

GM 362 The German Public Sphere (in German)**Version: January 3, 2021**

Plans may change based on circumstances as the semester progresses

Dr. Michael Thomas Taylor
Platanenstraße 24
m.taylor@berlin.bard.edu

Spring Term 2021
Wednesdays 9:00 am to 12:15 pm
Location: Seminar Room 5, P24

Office hours: by appointment

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. This semester the course is taking place again under the shadow of Covid-19. In addition to traditional public media such as newspapers, one main focus will be on online forms of publicness. Since most cultural institutions are closed or not permitting groups, we will venture into the city with several walking tours carried out individually and discussed as a group. Students will also play a major part in contributing the content that we discuss, choosing materials and topics for us to examine together.

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.

The course is structured in a blended-learning format. Some excursions combine a personal visit to a Berlin site with written assignments and follow-up class discussions. Students who cannot be in Berlin will be given alternate, internet-based assignments.

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.**

Excursions

Two assignments consist of walking tours in Berlin, followed up by a walking tour guide and presentation shared with the class. I have scheduled two class periods for these walking tours. You may of course elect to visit the site at another time as long as you complete the assignment on time. Your visit to the site, including travel time, should take about 3 hours.

Required Texts

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to read a newspaper every week each Friday. I will assign which papers 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.
- One issue of the literary magazine *Sand*, tbd.

All other will be available via a Dropbox link. Please note that you **must** have a hard copy of the text with you in every class meeting. 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 one quarter 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 SPRING 2021:

Some students might 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.

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/>. Do not use DeepL or Google translate etc. for your writing; you will not learn to write German that way.

Writing

For writing assignments outside of class, bring a hard copy of your double-spaced text with margins of ca. three cm to class on the assignments' due dates. Essays that are up to 24 hours 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.

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, he or she should consult academic advisors or course instructors.

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

Grade Breakdown:

Participation:	25%
Presentations/discussions:	35%
Papers:	20%
Final project	20%

SYLLABUS

Feb. 3	<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"> • Read Wikipedia article on “Public Sphere.” • Thomas Meaney, “Bild, Merkel and the Culture Wars: The Inside Story of Germany’s Biggest Tabloid,” <i>The Guardian</i>, July 16, 2020. • Buy a copy of the <i>Bild Zeitung</i> from January 20, 2021 and bring it to class. <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will draw straws to assign one German news publication to each student. Over the course of the semester, you will follow this publication for six weeks, then another publication for another six weeks, based on a log-book we will discuss today. Each week we will begin class with a presentation of one of these papers.
Feb. 10	<p>Germany interkulturell</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum</i>, ed. Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah (Berlin: Ullstein, 2019), “Vorwort” and essay by Fatma Aydemir, “Arbeit.” • One issue of <i>Sand</i> tbd. • Discussion with Jake Schneider, editor of Berlin literary magazine <i>Sand</i>, who will be joining us via Zoom.
Feb. 17	<p>Exit Racism part 1 + Student topic 1</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Prizkau, “‘Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum’: Nervt, bitte!,” <i>FAZ</i>, March 1, 2019. • Find and read another review of <i>Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum</i>. • Tupoka Ogette, <i>Exit Racism: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen</i> (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2017), chapters 1–2. • Student topic 1 <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-page analysis about an article from your newspaper
Feb. 24	<p>Exit Racism part 2 + BLM in Germany</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tupoka Ogette, <i>Exit Racism: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen</i> (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2017), chapters 3–5. • Three videos on BLM in Germany • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJY9TE6FPMg • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycX4OA2uE74 • A video we will choose together

March 3	<p>In-class writing assignment + Student topic 2</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have an in-class writing assignment on the topic of multiculturalism in Germany. • Student topic 2 <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised one-page analysis of your newspaper article.
March 10	<p>City visit: Topographie des Terrors</p> <p>You should visit the Topographie des Terrors on your own. You may visit at any time of your choosing, or during the regularly scheduled class hour.</p> <p>Assignment due by midnight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
March 17	<p>Topographie des Terrors + Susan Neiman</p> <p>To read for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Neiman, <i>Learning from the Germans</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 2019), chapters 1 and 2. <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Topographie des Terrors guide • Walking guide for a five-minute presentation on the Topographie des Terrors
March 24	<p>Landtagswahl in Rheinland-Pfalz and Baden-Württemberg + Student topic 3</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student will pick one issue being discussed in the media in connection with these state elections for our discussion and prepare materials for our discussion. • Student topic 3 <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today we will assign a new newspaper! You should start reading your new paper on April 2. •
March 31	<p>Fall break – no class</p>
April 7	<p>Corona: The current situation + Students topic 4 and 5</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together, we will attempt to gain an overview of how media are currently discussing the pandemic. • Student topics 4 + 5 <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised three-page paper • Final project groups/topics

April 14	<p>City visit: Humboldt Forum</p> <p>You should visit the Humboldt Forum on your own. You may visit at any time of your choosing, or during the regularly scheduled class hour.</p> <p>Before you go, you should read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
April 21	<p>Landtagswahl in Thüringen + Student topics 6 and 7</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student will pick one issue being discussed in the media in connection with these state elections for our discussion and prepare materials for our discussion. • Student topics 6 and 7
April 28	<p>The Humboldt Forum—Berlin and the World?</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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." • Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Markus Messling, "Wilhelm von Humboldt," <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/wilhelm-humboldt/. <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking guide + presentation on Humboldt Forum
May 5	Student projects
May 12	<p>Student projects</p> <p>Assignments due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your final project for uploading is due May 21.