

AH212 Memory Matters: The Place of Germany's Past in the Present

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Aya Soika

Course Times: Fridays 14:00 – 17:15 (make sure you reserve enough time ahead and after class during our regular offsite visits, see syllabus)

Email: a.soika@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: by email appointment & Fridays 11:00-12:30 (please get in touch beforehand)

Course Description

What aspects of the past are being remembered in German art of the 20th and 21st centuries? How do Berlin's numerous museums, as well as its architecture and memorials, add to the dynamics of remembrance culture discourse? The seminar focuses on "the place of Germany's past" in its development throughout the second half of the twentieth century up until today. Beyond the discussion of the works by well-known figures such as Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer or Gerhard Richter, or those by architects such as Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman, the class will address numerous other sites and positions which remain of great interest in attempts to map Berlin's memory landscape. With public discussion currently focused on the reconstruction of Berlin's historical center and its controversial pseudo-Baroque City Palace--in reality a steel and concrete construction--we will explore the place of recent debates over the role of Germany's colonial past in Germany's memory discourse, especially in the context of shifting definitions and new approaches to constructions of contemporary national identity. In addition, the seminar aims to serve as an introduction to twentieth-century German history and remembrance culture in art and architecture. Visits to museums and memorial sites will be an integral part of the class.

Requirements

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(including expectations regarding participation and course assignments)

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. 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 is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, an absence from a double session will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Beyond that, unexcused absences will affect the participation grade. 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.

In light of the special situation caused by the pandemic, students must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Please get in touch with me via email to discuss how best to catch up.

Covid-regulations

Please note that hybrid attendance is mostly not possible, due to many off-campus excursions. Depending on the pandemic it is possible that the class will be divided into two groups on several occasions.

Punctuality

Punctuality is also essential. Turning up late will therefore also affect the participation grade. For off campus visits please make sure you depart early in order to reach the museums and please lock in your coats and bags before the beginning of class. The itinerary can be checked on www.bvg.de; in addition, it may be helpful to be equipped with a city map, digital or on paper.

Class Etiquette

In the case of unavoidable absence, a short notification via email sent before the beginning of class is appreciated. Please keep your bathroom breaks to a minimum. Also note that the use of smartphones and computers is not allowed during seminars on campus. When off campus you should stay with the group whilst the conversation is still going on. Please do your best to stay focused on the object of our discussion. This includes listening to students' presentations. In case of online teaching, you should stay in front of your screen, refrain from eating and avoid multitasking.

Weekly Readings

Weekly readings and other specific assignments will be confirmed in an email by the beginning of each week, all materials are uploaded on our class padlet. Please check your Bard emails, read my emails carefully and make sure you can access the padlet.

Assessment

The course assessment consists of the overall seminar work (occasional response papers, presentations, regular class participation) and two essays. See also "Grade Breakdown."

Participation / Seminar Grade

Students are asked to regularly submit short responses to and/or to deliver presentations on works / texts which are uploaded on the class padlet. The responses and presentations count into the overall participation grade. **Grading Criteria:** Structure, Relevance to the topic and analysis; awareness of context and key debates; timing (in the case of presentations).

Writing Assignments

There are two essays for this course, one mid-term essay and one final essay (ca. 2000 words each). A range of prompts will be provided in advance.

The midterm essay is due on 22 October (Saturday), midnight.

The final essay is due on 16 December (Friday), midnight.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials. Please note that prior consultation with the Bard in Berlin Writing Centre may be recommended in order to reflect upon writing and structure. Here are some basic points you should bear in mind:

Title and Topic: How does the title of your essay as well as your introduction reflect your objectives?

Background Reading: Have you researched the particular object (art work, building or historical event) sufficiently? What kinds of sources/articles have you found so far and where else could you try to find out more?

Facts and contextual information: Have you acquired sufficient foundational knowledge - e.g. are you aware of the object's date of origin, its technique/materials, size and location, subject-matter etc., and are you aware of further information around the subject matter and topic, of the cultural and political debates at the time, and of the work's public reception?

