

Berlin Outsider: History, Politics, Film, Text (LT291)

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Office Hours: Before or after class, or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to a modern history of the city of Berlin, largely after 1918. It will do this through a weekly doubling of text (history, fiction, theory) and image (film, photography, painting), that engage with those who lived on the margins of the city, but also those who traveled from outside to make Berlin a home, however temporary. The course aims to provide space for creative engagement and exploration of the urban space; to spend time with texts and film in the classroom, and, ultimately, to transform the streets into an object of study. By the end of the course, students will have a wide and detailed appreciation of a modern history of the city, its aesthetic sensibilities, and its counter-cultural formations.

Requirements

Students are expected to participate actively in the course. This includes engagement with the materials provided, but also thinking and working beyond them where possible, gleaned from an engagement with the city outside of the course. In the class, all students are expected to arrive promptly, and are encouraged to engage with the materials carefully and sensitively and use the class to develop modes of critical thinking.

The course materials will be uploaded every week on google classroom and outlined in emails. Students are encouraged to keep a notebook and make lists throughout the course in order to develop ideas for the assignments.

Students are asked to bring paper copies of the reading to class and to not use laptops. The use of electronic devices during class time is only allowed for disability accommodation. If you have a disability accommodation, please inform your instructor at the beginning of the course.

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 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.

If you cannot attend please email your instructor as soon as possible.

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. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assessment/Assignments

This course is assessed with the assessment/assignments:

Midterm assignment:

a 1,750-word exploration of a place or site through text, image, film. The site should be chosen by the student, in dialogue with the instructor. It can be a major or minor part of the city, known or obscured, single or multiple. The writing should go beyond the mere factual and engage with the site. It could incorporate theoretical approaches, from philosophy to geography. This work could take various forms, including the essayistic, the diaristic, and it could incorporate images where appropriate. It should be properly and clearly referenced and formatted. Forms of experimentation are encouraged.

Museum project:

For this assignment students will be expected to select an object they have come across since their time in Berlin and write a 750-word description of it, for presentation in a new museum of marginality/outsideness, which will briefly open in week 13. The object should relate somehow to the city in some way. It can be found or bought. The grade will be assessed both on the writing itself but also on cooperation with others and imagination in which the object is selected.

Final assignment:

a 2,500-word essay on a theme or topic related to the course. This theme is to be selected by students in dialogue with the instructor. Students should consider possible topics throughout the course. The writing should be essayistic and thorough. The assignment should be properly and clearly referenced and formatted.

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

Classroom participation: 25%

Midterm Essay: 25%

Museum Project: 20%

Final Essay: 30%

Schedule

Week	Theme	Date	Class
1	Thinking marginality, outsideness, history	29.08	<p>Introduction to the course and assessments; Thinking through how one might approach texts, works, objects; Philosophies of walking and the urban landscape; Purpose and methods of learning.</p> <p>Prior preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the various ways in which one might approach questions of outsideness or marginality in relation to the city. For discussion in class.
	Thinking modernity, metropol, decolonization	31.08	<p>Prior preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Georg Simmel, <i>The Metropolis and Mental Life</i> (1903); Watch: Walther Ruttmann, <i>Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Großstadt</i> (1927). As you watch, write a list of thoughts and words. Make a selection to read out in class. Listen to edna bonhomme and Kristyna Comer’s podcast Decolonizing Berlin or another in the series. <p>The class will include discussion of the experience of modernity in the city, and how that played out in the later twentieth century. We will also consider how the modern city constructs dynamics of marginality and outsideness.</p>
2	Thinking childhood	05.09	<p>Class visit to the Tiergarten (location to be confirmed) for a collective reading of Walter Benjamin’s <i>Berlin Childhood around 1900</i> (1932-38). With conversations and reflections. Selections to be handed out before the walk.</p>
		07.09	<p>Prior preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: ‘Gaining Sovereignty: On the Figure of the Child in Walter Benjamin's Writing’ by Nicola Gess Extra listening: RADIO LACIS

