

IS331 Berlin Internship Seminar: Working Cultures, Urban Cultures

Seminar Leaders: Agata Lisiak / Florian Duijsens

Course Times: Thursdays 2-3.30 pm

Email: a.lisiak@berlin.bard.edu, f.duijsens@berlin.bard.edu

Office hours: Lisiak: Wed 1-2.30 pm; Thur 10 am-12 pm / Duijsens: Thur 11 am-12 pm

Course Description

The Berlin Internship Seminar accompanies third-year students' undertaking of an internship or period of practical training. The seminar offers a range of theoretical and analytical tools for thinking critically about how and why we work, and how work affects our daily lives and the places where we live. Over the course of the seminar, we will talk about contemporary ways of working and living in Berlin and beyond, asking: What do we mean when we talk about work? Do we need to love what we do? What renders work in/visible? How is work gendered and classed? How is work organized temporally and spatially, and how does that, in turn, affect a city and its residents? What distinguishes the spaces where we live and work today? Which new forms of work have emerged in Berlin recently? Which of them seem to thrive? What is the future of work?

One of the major issues we will tackle in class is the very phenomenon of unpaid internships and what it means for you to be working for free. We will address this question by discussing the precariat, creative industry, and affective labor. Drawing from Kathi Weeks' work, we will consider what the problem with work actually is, and why we tend to define and value ourselves through what we do professionally. We will dissect Steve Jobs' mantra ("Do what you love"), and discuss how work and love are interwoven. We will approach contemporary working cultures from an intersectional perspective, remaining sensitive to the workings of inequalities in structural, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains.

Besides in-class discussions, invited lectures, and off-campus visits, the seminar offers a platform for the regular exchange of observations, reflections, and comments on students' internships. The assigned readings, too, will be discussed in class in the context of students' internships. Students are required to keep an internship journal and provide regular updates on the progress of their internship.

Requirements

Attendance and participation

Your preparation, attendance, and participation are crucial. Please complete the required readings, be on time for each class, and contribute energetically and meaningfully to the discussions. A class participation mark will be awarded on the basis of your engagement in class discussions. As this seminar convenes only once a week, only one absence will be excused. Missing more than one class will affect your participation grade for this class. Please consult the [Student Handbook](#) for BCB's policy on absences. This mark makes up 30% of the final grade. A self-assessment rubric will be distributed in class

and completed at the end of the semester.

Readings

On a weekly basis, you will be expected to devote 2-3 hours to complete the readings and 15-20 minutes to update your internship journal. It may be possible for you to get both done during your commute to the internship. A course reader is required for this class, but keep in mind that some of the readings we will be discussing are not included. Though all the texts you will be required to read are included in the syllabus (and listed on the course website), the highly topical nature of this course means that we will also be sending around up-to-date articles, essays, and videos to enrich our discussions. Students are encouraged to do the same.

Assignments

This class will include several graded assignments that will add up to your final grade for this class alongside your participation grade: 1) a 500-word blog post (10%); 2) a take-home midterm exam (20%); 3) a 500-800-word interview with your internship mentor (10%); and 4) a 1500-word final paper. Please see below for more details including deadlines and grading criteria. Assignments 2, 3, and 4 are to be submitted to the course instructor by email; the blog entry is to be posted on the course website.

Internship Course Website

The website accompanying this seminar features the syllabus, online readings, some additional materials on the seminar's main subjects, as well as blog posts created by students. Students are encouraged to comment on each other's blog posts and upload images to the website gallery (this will also be considered when determining their participation grade). The website facilitates students' exchange of reflections on their internships and the assigned readings beyond the classroom.

Internship Journal

Students are required to keep an internship journal in which they regularly (at least once a week) reflect on their work experiences. The journal should be kept in electronic form on Google docs and shared with the seminar instructor. The goal of this journal is twofold: not only does it provide students with important material with which to reflect back on their internship experience when they are writing their final papers, but it also provides a discreet way for the instructors to make sure the internships are going well (or step in should issues arise). Failing to update the journal regularly will affect the student's participation grade negatively. For more details (and examples) see the Internship Journal Handout.

Policy on Plagiarism and Late Submission of Papers

As specified in *The Student Handbook*, "Bard College Berlin students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of integrity and intellectual engagement in their academic work. Attendance and thorough preparation for class, as well as commitment to the pursuit of excellence in written work, are fundamental requirements of Bard College Berlin's programs." Acts of academic misconduct (plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, cheating) will be reported and result in a disciplinary process (please see *The Student Handbook* for details).

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If we agree to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than a C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Class participation: 30%
Assignment 1 (blog post): 10% // February 11
Assignment 2 (midterm): 20% // March 15
Assignment 3 (interview): 10% // April 23
Assignment 4 (final paper): 30% // December 14

Grading criteria for the midterm

A = Extraordinary. The exam demonstrates student's full command of the material and reflects in-depth engagement with the readings.

B = Good to very good. The exam demonstrates student's general familiarity with the material and some engagement with the readings, but misses critical engagement and close reading of the texts.

C = Acceptable. The exam demonstrates student's selective familiarity with the material; it contains misreadings or gaps in understanding of the texts that have been discussed in class.

D = Very poor. The exam demonstrates student's lack of engagement with the readings and lack of familiarity with the key concepts discussed in class.

F = Unacceptable. The exam demonstrates student's unfamiliarity with the basic concepts discussed in class and/or fails to adhere to the academic standards as set out in the students' handbook.

Grading criteria for the final

A = Extraordinary. The paper demonstrates a full command of the material, reflects the author's in-depth engagement with the selected readings, clear and compelling thinking, and skillful writing.

