

**PT320 Discussing Deutschland: What Germans Are Talking About Today (in German)**  
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Fall Term 2021  
Wednesdays 9:00 am to 12:15 pm  
Location: TBD

Office hours: by appointment

**Dropbox link for reader:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/cixvh69tq13yn44/AABO8NQg3g6z-5gcqTReNEdPa?dl=0>

**Course Description**

This course engages pressing debates in German media today, asking about the issues and forms of discourse that shape German politics and social life. It is structured around engagement with German media as well as visits to cultural sites, events, and organizations in Berlin, with additional topics chosen by the participants in cooperation with the instructor. These will include

- Art and politics at the German Historical Museum
- Topography of Terror and Germany's remembrance culture
- The 2021 "super election year" in Germany
- The opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin and the site history of the Berlin Stadtschloss

In addition to the study of current public debates and forms of civic engagement, the purpose of this course is to refine and advance your ability to articulate yourself verbally and in writing through constant vocabulary building. Students taking the class should have a B2 proficiency level in German or higher.

## Course Goals

- You will get to know **key themes dominating current public debates** in German media and **visit Berlin-based cultural sites, events, and organizations, generating ideas for social and political change.**
- By working with partners, in groups, through class **discussions**, by **writing assignments** in and outside of class, and by **building up your vocabulary**, you will refine and advance your ability to articulate your verbal and written contributions to current debates more confidently and concisely. You will improve your general German language abilities in the areas of writing, reading, listening, and speaking.
- Working closely with the instructor, you will **choose and present a discussion topic** including texts or other material for the class to discuss, improving your ability to **critically engage and evaluate German public discourse** and to **develop your own point of view in dialogue with that of others.**
- **Class discussion will generally be in German. Several discussions may be conducted in English.**

## Required Texts

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to read a newspaper every week each Friday. I will assign which paper you should read. Please purchase the physical copy of this paper, rather than reading it online.

You should also buy:

- Tupoka Ogette. *Exit Racism: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen*. Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2017.
- *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum*. Edited by Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah. Berlin: Ullstein, 2019.
- Susan Neiman. *Learning from the Germans*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 2019.
- A notebook for a weekly writing journal.
- A weekly newspaper (to be assigned). You should purchase this on Fridays.

All other readings will be available via a Dropbox link. Much of our work will be collaborative and based on texts or materials that we will select and provide for each other in the course of the semester.

## Participation

Your active and prepared participation is crucial and constitutes a significant part of your grade. You are expected to contribute actively in class discussions and group work, and you need to be prepared to answer and turn in small assignments or short reading

comprehension quizzes. The purpose of these smaller assignments is to help you test your reading, speaking, and listening comprehension skills on a regular basis.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars. Please note: You will be allowed no more than two absences during the semester. Repeated lateness also counts as an absence. Each additional absence will lower your final grade by 5 percent. In case you have any medical issues or other concerns that could impact your compliance with the regulations above, please make sure to inform your instructor during the first week of the semester.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2021:** Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

### **Excursions**

We will be making several excursions into Berlin.

The uncertainty around what coronavirus restrictions will be in place means we will have to be flexible in terms of planning. This means in particular:

- For our two visits to the German Historical Museum, please arrange and purchase your own ticket with a time window. Class time is reserved for these visits but you are also welcome to visit at another time of your choosing. Our class discussion the following week will be structured around sharing our individual experiences.
- For the Topography of Terror, we should be able to visit the site together, as it is outdoors. To visit the visitor center and museum, you will need to book a time window on your own. Here, too, class time will be reserved for our visit but you are also welcome to visit on your own time.
- For our visit to the Humboldt Forum, I have arranged for a special group tour. This will require that I submit your names a week before we visit for a security clearance.

Funds are available to cover your tickets to these venues. I can reimburse you if you provide me with your ticket after your visit.

### **Writing Journal**

One central aspect of our course will be a writing journal you keep in German. Please purchase a simple writing notebook for this purpose.

### **Resources**

In preparing for class, you are strongly encouraged to make use of the different German dictionaries listed on the Bard College Foreign Languages, Cultures, and Literatures website: <http://flcl.bard.edu/resources/german/>.

### **Writing**

For writing assignments outside of class, bring a hard copy of your double-spaced text with margins of ca. 3 cm to class on the due date. Essays that are up to 24 hours late may be lowered one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). I am not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late.

For all essay assignments to be complete, you must hand in **two versions**. Based on the comments you receive on your first version, you will need to revise and resubmit your correction along with the first version. You will receive a grade for both essays based on grammar, content, and structure and the thoroughness/accuracy of your corrections.

*Your work on your essays, including your corrections, should be yours alone. Do not use DeepL, Google translate, or ask native speakers for help. The purpose of the writing assignment is for you to make mistakes and learn by correcting them.*

### Final Projects

The last two weeks of class will be reserved for final project presentations. The form of these projects is open: they can be something written, a video, or something else you design; they can be completed individually or in groups. They will be posted to the course website for the public.

### Academic Honesty

In the written work you do for this course, you are expected to adhere to the rules of academic honesty stated under the paragraph on **plagiarism** in the Student Handbook: The most serious violation of academic integrity is the attempt to pass off the work of others as one's own. Plagiarism means presenting the exact words of others as one's own, or seeking to disguise borrowings from other sources through paraphrase and/or through the failure to use appropriate means of attribution and citation. Plagiarism also includes the re-use of one's own work for another assignment, whether in the same course or in a different course. If a student is in any uncertainty about what constitutes plagiarism, they should consult academic advisors or course instructors.