Interpretations and overview of scholarship: What kinds of interpretations have you encountered so far? How would you distinguish them in terms of the questions they ask and the methods they apply? How does your own line of argument relate to them? Don't be afraid to engage with and quote from articles you have read (this can show an awareness of the complexity of the topic) or quote from some primary sources, such as artists' statements or contemporary reviews. Quotes should be accompanied by an annotation providing the source reference.

Grading Criteria: Line of argument with regard to essay question; Awareness of context and existing literature on the topic; structure and format (consistent use of annotations, bibliography & list of illustrations is desirable)

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Essays that are more than 24 hours late cannot receive a grade of higher than C (see policy on late submission in the Bard College Berlin Student Handbook) and must be

submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Students are welcome to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and/or feedback. They will also receive written feedback on their mid-term and final essays.

Grade Breakdown

Listed below is the percentage grade allotted to each essay, and to classroom participation and assignments.

Seminar Grade = Attendance (participation/preparation of art works and texts, regular responses/tasks and presentations)

Seminar Grade: 33,3%

Essay 1: 33,3 %

Essay 2: 33,3 %

Schedule

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>

Week 1

02.09.2022, Friday, 15:45 – 17:15 (Note: This is a shorter session due to a conference I am attending earlier that day)

Introductions

Aleida Assmann, "On Cultural Memory"

Memory through Art, Architecture and Memorials: Examples and Running through Syllabus
The *Reichstag* as Symbol and Citation

Please read the Syllabus carefully and familiarize yourself with the Class Padlet

Listening: Prof. Dr. Aleida Assmann of Konstanz University on Cultural Memory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hjwo7A--sg>

***Note the change of schedule for our first class due to a conference ***

04.09.2022, SUNDAY, 14:00 – 17:15

Urban Space and the Question of national Identity

Brandenburg Gate, Parliament, Holocaust Memorial, Memorials to killed Parliamentarians,
to Sinti & Roma and to Homosexuals

Meet at 14:00 in front of Brandenburg Gate.

Reading:

Brian Ladd, Center and Periphery in the New Berlin: Architecture, Public Art, and the Search for Identity, in: *A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Berlin 2000, pp. 7-21;

Niklas Olsen, „Commemorating the Dead. Experience, Understanding, Identity“, in: *History in the plural – an introduction to the work of Reinhart Koselleck*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn 2012, pp. 269-305

Week 2

09.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

Memory Matters: The Place of the Past in Contemporary Art, Culture and Architecture

Part I: Follow-up to Sunday Session

Part II: Round of Student Presentations

Padlet Task for this session:

Upload and prepare one example of a historical event in the past or presence which has played a role in your upbringing / local community / country / culture of remembrance. Please send me an image to go with your short introduction before class, **by Thursday, 10:00 am.**

Week 2

*** 11.09.2022, SUNDAY, 14:00 – 17:15, Hamburger Bahnhof (TBC) ***

The Place of Germany's Past at the 2022 Berlin Biennale: Old Questions, New Questions

Meet at 14:00 in front of Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz

Week 3

16.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Humboldt Forum

Reconstructing the Past? The Humboldt Forum

“History of the Place”: Video Panorama Analysis

Berlin Global Exhibition: Visit & Analysis (Discuss the Role of “Memory/The Past”)

Readings:

Opening Speeches of the Ethnological Museum at Humboldt Forum by Frank Walter Steinmeier (German President) and writer Chimamanda Adichie (PDFs will be uploaded on the padlet)

Week 4

23.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB campus

Germany's Memory Discourse in the Visual Arts

Artistic Responses to the “German” Past.

Part II: Student Presentations of designated works

Reading:

Stephanie D'Alessandro, „History by Degrees: The Place of the Past in Contemporary German Art“. In: *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 66-81, 110-111

Week 5

30.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Neue Nationalgalerie, Potsdamer Platz

New National Gallery: National Identity and the Problem of “Modernism”

Memory and Society: “Die Kunst der Gesellschaft. 1900-1945” Exhibition Visit

Reading:

Andreas Huyssen, „Figures of Memory in the course of Time“. In: *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures...* (page numbers TBC)

Week 6

07.10.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Kunsthaus Dahlem (TBC)

