

**PT320 Discussing Deutschland: What Germans Are Talking about Today (in German)
(preliminary syllabus August 13, 2020 – dates and visits to be finalized)**

Dr. Michael Thomas Taylor
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Fall Term 2020
Thursdays from 14:00 to 17:15

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Office hours: after class and 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. It is structured around visits to cultural sites, events, and organizations in Berlin, with additional topics chosen by the participants in cooperation with the instructor. These will include

- The exhibition on Hannah Arendt at the Deutsches Historisches Museum
- Topographie des Terrors
- Bundespressekonferenz
- The 2020 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.

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.**

Excursions

We will be taking a number of excursions into Berlin to meet at cultural sites. The excursions are mostly organized so that you can carry them out during class time or on your own. If you cannot visit the sites, for example because you are not in Berlin, we will determine an alternate online assignment.

Required Texts

All texts 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 the following regulations: 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 half a point (i.e. if your final grade is a B, and you have missed three classes and/or been late repeatedly you will be downgraded to a B-).

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.

Please be punctual and considerate. Also, please keep bathroom breaks to a minimum. Interruptions are bad for everybody's concentration and impolite.

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

You will be asked to explore the ideas and texts discussed in class in several writing assignments in and outside of class (see syllabus for dates). 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 late can 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 the corrected second version of your essay, based on its content, grammar, and structure.

Final Projects

The last week 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%
Presentation/discussions:	15%
Papers:	40%
Final project	20%

SYLLABUS

Sep. 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. <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 based on a log-book we will discuss today. Starting on September seventeenth, discussion each week will start with a 20- to 30-minute focus on this weekly media coverage. ● I will hand out an exhibition question guide for your visit to the Deutsches Historisches Museum.
Sep. 10	<p>CITY VISIT: Hannah Arendt exhibition at Deutsches Historisches Museum</p> <p>Class this week will be a blended format—you should visit the Hannah Arendt exhibition at the Deutsches Historisches Museum on your own. You may visit the exhibition at any time of your choosing, or during the regularly scheduled class hour. We will meet at 16:15 via Zoom to do a joint writing assignment on the exhibition.</p>
Sep. 17	<p>Hannah Arendt discussion – judgment as a mode of activity</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Hannah Arendt’s essay “Reflections on Little Rock.” ● Watch Arendt in discussion with Günter Gaus, YouTube video of interview, October 28, 1964; this can be easily found by searching “Hannah Arendt im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus” <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed Arendt museum guide ● Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Sep. 24	<p>CITY VISIT: Topographie des Terrors</p>

	<p>Class this week will be a blended format—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. We will meet at 16:15 via Zoom to do a joint writing assignment on the exhibition.</p> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item ● One-page analysis of newsmedia item
Oct. 1	<p>Discussion: racism and democracy in Germany and Europe</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readings TBA, focusing on racism in Germany ● Thomas Laqueur, “While Statues Sleep,” review of <i>Learning from the Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil</i> by Susan Neiman, <i>London Review of Books</i>, vol. 42, no. 12 (18 June 2020). Be sure to read the replies to the journal, including Susan Neiman’s reply. <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed Topographie des Terrors museum guide ● Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Oct. 8	<p>Discussion: old media + new media, media and politics, prepare for visit to Bundespressekonferenz</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media texts to be chosen closer to class date <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3-page comparison and analysis of two articles from different media sources on the same topic. Your discussion of one of the articles should be based on your 1-page description/analysis. ● Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Oct. 15	<p>CITY VISIT: Bundespressekonferenz</p> <p>We will either be visiting the Bundespressekonferenz in person or carrying out an online visit if that is not possible.</p> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3-page comparison and analysis of two articles from different media sources on the same topic. Your discussion of one of the articles should be based on your 1-page description/analysis. <p>Writing assignment due:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Oct. 22	Fall break – no class
Oct. 29	<p>Publics in/after Corona</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites we have chosen as a class to examine how the pandemic is changing the German public sphere(s) <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-page comparison and analysis of two articles from different media sources on the same topic. Your discussion of one of the articles should be based on your 1-page description/analysis. Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Nov. 5	<p>Politics USA/Germany</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media guide for examining coverage of US presidential election in Germany <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Nov. 12	<p>ONLINE EXCURSION: Politics and media online</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group presentations on several websites we have chosen as a class <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final/corrected draft of in-class writing assignment Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item
Nov. 19	<p>Das Humboldtforum – Germany’s engagement with its colonial past</p> <p>To prepare for class:</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. Two articles TBD on the Humboldt Forum. <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item Media logbook including one paragraph about a media item Final project groups/topics

Nov. 26	CITY VISIT: Humboldt Forum To prepare for class: <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."• Alexander von Humboldt, <i>Cosmos: A Sketch or a Physical Description of the Universe</i>, trans. E. C. Otté (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1860), "Introduction."
Dec. 3	IN CLASS Student projects
Dec. 10	IN CLASS Student projects