

Name:	Dr. Brigitta Wagner
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Course title:	Imag(in)ing the Capital: Berlin in Cinema
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	4

Course description

How do we understand the great capital cities of the world if we have never seen them? How does this change once we have visited a place? To what extent is our contemporary imagination of national space and power constructed by images? This course offers students an introduction to the cultural politics of cinematic imaginings of Berlin, a dynamic European capital that has become a laboratory for creative urban studies. Students will examine Berlin's unique 20th and 21st-century history of expansion, destruction, division, unification, and urban marketing in relation to films that pictured the city for various political regimes and cultural objectives. The course will question this film legacy through the lens of political events, urban change, virtual technologies, spatial memory, geographical orientation, and location politics in the Berlin-Brandenburg region.

Inviting students to critically reexamine filmic representations of Berlin, the course will focus on several key time periods in German film production: 1) the Weimar Republic; 2) the Nazi Era and the immediate postwar years; 3) the Cold War; and 4) the postwall era. Not only are these time periods important to German cinema and its representations of Berlin; they also fostered competing cultural political versions of the city that would continue to circulate in the digital age.

One goal of the course is to introduce students to audiovisual analysis through a number of Berlin films spanning German film history. A second goal is for students to acquire knowledge of the sociocultural discourses that inform the production and reception of these films. Students will work on a number of questions in small groups and will then be asked to share their analyses and thoughts with the rest of the class. A third goal of the course is to introduce students to relevant cultural and geographical resources in Berlin through field trips to, for example, the Museum of Film and Television and Studio Babelsberg.

By the end of the course, the students will have gained a better understanding of Berlin's history, its cinema, and its current film production and urban marketing discourses. They will be able to analyse the ways in which film form, content, geographical orientation, and historical context create meaning. Not only will the students enhance their skills in audiovisual analysis; they will also acquire the ability to interrogate the political circumstances that led to these films' creation and reception.

Student Profile

This course is open to anyone with an interest in cinema in general and German cinema in particular.

Prerequisites

No prior knowledge of German, German films, or film and media studies is required. Students must be able to speak and read English at the advanced intermediate level.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation in class, leading one class discussion, one field trip report, and one term paper.

Student Responsibilities

- **Attendance and Participation:** Your attendance in class encompasses arriving on time, being present for all class sessions, being courteous and professional to all members of the class, preparing notes and thoughts on the class reading questions, and participating actively in all discussions and assignments.

- **Leading One Discussion:** You will be expected to make a 10-minute presentation on an additional film or text that you will be responsible for introducing to the class. After this, you will open discussion and serve as discussion chair.

- **Field Trip Report:** In this 3-4 pp. paper (double-spaced, 12-pt. font), you will analyse some aspect of the Film and Television Museum’s exhibition on field trip 1. More information about this assignment will be provided in class.

- **Term Paper:** For the term paper (8-10 pp., double-spaced, 12-pt. font), you will develop your own research question about one or two films seen in the course and complete relevant research beyond our course texts. More information about this assignment will be provided in class.

Grading

Attendance and participation: 20%
 Chairing one discussion in class: 20%
 Field Trip Report: 20%
 Term Paper: 40%

Reading

A course reader will be provided on the first day of class.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 24, 2018	<p>Introduction: The “Original” City A short background on Weimar Berlin and Weimar cinema. Introduction to film analysis.</p> <p>How was the city portrayed in the “golden” 1920s?</p> <p>Film: <i>Berlin, Symphony of a Great City</i> (Germany 1927, Dir. Walter Ruttmann, 65 min.)</p> <p>Texts:</p>