“Art after Auschwitz”? Theodor Adorno's Dictum

Visit of Kunsthaus Dahlem, Exhibition “Boris Lurie – Wolf Vostell. Art after the Shoa”, conversation with Dr. Dorothea Schöne

Reading:

Andreas Huyssen, „Figures of Memory in the course of Time“. In: *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures...* (continued);

Leonard Olschner, “1951: In his essay ‘Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft’, Theodor W. Adorno states that it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz”, in: Sander Gilman (ed.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture*, New Haven 1997, pp. 691-696

Week 7

14.10.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, On Campus

Counter-Monuments: The Memorial Debate in Berlin

Part II: Student Presentations (Christian Boltanski’s *The Missing House*; Micha Ullman, *Memorial to the Burning of the Books*; *Stolpersteine / Stumbling Stones*, Gunter Demnig, from 1992; *Socialist Memorials and their Legacies*)

Readings:

James E. Young, *The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today*, in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol 18, no 2, Winter 1992, pp 267-296

Week 7/8 – *Attention*

16.10.2022, SUNDAY, 13:00 – 16:00 (Time TBC)

Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp

Take S-Train to S-Station Oranienburg (walk from there). All relevant info TBC

Listening:

Mary Fulbrook on the Prominence of Auschwitz in Historical Reception, Lecture (online recording)

Week 8

21.10.2022, 14:00–17:15: No Class because of Sunday Excursion. Instead: Feel free to discuss your essay structure, ideas and arguments

Midterm essays due on 22 October

(Prompts to be circulated in advance, please email your essays to me directly)

24.10.-28.10.2022: Fall Break

Week 9

04.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, On Campus

May 8th 1945: Day of Defeat or Liberation?

Hannah Arendt: The Banality of Evil / Eichmann in Jerusalem

TBC: Walk to Soviet Memorial in Pankow

Reading:

Bill Niven, “8 May 1945 in political discourse”, Chapter 4 in: *Facing the Nazi Past. United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*, Routledge: 2001, pp. 93 ff.

Listening:

Eichmann on Trial, Witness History, BBC Podcast <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00q89dy>;
In our Time: Hannah Arendt, BBC Radio 4, podcast <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08c2ljg>

Week 10

11.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Topography of Terror

Topography of Terror. The Challenge of Documenting Historical Violence

TBC: From Topography walk to newly opened Documentation Centre on Forced Migration

Readings:

James E. Young, Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem – and Mine, in: *The Public Historian*, vol. 24, no. 4, fall 2002, pp. 65-80;

Michael Naumann, "Historical Consciousness in Germany after the Genocide". In: *New German Critique*, no. 80, 2000, pp. 17-28

Week 11

18.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, On Campus

Cold War Cultures and West German Remembrance Cultures

Part I: Class Discussion

Part II: Round of Student Presentations on Works by Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter

Readings:

Frank Trommler, "Germany's past as artifact". In: *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 61, no 4, 1989, pp. 724-735

Week 12

25.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, On Campus

Blackbox Germany: Memory and the 1968 Student Revolt Gerhard Richter's RAF series

Part I: Class Discussion

Part II: Round of Student Presentations

Reading:

Rainer Usselman, „18. Oktober 1977: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning and its new audience“, in: *Art Journal*, vol. 61, no. 1, Spring 2002, pp.4-25

Week 13

02.12.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum: Architecture - Museum - Memorial

Reading:

Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin". In: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 57-81

Week 14

09.12.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, On Campus

Conclusion

Current Debates and Outlook: Memory Matters Today

Readings:

Michael Rothberg & Yasemin Yildiz, "Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany", In: *Parallax*, 17:4, 32-48;

Michael Rothberg, "The Specters of Comparison": <https://www.goethe.de/prj/lat/en/dis/21864662.html>

Readings for last session TBC

Essay Deadlines

For further information on essay guidelines and grading criteria see above (pp. 2-3)

The midterm essay is due on 22 October, midnight.

The final term essay is due on 16 December, midnight.

Library and Book Purchase Policies

All texts will be made accessible through our class padlet, additional background readings for essays and presentations will also be made available. A useful range of books on our topics can be found in the BCB library.