

# LT352 – Happy in Berlin?

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti  
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Office Hours: by appointment  
Course Times: Fridays 14:00-17:15

## Course Description

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

In the interwar years, Berlin was a kind of myth - it embodied for a short while the idea of a radical modernity, which partly overshadowed its status as the capital of a state, Prussia, associated with an ethos of militarization. In the 1920s, it became a magnet for writers, artists and intellectuals from other German cities and many countries, who arrived in the city with different goals: to live openly their non-normative sexualities, to enjoy and be inspired by the modernity of the entertainment industry and the freedom of the city's famed unconventional nightlife, to become acquainted with the more recent developments in the new disciplines of psychoanalysis and sexology, to be part of international artistic networks. How did writers and artists represent this experience? How did their social and cultural lives affect literary and artistic forms? How did the "myth of Berlin" relate to other versions of modernism and modernity? The course is based on the exhibition "Happy in Berlin?" (2021), organized by the GBZ (Grossbritannienzentrum) at the Humboldt University, and will offer an interdisciplinary exploration of written and visual artworks about Berlin mainly by artists and writers (many of whom British) who visited Berlin in the interwar years, such as Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Alix Strachey, Bryher, Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden. Students will read these texts in dialogue with contemporary works on architecture, cultural history, psychoanalysis, sexology, cinema, by, among others, Walter Benjamin, Franz Hessel, Magnus Hirschfeld, Irmgard Keun, Alfred Döblin., Georg Simmel. Students will read critical and theoretical texts on modernism, psychoanalysis, cultural history and the history of modernity. The will involve excursions in the city.

## Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

### 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.

### Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, ([accommodations@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:accommodations@berlin.bard.edu)) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker ([j.harker@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)) or Maria Anderson-Long ([m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu)).

### Attendance

Attendance at all classes 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.

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

### Assessment

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

### Assignments

Assignments for this course consist in:

- 2 response papers of 1000 words each (students can decide which texts they want to respond to. The response papers are due just before class starts, on the day in which the chosen text is discussed). Response papers cannot be written for the texts chosen for the presentation. The first response paper must be submitted before week 5: students will choose the two texts at the beginning of the semester.
- 1 presentation on a chosen assigned text: max 20 minutes. Students should submit their presentation notes after delivering the presentation – circa 1500 words).
- 1 final essay (circa 3000 words). Deadline: Tuesday 17 December, 23:59 hrs

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Should a student be sick during the exam days or on the day of their scheduled presentations, it will be possible to schedule an alternative date for the missed exam.

An unexcused absence on the day of the assigned presentation or exam will result in a F for that assignment.

### 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 a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. 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:	30%
2 Response papers (1000 words each: 2000 words in total):	20% (10% each)
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1000 words):	20%
Final essay (3000 words):	30%

## Library and Book Purchase Policies

Students are asked to buy or borrow from the library the following texts:

Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*  
Sabahattin Ali, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (London: Penguin, 2017)  
Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (1932)

All other assigned texts will be made available in digital format or as printed reader.  
A reserve shelf with critical readings is available in the library.

## Schedule

### Weeks 1-5: Berlin, Modern Metropolis – History, Myth, Affect

#### Friday 6 September – Introduction

Readings:

Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis. A History of Berlin* (selection)  
Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (selection)  
Richard F. Wetzell, "The Weimar Republic Reconsidered: Introduction", in David Lazar and Richard F. Wetzell (eds), *Forum. The Weimar Republic Reconsidered* (Bulletin of the German Historical Institute) no. 65 (2019), pp. 9-17.

Visual art:

Film: Walther Ruttmann, *Berlin. Symphonie einer Großstadt* (1927)  
Photographs: Mario von Bucovich, *Berlin 1928*  
Paintings and drawings by Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

#### Friday 13 September

Readings:

Franz Hessel, *Walking in Berlin. A Flaneur in the Capital* (1929) – selection  
George Simmel, "The Stranger"  
Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) – excerpts

Extra readings: Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (selection); Henri Lefebvre, *The*

*Production of Space* (selection)

Friday 20 September

Readings:

Joseph Roth, *What I Saw. Reports from Berlin 1920-1933* (selection)

Harold Nicolson, "The Charm of Berlin" (1929)

Friday 27 September – NO CLASS DUE TO CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Friday 4 October

Readings:

Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Chronicle* and *A Berlin Childhood* (excerpts)

Sigfried Krakauer, "Farewell to the Linden Arcade" (1930), in *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*, pp. 337-342

Andrew Thacker, *Modernism, Space and the City. Outsiders and Affect in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and London* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019) - selection

## **Weeks 6-9: Eros, Freedom, Entertainment**

Weeks 6-7: Friday 11 October and Friday 18 October – Queer Metropolis I

Readings:

Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939)

Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind* (excerpts)

Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin. The Birthplace of Modern Identity* (selection)

## **FALL BREAK**

Week 8 – Friday 1 November - EXCURSION

Schwules Museum Berlin – Exhibition on the history of sex work in Berlin

Weeks 9-10 – Friday 8 November and Friday 15 November- Queer Metropolis II

Readings:

Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlin's Third Gender* (selection)

Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette Timm, Thomas Herrn (eds), *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld* (2017) – selection

Heike Bauer, "The Institute of Sexual Science and Sexual Subcultures in 1920s Berlin".

Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017) – selection

Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic. The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin. Expanded Edition* (Port Townsend: 2000) – selection

Laurie Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of Gay Rights. A Sexologist, His Student, and the Empire of Queer Love* (University of Toronto Press, 2022) – selection

## Weeks 11-12 – Happy in Berlin? Intellectuals in Search of the Myth

### Week 11 - Friday 22 November

Readings: Sabahattin Ali, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (1943)

### Week 12 - Friday 29 November – W. H. Auden's, Bryher's and Stephen Spender's Berlin

Readings:

W.H. Auden, "1929"

Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (1951) - selection

Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis. A Writer's Memoir*, pp. 289-315

### Week 13 – Friday 6 December – Cafés and Cabarets

Gesa Stedman, "An Habitué of the Romanisches Café: Alyx Strachey's 1920s Berlin" (2017)

Else Lasker-Schüler, *Your Diamond Dreams Cut Open My Arteries: Poems by Else Lasker Schüler* (selection)

Film: Benjamin Cantu, *Eldorado. Everything the Nazi Hated* (2023)

### Week 14 - Friday 13 December – Irmgard Keun

Readings:

Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (1932)

Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (excerpts)

Jill S. Smith, "Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar Fiction"

Paintings by Jeanne Mammen

Final essay deadline: Tuesday 17 December, 23:59 hrs

### Week 15 - Friday 20 December – COMPLETION WEEK (make-up class for 27 September)

Excursion: Berlinische Galerie