

**PT320 Discussing Deutschland: What Germans Are Talking About Today (in German)****Version: August 1, 2022**

Dr. Michael Thomas Taylor  
Platanenstraße 24  
[m.taylor@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:m.taylor@berlin.bard.edu)

Fall Term 2022  
Thursdays 9:00 am to 12:15 pm  
Location: TBD

Office hours: by appointment

**Dropbox link for reader:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q64uc7c03uyxwol/AACxgHxzQJAs8coqKRRqiepma?dl=0>

**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

- Postpandemic urban space in Berlin
- Germany's *Zeitenwende*: the war in Ukraine, energy security, and the *Energiewende*
- Germany's remembrance culture and fascism today
- The German photographer Sybille Bergemann
- Current topics chosen together as a class

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.

### 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. Several discussions may be conducted in English.**

### Required Texts

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to read a newspaper every week each Friday. I will assign which papers you should read. Please purchase the physical copy of this paper, rather than reading it online. You should also buy:

- A notebook for a weekly writing assignment.
- A weekly newspaper (to be assigned), starting week 4. You should purchase this on Fridays.

All other readings will be available via a Dropbox link. 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 a significant part 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: 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 5 percent. 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.

### 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://fcl.bard.edu/resources/german/>. *Do not use DeepL or Google translate etc. for your writing; also, do not ask native speakers to correct or help you correct your essays. Your corrections should reflect your own work.*

### Writing

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 may 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 both essays based on grammar, content, and structure and the thoroughness/accuracy of your corrections.

*Your work on your essays, including your corrections, should be yours alone.*

### Final Projects

The last two weeks 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, they should consult academic advisors or course instructors.

<http://www.berlin.bard.edu/for-students/student-handbook/academics/#c2599>

### Grade Breakdown:

Participation:	20%
Presentations/discussions:	20%
Papers:	40%
Final project	20%

**SYLLABUS**

**Semester overview**

**Week**

- 1 Sep. 1 Public sphere/public space: an introduction
- 2 Sep. 8 *Tagesschau* and online media today
- 3 Sep. 15 EXCURSION: Public space in Berlin
- 4 Sep. 22 Berlin: Public space + Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*
- 5 Sep. 29 EXCURSION: Berlinische Galerie, Sibylle Bergemann (photographer)
- 6 Oct. 6 Discussion of excursion + workshop on current topics
- 7 Oct. 13 Current topics + *Landtagswahl* Niedersachsen
- 8 Oct. 20 Newspaper overviews/presentations  
Oct. 27 FALL BREAK
- 9 Nov. 3 EXCURSION: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Ort der Information
- 10 Nov. 10 Discussion: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas + Timothy Snyder
- 11 Nov. 17 *Zeitenwende*, energy security, *Energiewende*
- 12 Nov. 24 The war in Ukraine in German media
- 13 Dec. 1 Final projects
- 14 Dec. 8 Final projects

Sep. 1	<p><b>Public sphere/public space: an introduction</b></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"> <li>• Read Wikipedia article on “Public Sphere.”</li> <li>• Buy a copy of the <i>Bild Zeitung</i> from August 31, 2022 and bring it to class.</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the German nightly <i>Tagesschau</i> every night. Fill out the logbook assignment and prepare one clip of five minutes that you’d like us to discuss together with the class (this may be assigned in groups).</li> <li>• A one-paragraph essay on the <i>Tagesschau</i> (double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font)</li> </ul>
Sep. 8	<p><b><i>Tagesschau</i> Themen</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tagesschau</i> clip/logbook</li> </ul> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tagesschau</i> paragraph</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online media exploration in German</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will draw straws to assign one German news publication to each of you. Over the course of the semester, you will follow this publication for four weeks, then another publication for another four weeks, based on a logbook we will discuss today.</li> <li>• Prepare Berlin excursion: What is public space?</li> </ul>