	<p>Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (Second Version), 101-122</p> <p>Ladd, "Metropolis," 83-125</p>
Friday, July 27, 2018	<p>A City Destroyed How did the rubble landscape of postwar Berlin change the kinds of stories that could be told there? How did this lead to innovations in filmmaking?</p> <p>Film: <i>Germany Year Zero</i> (Italy/SOZ 1948, Dir. Roberto Rossellini, 71 min.)</p> <p>Texts: Paul Steege, "Postwar Berlin: The Continuities of Scarcity," 18-63</p> <p>André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism" (1948), 16-40</p>
Tuesday, July 31, 2018	<p>Remaking the Filmic City In which ways was the filmic image of Berlin remade after the Second World War and then again after the fall of the Berlin Wall?</p> <p>Films: <i>Berlin Symphony</i> (Germany 2002, Dir. Thomas Schadt, 80 min.); excerpts from <i>Symphonie einer Weltstadt/Berlin, wie es war</i> (Symphony of a World-class City/Berlin the Way It Was, Germany 1943/FRG 1950, Dir. Leo de Laforge)</p> <p>Texts: Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 166-170</p> <p>Barthes, excerpts from <i>Camera Lucida</i></p>
Friday, August 3, 2018	<p>A Generation Divided in Space How did East and West Germany portray the divided city? In which ways was German-German film culture still possible? What role did the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, play in the filmic Cold War?</p> <p>Film: <i>Berlin—Schönhauser Corner</i> (GDR 1957, Dir. Gerhard Klein, 82 min.)</p> <p>Texts: Müller, "Counter-Architecture and the Building Race: Cold War Politics and the Building Race," 101-113</p> <p>Doherty, Ch. 5: "Dangerous Youth," 83-114</p>

	<p>Field Trip 1: Potsdamer Platz, Museum of Film and Television</p>
Tuesday, August 7, 2018	<p>Virtual Berlins In which ways have filmmakers tried to represent Berlin's multiple pasts? Which challenges does the city present aesthetically?</p> <p>Film: <i>Wings of Desire</i> (FRG 1987, Dir. Wim Wenders, 128 min.)</p> <p>Texts: Wenders, "An Attempted Description of a Indescribable Film," 73-83</p> <p>Boym, "Restorative Nostalgia: Conspiracies and Return to Origins," 41-48</p> <p>Boym, "Reflective Nostalgia: Virtual Reality and Collective Memory," 49-55</p>
Friday, August 10, 2018	<p>Spatial Orientation after the Wall How did postwall cinema reconcile the unified city's divided past? In which ways did cinema help to reorient spectators in urban space?</p> <p>Film: <i>Good Bye, Lenin!</i> (FRG 2003, Dir. Wolfgang Becker, 121 min.); excerpts from <i>Run Lola Run</i> (FRG 1998, Dir. Tom Tykwer)</p> <p>Texts: Till, Ch. 2: "The New Berlin: From <i>Kiez</i> to <i>Kosmos</i>," 31-57</p>
Tuesday, August 14, 2018	<p>International Coproductions and Location Politics In which ways have the postwall German government and the regional film industry collaborated to bring international coproductions to Berlin-Brandenburg? How does regional film funding affect the image of the city produced in these films?</p> <p>Film: <i>Unknown</i> (UK/FRG/FR/CN/JP/US 2011, Dir. Jaume Collet-Serra, 113 min.)</p> <p>Texts: Lynch, Ch. 3 "The City Image and Its Elements," 46-90 <i>Creative Industries in the Capital Region</i> (2010)</p> <p>Field Trip 2: Studio Babelsberg</p>
Friday, August 17, 2018	<p>Marketing the Urban Future Where does Berlin stand today? Which futures are being imagined for the city? For cinema made here? How does this relate to past cinematic Berlins?</p>

	<p>Film(s): excerpts from several films made here in the past decade.</p> <p>Texts: Colomb, Ch. 6 “Marketing the Global Service Metropolis and the National Capital,” 144-184</p> <p>Excerpts from several newspapers and the trade press.</p> <p>Farewell Ceremony (2:00 PM)</p>
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*Dates and subjects for field trips may be adjusted due to the availability and confirmation of the appointments. On field trip days, adaptation of class times is possible.