<http://www.berlin.bard.edu/for-students/student-handbook/academics/#c2599>

### Grade Breakdown:

Participation:	20%
Presentations/discussions:	20%
Papers:	40%
Final project	20%

## SYLLABUS

Sep. 1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>What is a public sphere or a public? Who has a voice, who is heard and seen, and how and via what media? What are the topics being discussed in public in Germany today? What media do you read, in German and in English, or in another language? What is more important for the public sphere, images or text?</p> <p>To do before coming to class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Wikipedia article on “Public Sphere.”</li> <li>• Read Thomas Meaney, “Bild, Merkel and the Culture Wars: The Inside Story of Germany’s Biggest Tabloid,” <i>The Guardian</i>, July 16, 2020.</li> <li>• Buy a copy of the <i>Bild Zeitung</i> from August 31, 2021 and bring it to class.</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the German nightly Tagesschau every night. Fill out the logbook assignment and prepare 1 clip of 5 minutes that you’d like us to discuss together with the class (this may be assigned in groups).</li> <li>• 1-paragraph essay on the Tagesschau</li> </ul>
Sep. 8	<p><i>Tagesschau</i> Themen</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tagesschau</i> clip/logbook</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper articles to be chosen by students</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will draw straws to assign one German news publication to each of you. Over the course of the semester, you will follow this publication for five weeks, then another publication for another five weeks, based on a logbook we will discuss today.</li> <li>• Prepare museum guide for our visit next week</li> </ul> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tagesschau</i> paragraph</li> </ul>
Sep. 15	<p><b>City visit: <i>Documenta: Politik Und Kunst</i>, Deutsches Historisches Museum</b> <b>This week you should visit the Deutsches Historisches Museum. You should arrange your own ticket with a time window. You are welcome to visit during class time or at a time of your choice.</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read exhibition website</li> <li>• Museum guide</li> </ul> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museum guide</li> </ul>

Sep. 22	<p>Documenta Discussion Elections: Berlin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Thüringen, Deutschland Student topic 1</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-minute museum presentation: let us see the exhibition through your eyes</li> <li>• Three articles on elections (chosen by students)</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student topic 1</li> </ul> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-page analysis about an article from your newspaper</li> </ul>
Sep. 29	<p>Elections: Results and Discussion</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared to give an overview of how your paper covered the election results.</li> <li>• Pick one article from your newspaper on the day after the elections (that will be Monday, September 27) for us all to read.</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will have an in-class writing assignment on the elections.</li> </ul>
Oct. 6	<p>Germany interkulturell</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum</i>, ed. Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah (Berlin: Ullstein, 2019), "Vorwort" and essay by Fatma Aydemir, "Arbeit."</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anna Prizkau, "'Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum': Nervt, bitte!," <i>FAZ</i>, March 1, 2019.</li> <li>• Find and read another review of <i>Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum</i>.</li> <li>• Student topic 2</li> </ul> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised one-page analysis of your newspaper article.</li> </ul>
Oct. 13	<p>Exit Racism</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tupoka Ogette, <i>Exit Racism: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen</i> (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2017), chapters 1-2, 4-5.</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exit Racism</li> </ul> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-page comparison and analysis of two articles on the same topic from different sources. Your discussion of one of the articles should be based on your one-page description/analysis.</li> <li>• Revision of in-class writing assignment</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper logs</li> <li>• Personal information for security clearance for our visit to the Humboldt Forum.</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week (after break):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Today we will assign a new newspaper! You should start reading your new paper on October 22.</li> </ul>
Oct. 20	<b>Fall break - no class</b>
Oct. 27	<p><b>City visit: Humboldt-Forum</b> <b>We will meet this week at the Humboldt-Forum.</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brian Ladd, "The Old Berlin," in <i>The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 41-82.</li> </ul>
Nov. 3	<p>The Humboldt Forum—Berlin and the World?</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrea Wulf. <i>The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World</i> (New York: Knopf, 2015). Prologue, Chapter 7 "Chimborazo," Chapter 18 "Humboldt's Cosmos."</li> <li>• Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Markus Messling, "Wilhelm von Humboldt," <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., <a href="https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/wilhelm-humboldt/">https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/wilhelm-humboldt/</a>.</li> <li>• Walking guide of Humboldt-Forum/5-minute presentation</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student presentations on Humboldt-Forum</li> <li>• Student topic 3</li> </ul> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed materials for final projects</li> <li>• Revised 3-page essay</li> </ul>
Nov. 10	<p>German Remembrance Culture + Susan Neiman Discussion in English</p> <p>To read for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Neiman, <i>Learning from the Germans</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 2019), chapters 1 and 2.</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of Susan Neimann</li> <li>• Look at Topographie des Terrors website</li> <li>• Look at one more memorial site website</li> </ul> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed materials for final projects</li> <li>• Sign-up for office hour discussion with me on final projects</li> </ul>

Nov. 17	<p><b>City visit: Topographie des Terrors</b> We will be meeting this week at the Topographie des Terrors. Details to be arranged depending on current coronavirus restrictions.</p> <p>Please read before visiting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brian Ladd, "The Old Berlin," in <i>The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pages on Topographie des Terrors.</li> </ul>
Nov. 24	<p><b>City visit: Künstler Des Nationalsozialismus/BRD</b> We will be meeting this week at the Deutsches Historisches Museum. Details to be arranged depending on current coronavirus restrictions.</p> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-paragraph reflection on Topographie des Terrors visit</li> <li>• Comparative paper, 3 pages, comparing your two papers</li> <li>• Newspaper logs</li> </ul>
Dec. 1	Student projects
Dec. 8	<p>Student projects</p> <p>Assignments due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your final project for uploading is due Dec. 17.</li> </ul>