B = Good to very good. The paper has a solid, consistent focus and demonstrates clear argumentation, but some paragraphs are not fully developed and at times the paper doesn't quite know why it does what it does. The paper contains occasional stylistic, grammatical, and spelling mistakes.

C = Acceptable. The paper fulfills the minimum required by the assignment. It might lack skillful argumentation, offer irrelevant evidence, and rely on generalities (and generalizations), but shows some basic understanding of the material. The paper contains multiple stylistic, grammatical, and spelling mistakes.

D = Major deficiencies in writing and argumentation, the paragraphs are not logically organized, and the paper lacks overall cohesion.

F = Unacceptable, fails to follow the basic points of the assignment and/or fails to adhere to the academic standards as set out in the students' handbook.

Note: Students are advised to visit the Writing Center before turning in their final papers.

Schedule*

Class 1

January 31, 2019: Your Internship: Practicalities & Expectations

This class will address the practicalities of commencing your respective internships. We will go over the internship documents for the semester: your "Internship Agreement" and the "Internship Time Sheet." We will also discuss the course content, pedagogical goals, and grading requirements. You will be introduced to the website accompanying this class, as well as the internship journal. No readings are required for this session.

Class 2

February 7, 2019: Work: Terms and Concepts

- Andrea Komlosy, *Work: The Last 1000 Years* (2018). Excerpts.
- Raymond Williams, "Work" and "Labour" in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976).

ASSIGNMENT 1 (10% of final grade)

In this short response post, you are expected to reflect on the Williams readings for Class 2 by picking a keyword related to the contemporary world of work and writing it up (500 words) in the style of Williams' *Keywords*. [Please confirm with your instructor which keyword you're covering by February 8 at the latest!](#) Post the keyword and its description to the course website by **midnight of Monday February 11 at the latest**. Students will be asked to revise these keywords staggered points in the semester, critically engaging with assigned texts. Your instructor will inform you about the deadlines individually.

Class 3

February 14, 2019: The Elephant in the Room: The (Many) Problems with Unpaid Internships

- Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (2011). 23-41.
- Madeline Schwartz, "Opportunity Costs: The True Price of Internships," *Dissent* (2013).

Class 4

February 21, 2019: The Problem with Work

- Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (2011). Excerpts.
- Miya Tokumitsu, "In the Name of Love," *The Jacobin* (2014).

Class 5

February 28, 2019: Precarization of Work

- Guy Standing, “Defining the precariat: A class in the making”, *Eurozine* (2012).
- Jia Tolentino, “The Gig Economy Celebrates Working Yourself to Death”, *New Yorker*, March 22, 2017.
- Heike Geißler, *Seasonal Associate* (2018). Excerpts.

Class 6

March 7, 2019: The Forms of Capital and the Creative Class

- Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital” (1986).
- Richard Florida, “Cities and the Creative Class” (2003).

Class 7

March 14, 2019: Emotional Labor

- Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (1983). Chapter 1.
- Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1978), “A pecking Order: Terry Mason”.

ASSIGNMENT 2 (20% final grade)

For this take-home midterm, you’ll be handed the questions at the end of Class 7. The mid-term will be made up of three shorter questions about the readings so far, plus one longer critical response to one of three quoted statements. The midterm is due **3:30 pm, March 15 at the latest**.

Class 8

March 21, 2019: Making a Living in Creative Industries – **GUEST LECTURE** (tbc)

- Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (2015), 33-59.

Class 9

March 28, 2019: Space Invaders

- Nirmal Puwar. *Space Invaders* (2004). Intro + Chapter 5 (till page 97).
- Sara Ahmed. *Living a Feminist Life* (2017). Chapter 5.

ASSIGNMENT 3 (10% of final grade)

For this assignment, read the other interviews from Studs Terkel’s *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1978). Though Terkel’s questions have mostly been edited out, what do you think they were? How do you think he got these people to open up about their work? What would you change or add about his question and approach? After considering these questions, prepare and execute a short (500-800 words) interview with one of your mentors, write it up and edit it along the lines of the pieces in Terkel’s *Working*, and send it to your instructor by **midnight of Monday, April 23 at the latest**.

Class 10

April 4, 2019: The new office and co-working in Berlin

- Nikil Saval, “New Trends in Office Design” (2014).
- Janet Merkel, “Coworking in the City” (2015).

Class 11

April 11, 2019: Gentrification: Who owns Berlin?

- Henrik Lebuhn, “Neoliberalization in Post-Wall Berlin: Understanding the City through Crisis”, *Critical Planning* 22 (2015): 99-118.
- Andrej Holm, “Berlin’s Gentrification Mainstream” (2013).

SPRING BREAK

Class 12

April 25: Keywords of Work workshop

- Your readings for this session are the revised keywords from both groups currently up on the course website.

Class 13

May 2, 2019: AN OFF-CAMPUS VISIT TO A COWORKING SPACE

Class 14

May 9, 2019: Work and/in the Future

- John M. Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren” (1930).
- Nick Srnicek & Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future. Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (2016). Excerpts.

ASSIGNMENT 4 (30% of final grade)

Your final paper will be a 1,500-word essay reflecting critically on (a particular aspect of) your internship experience that is anchored in, and informed by, at least two readings we have covered during the semester (at least one of which should be from classes 5 through 14). It should investigate a concept, paradox, or question from the readings with the help of your own internship experience. In other words, the readings should provide the lens, but the internship should provide the material. Go through your internship journal, your reader, and the course website: Which texts did you annotate most extensively? Which seem to resonate with you most in relation to your internship? Which questions would you like to explore? Deadline for submission of the final essay is **midnight of Friday May 10**.