

# FM 303

## Berlin School and Beyond: German Cinema After Reunification

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

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Office Hours (P 98, Room 003): Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00, or by appointment

Course Times: Thursday, 15.45 – 19.00; Wednesday, 19.30 – 22.00 (weekly film screening)

### Course Description

Advanced Module: Artists, Genres, Movements

In the 1990s the term "Berlin School" (Berliner Schule) was coined to describe a group of German films that specifically reflect the Zeitgeist and cultural atmosphere in Germany after reunification. Directors often classed as belonging to the Berlin School are Christian Petzold, Angela Schanelec, Christoph Hochhäusler, Thomas Arslan, Maren Ade and Valeska Grisebach, with films like *Milchwald* (2003), *Marseille* (2004), *Ghosts* (2005), *Yella* (2007), *Barbara* (2012), *Phoenix* (2014), *The Dreamed Path* (2016) or *Toni Erdmann* (2016). However, their common themes and stylistic elements are difficult to identify, as are their divergences from or continuities with the New German Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore this class explores German cinema of the last decades in a broader sense, analyzing selected films that represent Berlin School but also others films that go beyond or lie outside this categorization, e.g. films by Andreas Dresen, Thomas Stuber, Nora Fingscheidt and Burhan Qurbani, in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the German cinema of recent decades and its relation to social change and historical experience.

### Requirements

Basic knowledge of film history, film theory, and film analysis.

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared, to participate actively in the class discussions and to do all the course assignments on time.

\* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes and film screenings is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

More than two absences will affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Special considerations for Spring 2022: Students must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. The instructors will make all reasonable efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

### **Assessment / Writing Assignments**

- Individual presentations in class, based on individual research
- Mid-term essay (1500-2000 words), due in week 8, Friday, March 25, 2022, midnight
- Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Friday, May 20, 2022, noon (12.01 pm) \* Please note: Deadline for final essay might be a few days earlier for senior students! \*

The topic of the final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

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

Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Participation:	25 %
Midterm Essay:	25 %
Presentation:	25 %
Final Essay:	25 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C-.  
If two components are graded F, the final grade will be F (i.e. the whole class will be failed).

### **Schedule**

\* Tentative schedule depending on official Corona policies, availability of films and students' choice of presentations

#### **Week 1**

Introduction: German Cinema and German History (1)

No film screening in week 1!

#### **Week 2**

German Cinema and German History (2): New German Cinema, Autorenfilm and Berlin School

Approaches to Film Analysis and Film Interpretation

*Stilles Land (Silent Country, 1992, Andreas Dresen)*

*Das Leben ist eine Baustelle (Life Is All You Get, 1997, Wolfgang Becker)*

#### **Week 3**

*Geschwister – Kardesler (Brothers and Sisters, 1997, Thomas Arslan)*

*Der schöne Tag (A Fine Day, 2001, Thomas Arslan)*

#### **Week 4**

*Ferien (Vacation, 2007, Thomas Arslan)*

*Im Schatten (In the Shadows, 2010, Thomas Arslan)*

### **Week 5**

*Marseille (2004, Angela Schanelec)*

*Der traumhafte Weg (The Dreamed Path, 2016, Angela Schanelec)*

### **Week 6**

*Gespenster (Ghosts, 2005, Christian Petzold)*

*Yella (2007, Christian Petzold)*

*Jerichow (2008, Christian Petzold)*

### **Week 7**

*Barbara (2012, Christian Petzold)*

*Phoenix (2014, Christian Petzold)*

*Transit (2018, Christian Petzold)*

### **Week 8**

*Milchwald (This Very Moment, 2003, Christoph Hochhäusler)*

*Unter dir die Stadt (The City Below, 2010, Christoph Hochhäusler)*

Deadline for mid-term essay (1500-2000 words): Friday, March 25, 2022, midnight

### **Week 9**

*Sturm (Storm, 2009, Hans-Christian Schmid)*

*Was bleibt (Home for the Weekend, 2012, Hans-Christian Schmid)*

### **Week 10**

*Halbe Treppe (Grill Point, 2002, Andreas Dresen)*

*Als wir träumten (As We Were Dreaming, 2015, Andreas Dresen)*

*Gundermann (2018, Andreas Dresen)*

**Spring Break: April 11 –April 16, 2022**

**Week 11**

*Alle anderen (Everyone Else, 2009, Maren Ade)*  
*Toni Erdmann (2016, Maren Ade)*

**Week 12**

*Western (2017, Valeska Grisebach)*  
*In den Gängen (In the Aisles, 2018, Thomas Stuber)*

**Week 13**

*Systemsprenger (System Crasher, 2019, Nora Fingscheidt)*

**Week 14**

*Wir sind jung. Wir sind stark (We Are Young. We Are Strong, 2014, Burhan Qurbani)*  
*Berlin Alexanderplatz (2020, Burhan Qurbani)*

**Week 15:**

Completion Week (May 16 – 20, 2022)

Deadline for final essay (3000 – 3500 words): Friday, May 20, 2022, noon (12.01 pm)

\* Please note: Deadline for final essay might be a few days earlier for senior students!

**Literature:**

Abel, Marco. *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2015.

Abel, Marco, and Jaimey Fisher (eds.). *The Berlin School and Its Global Context: A Transnational Art Cinema*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018.

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Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971.

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- Bergfelder, Tim, Erica Carter, Deniz Göktürk and Claudia Sandberg (eds.). *The German Cinema Book*. Second Edition. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing/British Film Institute, 2020.
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- Clarke, David (ed.). *German Cinema Since Unification*. London/New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Cook, Robert F., Lutz Koepnick, Kristin Kopp and Brad Prager (eds.). *Berlin School Glossary. An ABC of the New Wave in German Cinema*. Bristol/Chicago: Intellect, 2013.
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- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Revised and expanded edition. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.
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Landry, Olivia. *Movement and Performance in Berlin School Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.

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Nelmes, Jill (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.

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Reimer, Robert, Reinhard Zachau and Margit Sinka. *German Culture Through Film. An Introduction to German Cinema*. Second Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Focus/Hackett Publishing Company, 2017.

Rentschler, Eric. *The Use and Abuse of Cinema. German Legacies from the Weimar Era to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Roy, Rajendra, and Anke Leweke. *The Berlin School. Films from the Berliner Schule*. With contributions by Thomas Arslan, Valeska Grisebach, Benjamin Heisenberg, Christoph Hochhäusler, Nina Hoss, Dennis Lim, Katja Nicodemus, Christian Petzold and Rainer Rother. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2013.

Scharf, Inga. *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema. Homeless at Home*. New York/London: Routledge, 2009.

Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.

### **Essay Deadlines**

Mid-term essay (1500-2000 words): Week 8, Friday, March 25, 2022, midnight

Final essay (3000-3500 words): Week 15, Friday, May 20, 2022, noon (12.01 pm)

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