			In class: discussion of questions of childhood, in Benjamin's work and beyond.
3	Thinking gender, sexuality	12.09	<p>In preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Magnus Hirschfeld's <i>Berlin's Third Sex</i> (1904) • Watch either/or: Leontine Sagan's <i>Mädchen in Uniform</i> (1931) / Rosa von Praunheim's <i>It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives</i> (1971). <p>In class there will be chance for general discussions and reflections. Plus screening of Richard Oswald's <i>Different from the Others</i> (1919).</p>
		14.09	Class visit to the exhibitions at the Schwules Museum (details to be confirmed).
4	Thinking race, gender, sexuality, politics	19.09	<p>In preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: <i>Audre Lorde - The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992</i> (dir. Dagmar Schultz, 2012). • Explore: Digital Audre Lorde Archive. <p>In class we will read some of Lorde's poems and diaries together (from <i>A Burst of Light</i>), with general discussion.</p> <p><u>Option to hand in an abstract for the midterm assessment in order to receive feedback</u></p>
		21.09	(Anti)colonial walking tour using Nathaniel Flaken's <i>Revolutionary Berlin: A Walking Tour</i> (2022).
5	Open week	26.09	Open class: discussion of work so far; the assessments; what's been missing?
		28.09	Virtual walking tour: 10 minute presentations on a particular place or site, in preparation for the midterm assessment.
6	BREAK WEEK	03.10	No class
		05.10	
7	Thinking division	10.10	<p>In preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: 'Berlin walls' by Hannah Proctor. • Optional watch: Ulrike Ottinger's Countdown (1990).

			In class we will watch Hito Steyerl's <i>Die leere Mitte</i> (The Empty Middle) (1998) followed by reflections and discussion.
		12.10	Group walk of a section of the wall with discussions, readings and conversations.
		14.10	MIDTERM DUE @ 21:00
8	Thinking hedonism	17.10	Prior to class: watch Ulrike Ottinger's <i>Ticket of No Return</i> (1979). In class we will go through with discussion of a number of stills from the film.
		19.10	Prior to class: read a selection from Ulrich Gutmair's <i>The First Days of Berlin: The Sound of Change</i> (2022).
9	Thinking destruction, violence, resistance	24.10	Watch/read before class: Yvonne Rainer's <i>Journeys from Berlin/1971</i> (1980) with Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence' (1921) in preparation for class discussion.
		26.10	Continuation of discussion of 'Critique of Violence' with reflections also on the work of Käthe Kollwitz.
10	Thinking nature, destruction	31.10	Read/watch before class in order to discuss: the first essay in W. G. Sebald's <i>On the Natural History of Destruction</i> (1999) and Roberto Rossellini's <i>Germany, Year Zero</i> (1948).
		02.11	Chance to discuss final essays/assessments. First show and tell of museum objects. Writing skills. Troubleshooting.
11	Thinking class, poverty	07.11	Watch in class <i>To Whom Does the World Belong?</i> (<i>Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?</i>) (1932) with discussion.
		09.11	In class reading of a cycle of poems by Bertolt Brecht poems (to be confirmed). Return to some work by Käthe Kollwitz. <u>Option to hand in an abstract for the final assessment in order to receive feedback</u>

12	Thinking animality, vegetality	14.11	Read John Berger's <i>Why Look at Animals?</i> (1977) in preparation for discussion in class.
		16.11	Guest reading and speaker: Hussein Mitha on vegetal souls and plant politics.
13	Open class	21.11	General reflections, museum preparations, planning for the following week's themes and explorations.
	Museum opening	23.11	This class will stage the presentation of the objects in your museum.
14	Open week	28.11	These classes are left open to student input and design. What did the course miss out so far? What could and should be added? Space will also be available to discuss the final assignment, including space for presentations of ideas and plans for feedback and development.
		30.11	
15	Completion week	05.12	No class unless a catch up class is required.
		07.12	
		09.12	FINAL ESSAY DUE @ 21:00

Grades Submission

- Midterm grades will be available by the end of week 8, i.e. 21 October 2022
- Final grades for all students will be available by 4 January 2022

Resources

Students are not expected to buy any materials. All texts and films will be provided.