

May 26, 2020

Dear prospective students of Bard College Berlin,
dear members of the Bard College Berlin community,

This May, our students concluded a remarkable and successful spring semester. With persistence, patience and ingenuity, they overcame the challenges of the past three months to complete their courses. Despite everything, the Class of 2020 graduated on time. Our students, faculty and staff members have proven that they possess the resilience and inventiveness to work, learn and unfold their capacities under difficult conditions.

The record of the past semester and current health developments in Berlin and Germany enable us to look to the Fall Semester of 2020 and the next academic year with confidence.

Bard College Berlin plans to open in August with in-person instruction, in accordance with our published academic calendar. We are on track to welcome a robust incoming class of first-year and transfer students. The “Language and Thinking” program for first-year BA and Academy Year students is scheduled to begin with orientation days on August 9 and 10, and “L&T” classes commence on August 11. Transfer students are expected to attend orientation days on August 27 and 28, and semester courses for all students commence on August 31.

Our approach to liberal arts education is centered on the intellectual interaction and direct feedback that only in-person seminars provide. We look forward to seeing you around the seminar table as soon as possible. At the same time, your safety is our primary concern, and the coronavirus outlook and attendant regulations around us remain moving targets. We are therefore prepared for many scenarios for the fall semester, each contingent on local conditions, travel restrictions and official guidelines regarding social distancing, quarantining and testing.

Most important, faculty members are planning all courses as “blended-learning” seminars. This means that in-person course meetings will in addition be accessible remotely through an online teleconferencing setup. Blended learning will:

- allow students to participate from abroad if their arrival in Berlin is delayed by governmental travel restrictions, legal entry requirements, increased waiting times for visa or other circumstances beyond their control,
- allow students to participate if they are asked to self-isolate or required to quarantine for fourteen days at any point during the semester, and
- enable the college to keep seminar room occupancy in line with social distancing practices.

Moreover, faculty members will be prepared to take seminar courses back online in their entirety, should this become necessary at any time during the semester to keep you safe and healthy.

If you are a prospective first-year student, we ask you to consider taking up residence at Bard College Berlin on July 28, if this is possible. Doing so would allow you to join “Language and Thinking” classes in person from the outset, after quarantining in an on-campus apartment. We will be in contact regarding this possibility by the beginning of July. Upon arrival, all on-campus students will be assigned to fixed small residential “household” groups to limit any potential contagion and to allow for reliable contact tracing.

If you are a returning student or a transfer student, we strongly recommend that you travel to your (on-campus or off-campus) residence in Berlin by August 17. This would allow you to join seminar classes in person on August 31, after quarantining in place for fourteen days, even if the current government directive for travelers entering Germany remains in effect.

Financial aid arrangements will continue unchanged, and all payment deadlines remain in effect. Payment will be refunded to prospective students who, due to travel restrictions, legal entry requirements or other circumstances beyond their control, have to postpone their studies at the college to the Spring Semester. Payment will also be refunded to returning students who, for reasons beyond their control, have to withdraw from the college for the duration of the Fall Semester. Moreover, if unforeseen financial hardship forces you to consider interrupting your studies, please contact the Financial Aid Office. We aim to ensure the continuity of your education to the best of our ability.

We will let you know as soon as possible of any changes to our planned operations forced by the pandemic. In the meantime, please know that we continue to focus all resources on the quality of your education. We are looking forward to welcoming you to Bard College Berlin for the first time, or seeing you back here on campus. Like you, we are keen to see you continue your education and enjoy the riches of university life.

With our best wishes for a safe and happy summer,



Florian Becker