

Course title:	20th Century Berlin: People, Places, Words
Instructor:	Lauren Van Vuuren, Ph.D.
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Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	72 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	7
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher. Interest in Berlin, and its extraordinary recent past.

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 history.

Structured largely chronologically, the course will work with films and novels whilst building on a clear historiographical base provided in class seminars. The teaching will be augmented by physical excursions into Berlin to trace the stories we encounter and class discussions 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 in class and the careful reading of the assigned course materials are most important. The reading pack will be divided into compulsory and supplementary readings. Furthermore, the course will require participation in the field trips, engaged discussion of the material in class 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 include participation in field trips and engagement in discussion in class. '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 at the orientation meeting

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, June 01, 2021	<p>Introduction Session: Setting the Scene End of the Monarchy and Revolutionary Berlin</p> <p>Readings: Eric Hobsbawm, <i>Age of Extremes</i> (Abacus, 1995), pp. 54-84 David Clay Large, <i>Berlin</i> (Basic Books, 2000), introduction</p>
Friday, June 04, 2021	<p>The Artist and the Revolutionary: Käthe Kollwitz and Rosa Luxemburg</p> <p>Reading: Claire C. Whitner, 'Käthe Kollwitz and the Krieg Cycle', <i>Käthe Kollwitz and the Women of War</i> (Yale University Press), 2016</p> <p>Class Trip: <i>Kollwitz Museum</i></p>
Tuesday, June 08, 2021	<p>The Weimar Years 1919 - 1933: Wild and Brokenhearted Berlin</p> <p>Reading: Peter Gay, <i>Weimar: The Outsider as Insider</i> (New York, London, Norton) 1968, 2000, pp. 1-22</p>
Friday, June 11, 2021	<p>Weimar's Literary Witnesses: Joseph Roth and Christopher Isherwood</p> <p>Reading: Extracts from Joseph Roth, <i>What I saw: Reports from Berlin 1920 - 1933</i> (London, 2013: Granta Books)</p> <p>Class Trip: <i>Scheunenviertel and Museum Island</i></p>
Tuesday, June 15, 2021	<p>The Actress and the Filmmaker in Nazi Berlin: Leni Riefenstahl and Marlene Dietrich</p> <p>Reading: 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>
Friday, June 18, 2021	<p>The Divided City Part I: Berlin after WWII and before the building of the Berlin Wall</p> <p>Readings: Extracts from Tony Judt, <i>Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945</i>, (London, 2010: Vintage Books) George Clare, <i>Berlin Days</i> (Macmillan London Limited, 1989), 91 - 108</p>
Tuesday, June 22, 2021	<p>The Divided City II: The Berlin Airlift</p> <p>Reading: Alexander Richie, <i>Faust's Metropolis</i> (Carol and Graff, 1998), pp.662 - 673</p> <p>Class Trip: <i>Tempelhof Airport</i></p>
Friday, June 25, 2021	<p>The Divided City III: Building the Wall</p> <p>Newspaper accounts and film clips will be shown in class</p> <p>Class Trip: <i>Bernauer Strasse Wall Memorial</i></p>
Tuesday, June 29, 2021	<p>The Divided Heaven: Literature as Resistance in East Germany through the writings of Christa Wolf</p> <p>Readings: Extracts from Christa Wolf, <i>The Divided Heaven</i> (University of Ottawa Press, 2013) 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>Friday, July 02, 2021</p>	<p>Dreamers and Dissidents in West Berlin</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>Class Trip: <i>Oranienstrasse and Bethanien Kreuzberg</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, July 06, 2021</p>	<p>After the Wall: Rebuilding the Derelict City</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>Class Trip: <i>Potsdamerplatz and Kulturforum</i></p>
<p>Friday, July 09, 2021</p>	<p>The Gentrification Wars: 2000 – Present</p> <p>Newspaper debates, and clips from the documentary <i>Babylon Berlin</i> (2001)</p> <p>Wrap up Session</p>

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