<p><u>Turn of the century (1890-1914)</u></p> <p>Otto von Bismarck had expanded the supremacy of conservative Prussia in Germany. In 1871 the victorious war against France led to the founding of the German Empire. Through his policy of alliances Bismarck sought to stabilize the German Empire and maintain peace in Europe.</p> <p>Around the turn of the century various literary movements existed side by side (e.g. Realism, Naturalism, Impressionism and Symbolism). In his novel "Buddenbrooks" Thomas Mann used the different styles of the time to tell the story of a merchant's family from the northern German city Lübeck. The family members find themselves caught between living an active working life and a more artistic way of living. Hereby the novel covers the time frame from the Revolution in 1848 until the turn of the century.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Thomas Mann (1875-1955): <i>Buddenbrooks</i> (1901)</p>
<p>Friday, June 22, 2018</p>	<p><u>Expressionism (1905-1925)</u></p> <p>In 1890 Bismarck was removed from his office by Kaiser Wilhelm II. The subsequent imperialist power politics of Kaiser Wilhelm II, coupled with international tensions, ultimately triggered World War I (1914-1918).</p> <p>The works of Franz Kafka, living in Prague and writing in German, take a special position here and describe the increasing alienation of the individual from the driving forces of the time. Social reality is depicted as absurd and monstrous in his novels and narratives. The modern individual sees himself at the mercy of imposing powers such as authority, bureaucracy and technology, viewing their own lived reality as a nightmare</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Franz Kafka (1883-1924): <i>Die Verwandlung</i> (1915)</p>
<p>Tuesday, June 26, 2018</p>	<p><u>Literature of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933)</u></p> <p>The Weimar Republic formed after World War I with one of the most modern constitutions in Europe. However, it was often referred to as a "democracy without democrats", as the retrogressive powers still held influence and fomented dissatisfaction among the citizenry, who were already suffering from the high reparation payments resulting from the Treaty of Versailles. Regardless, between 1923 and 1929, during the so-called "Golden Twenties", there was a political and economic calm</p>

	<p>and Berlin experienced a cultural bloom.</p> <p>Bertolt Brecht revolutionised the German theater during this era: The "alienation effect" is the major trademark of his "epic theater" - the spectator shall no longer identify with the occurrences on stage, but rather become a critical viewer. His teaching-plays, or <i>Lehrstücke</i>, attack bourgeois-capitalist society.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956): <i>Die Dreigroschenoper</i> (1928)</p> <p>Film: Clips from <i>Die Dreigroschenoper</i> (Dir.: Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1931)</p> <p><i>Field trip: Topography of Terror</i></p>
<p>Friday, June 29, 2018</p>	<p><u>Exile literature (1933-1945)</u></p> <p>The economic crisis of 1929 led to mass unemployment, which benefited the rise of the "Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei" (NSDAP). With its seizure of power on 30 January, 1933 Adolf Hitler established himself as <i>Führer</i> of a repressive and antisemitic policy that led to World War II and the Holocaust.</p> <p>On 10 May, 1933 books that were obligated to the spirit of humanity were burned in German university towns. Thousands of people fled the country to escape persecution by the Nazis - among them many authors. Exile was initially provided by neighboring countries in Europe, and later North and South America. The uncompromising rejection of Hitler and National Socialism is the binding characteristic of these authors.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956): <i>Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten</i> (poem, 1937) <i>Gedanken über die Dauer des Exils</i> (poem, around 1937)</p> <p>Klaus Mann (1906-1949): <i>Mephisto</i> (1936)</p> <p>Film: Clips from <i>Mephisto</i> (Dir.: István Szabó, 1981)</p>
<p>Tuesday, July 3, 2018</p>	<p><u>Literature of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949-1989)</u></p> <p>After the end of the war in 1945 Germany laid in ruins. Determined by the "Potsdamer Abkommen" the defeated Germany – including the city of Berlin – was divided into four occupation zones. The Federal Republic of Germany was created from the three western sectors. Already in the 1950s the economy started to flourish in free West Germany ("economic miracle").</p> <p>Post-war literature describes the survival in the destroyed cities. Occupied with reconstructing and rebuilding people tried to look ahead</p>

	<p>and did not want to deal with the Nazi period. The repression of what happened prevented discussing the past, which in the '60s led to student revolution and an increasing politicisation of literature. Especially Heinrich Böll's works reflects this time.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Heinrich Böll (1917-1985): <i>Der Engel schwieg</i> (written in 1949, published posthumously in 1992) <i>Ansichten eines Clowns</i> (1963)</p>
<p>Friday, July 6, 2018</p>	<p><u>Literature of the German Democratic Republic (1949-1989)</u></p> <p>The eastern sector became the German Democratic Republic. As the GDR government could offer its citizens neither freedom nor satisfactory living conditions, many citizens fled to West Germany. To stop such "foot voting" and prevent the resulting abscondence of its citizens, the regime constructed the Berlin Wall on 13 August, 1961 and fortified the country's borders ("Iron Curtain").</p> <p>Post-war literature in the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR developed under different portents: In the GDR criticism of the state and party was forbidden; all publications were subject to censorship. However, several authors unwaveringly debated with the situation of the individual within a collectivised society. The longing for freedom found its expression - often, however, with West German publishers.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Ulrich Plenzdorf (1934-2007): <i>Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.</i> (1972)</p> <p><i>Field trip: Deutsches Historisches Museum</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, July 10, 2018</p>	<p><u>Literature of the modern day I (since 1989)</u></p> <p>The Wall fell on 9 November, 1989. German literature after this change is now once again devoted to the innermost motivation of fiction: It gives the memory of pain and hardship a voice. The challenges of German-German integration on both sides of the not yet entirely processed era of the Third Reich continue to be crucial topics. - The subject of our last session is the novel <i>Der Vorleser</i> by the lawyer Bernhard Schlink. He confronts his young hero with the Nazi past of his older lover, and at the same time places the conscience-forming power of literature before our eyes.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Bernhard Schlink (b.1944): <i>Der Vorleser</i> (1995)</p> <p>Film: Clips from <i>Der Vorleser</i> (Dir.: Stephen Daldry, 2008)</p>
<p>Friday, July 13, 2018</p>	<p><u>Literature of the modern day II (since 1989)</u></p> <p>Modern day literature is only slowly beginning to take on current issues</p>

	<p>such as the financial crisis, religiously motivated wars and the terrorist threat. Which image of humanity and moral concepts are valid in the 21st century?</p> <p>We will raise this question by analyzing a theater play by Ferdinand von Schirach, in which a terrorist kidnaps a commercial airliner and threatens to crash it into a packed stadium. Contrary to orders a fighter pilot shoots down the plane, all passengers die, however, the spectators in the stadium are saved. In court, a trial is set to determine, if the pilot fighter is guilty or not guilty. Schirach is approaching the question of guilt and innocence from a new perspective and includes the readers in reaching a verdict.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Ferdinand von Schirach (b. 1964). <i>Terror</i> (theater play, 2015)</p>
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*Field trips may be subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days adaptation of class times is possible.