Sep. 15	<p><b>Excursion: Postpandemic public space in Berlin</b></p> <p>Either on your own or with a partner (we will decide this in class): Pick one place in Berlin that for you represents public space. Visit that place. Take pictures. Create a visual presentation in German to be shown next week in class. Incorporate at least two ideas or questions from this week's assigned reading.</p> <p>To read before your excursion:</p> <p>Jennifer A. Jordan, <i>Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond</i>, chapter 1, "Landscapes of Remembering and Forgetting" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1–22.</p>
Sep. 22	<p><b>Berlin: Public space + Susan Neiman, <i>Learning from the Germans</i></b></p> <p>To read for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Neiman, <i>Learning from the Germans</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 2019), chapters 1 and 2.</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public space presentations (in German)</li> <li>• Discussion of Susan Neiman (in English)</li> </ul> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your public space presentations</li> <li>• Pick one passage from Susan Neiman and come prepared with one discussion question for everyone</li> </ul>
Sep. 29	<p><b>Excursion: Sibylle Bergemann (photography) at the Berlinische Galerie</b></p> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised <i>Tagesschau</i> paragraph</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pick one photograph from the exhibition. Prepare a five-minute presentation (in German) about this photograph. What does it show? About the world/context in which it was taken? About the subject (position) of the photographer? What questions does it spark in you? For your presentation, take these questions as a starting point to do some further research – on websites in German! Use that research to develop a five-minute presentation about the photograph.</li> </ul>
Oct. 6	<p><b>Discussion of excursion + workshop on current topics</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on photo from exhibition</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibition discussion</li> <li>• Media workshop on current topics in Germany</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD from our current-topics workshop.</li> <li>• News perspective on the <i>Landtagswahl</i> in Niedersachsen from the newspaper you are following.</li> <li>• New assignment of newspapers</li> </ul>

Oct. 13	<p><b>Current topics + Landtagswahl Niedersachsen</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD from the previous week</li> <li>• Read one article on the <i>Landtagswahl</i> in Niedersachsen from the newspaper you are following. Be prepared to give a brief position summary (in German) of how the paper covered the election.</li> </ul> <p>Due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logbook on the newspaper you have been following</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of current topics</li> <li>• Discussion of <i>Landtagswahl</i> in Niedersachsen</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a ten-minute presentation (in German) about the newspaper you have been reading this semester. It should include visuals. Assume we know nothing about the newspaper and you want to give us a briefing about it. What kind of a paper is it? What kind of news/topics does it discuss? How does it present its content? Who do you think its target audience is? What is your personal reaction to the paper?</li> </ul>
Oct. 20	<p><b>Newspaper overviews/presentations</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten-minute presentation on your paper (in German)</li> <li>• Read Jennifer A. Jordan, <i>Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond</i>, chapter 4, "Changing Places: New Memorials Since 1989" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 92–133.</li> </ul> <p>Due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-page essay (double spaced, Times New Roman font 12) presenting your paper</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of newspapers (in German)</li> <li>• Discussion of Jordan, "Changing Places" (in English), with online exploration workshop</li> </ul>
Oct. 27	<p><b>FALL BREAK</b></p>
Nov. 3	<p><b>Excursion: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Ort der Information</b></p> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a ten-minute presentation (in German) about your visit to the memorial and information center.</li> </ul>
Nov. 10	<p><b>Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas + Timothy Snyder</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Timothy Snyder, "Introduction" and "Conclusion: Humanity," in <i>Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin</i> (New York: Basic Books, 2010).</li> <li>• Ten-minute presentation of your visit to Holocaust Memorial.</li> </ul> <p>Due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop suggestions for final projects</li> </ul>

	<p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of Snyder</li> <li>• Presentation of visit to Holocaust Memorial</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in groups (to be assigned), prepare discussion of three articles + three video clips (up to five minutes, all in German) on the topics of Germany's new military spending, energy security, and the <i>Energiewende</i></li> </ul>
Nov. 17	<p><b><i>Zeitenwende, energy security, Energiewende</i></b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles + video clips</li> </ul> <p>Due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-page essay (double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font) on your second paper</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of articles + video clips</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in groups (to be assigned), prepare discussion of three articles + three video clips (up to five minutes, all in German) to discuss how the war in Ukraine is being discussed in the German media</li> </ul>
Nov. 24	<p><b>The war in Ukraine in German media</b></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles + video clips on the war in German media</li> </ul> <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of articles + video clips</li> </ul> <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare your student project workshops</li> </ul>
Dec. 1	<p>Student projects</p> <p>Due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised second essay</li> </ul>
Dec. 8	<p>Student projects</p> <p>Assignments due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your final project first draft is due Dec. 15.</li> <li>• Your revised final project for uploading is due Dec. 22.</li> </ul>