

FM 217

How German Is It?

German Identity Through Film

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst
Email: m.hurst@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00

Course Times: Monday, 14.00 – 15.30; Monday, 19.30 – 22.00 (film screening);
Wednesday, 14.00 – 15.30

Course Description

In his seminal book *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), Siegfried Kracauer made the bold claim that German national cinema as a mass medium of the Weimar Republic represents the mentality of the people and does help to identify and understand characteristic traits of national identity that explain social and political realities at this moment in time and even foreshadow crucial political developments. Kracauer's main argument was that the film production of the period immediately preceding the advent of Nazism reflected a yearning for authoritarianism that was to be fulfilled in Hitler's takeover of power in 1933. Do films reveal the (cultural) identity and the psychology of a whole people? To what extent can such general features and tendencies be traced in the landmarks of cinema?

We will watch and discuss films – like *Der Untertan* (1951, Wolfgang Staudte), *Der geteilte Himmel* (1964, Konrad Wolf), *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981, Margarethe von Trotta), *Stilles Land* (1992, Andreas Dresen) and *Wir sind jung. Wir sind stark* (2014, Burhan Qurbani) – that might be helpful in figuring out elements of German identity or configurations of German culture from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, reflecting specific historical, political and social developments and their effect on German cinema, including the effort to reckon with the authoritarianism of the past, the emergence of violent reactions toward this past on the part of the younger generation in the 1970s as well as the effects of the German division and reunification.

Module: Art and Artists in Context

Requirements

No prerequisites.

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared, to participate actively in the class discussions and to do all the course assignments on time.

* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

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 and film screenings 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.

More than two absences will affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

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.

Assessment / Assignments

Two screening reports (1000 words each), due in week 2 (deadline for screening report # 1: Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 2:00 pm) and in week 7 (deadline for screening report # 2: Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 2:00 pm)

The topics of the screening reports will be announced before the screenings.

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Friday, May 19, 2023, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

* **Please note: Graduating students** -- Deadline for final essay: Week 15, Monday, May 15, 2023, midnight! *

The topic of the final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

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

Participation:	33 %
Screening Reports:	33 %
Final Essay:	34 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C-.
If two components are graded F, the final grade will be F (i.e. the whole class will be failed).

Schedule

* Tentative schedule depending on availability of films and intensity of class discussions

WEEK 1:

Introduction: How German is it? What films tell us about mentality, culture, and history.
Film as part of cultural history.

Reading:

Anton Kaes. "German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript." *New German Critique*, No. 65 (Spring-Summer 1995), pp. 47-58.

No film screening in week 1!

WEEK 2:

The double perspective of film:

Der Untertan (*The Kaiser's Lackey*, 1951, Wolfgang Staudte)

From Caligari to Hitler: Kracauer's interpretation of Weimar cinema and German mentality (1):

Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920, Robert Wiene)

Reading:

Siegfried Kracauer. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Revised and expanded edition. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004. (excerpts)

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 43-69.

This week: two film screenings!

Film screening on Monday evening: *Der Untertan* (*The Kaiser's Lackey*, 1951, Wolfgang

Staudte)

Film screening on Wednesday evening (19.30): *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920, Robert Wiene)

Screening report # 1, due Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 14.00

WEEK 3:

From Caligari to Hitler: Kracauer's interpretation of Weimar cinema and German mentality (2):

Der letzte Mann (*The Last Laugh*, 1924, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 71-79.

Film: *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau)

WEEK 4:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 131-165.

Film: *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, 1935, Leni Riefenstahl)

WEEK 5:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 285-301, 371-381.

Film: *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1979, Volker Schlöndorff)

WEEK 6:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 357-369.

Film: *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, 1979, Rainer Werner Fassbinder)

No class on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 (Public holiday)

WEEK 7:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 213-233, 259-273.

Film: *Der geteilte Himmel* (*Divided Heaven*, 1964, Konrad Wolf)

Die Legende von Paul und Paula (*The Legend of Paul and Paula*, 1973, Heiner Carow)

Screening report # 2, due Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 14.00

WEEK 8:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 343-355.

Film: *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1978, Alexander Kluge, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff, Edgar Reitz, Alf Brustellin et al.)

WEEK 9:

Reading:

Stephen Brockmann. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010, pp. 383-397.

Film: *Die bleierne Zeit* (*Marianne and Julianne* aka *The German Sisters*, 1981, Margarethe von Totta)

Spring Break: April 3 – April 7, 2023

WEEK 10:

No class and no film screening on Monday, April 10, 2023 (Public holiday)

Stilles Land (*Silent Country*, 1992, Andreas Dresen)

Good Bye, Lenin! (2003, Wolfgang Becker)

WEEK 11:

Film: *Herr Lehmann* (*Berlin Blues*, 2003, Leander Haußmann)

Das Leben ist eine Baustelle (Life Is All You Get, 1997, Wolfgang Becker)

WEEK 12:

Film: *Wild* (2016, Nicolette Krebitz)

WEEK 13:

No class and no film screening on Monday, May 1, 2023 (Public holiday)

Deutschland 09 (Germany 09, 2009, Angela Schanelec, Dani Levy, Wolfgang Becker, Christoph Hochhäusler et al.)

WEEK 14:

Film: *Wir sind jung. Wir sind stark (We Are Young. We Are Strong, 2014, Burhan Qurbani)*

WEEK 15: Completion week (Monday, May 15 – Friday, May 19, 2023)

Essay Deadline: Friday, May 19, 2023, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

Graduating students -- Deadline for final essay: Monday, May 15, 2023, midnight!

Readings

Allan, Seàn, and John Sandford. *DEFA. East German Cinema, 1946-1992*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003.

Allen, Richard and Murray Smith (eds.). *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Baudry, Jean-Louis. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.

Bazin, André. "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema". In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 23-40.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In: Leo Braudy / Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 731-751.

- Bergfelder, Tim, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (eds.). *The German Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute, 2002.
- Blandford, Steve, Barry K. Grant and Jim Hillier. *The Film Studies Dictionary*. London/New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Bordwell, David. "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 17-34.
- Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Seventh Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Brockmann, Stephen. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010.
- Brown, Larry A. *How Films Tell Stories. The Narratology of Cinema*. Nashville: Creative Arts Press, 2016.
- Burch, Noël. "A Primitive Mode of Representation?" In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 220-227.
- Coates, Paul. *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism and the Image of Horror*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Corrigan, Timothy. *New German Cinema. The Displaced Image*. Revised and expanded edition. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen. Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.
- Elsaesser, Thomas, and Michael Wedel (eds.). *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.
- Elsaesser, Thomas, and Warren Buckland. *Studying Contemporary American Film. A Guide to Movie Analysis*. London: Arnold Publishers, 2002.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Fassbinder's Germany: History Identity Subject*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *New German Cinema. A History*. Houndmills/London: Macmillan Education/BFI, 1989.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Weimar Cinema and After. Germany's Historical Imaginary*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Forrest, Tara (ed.). *Alexander Kluge. Raw Materials for the Imagination*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.
- Frampton, Daniel. *Filmosophy*. London: Wallflower Press, 2006.
- Gibbs, John. *Mise-en-Scène. Film Style and Interpretation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press 2003.
- Graf, Alexander. *The Cinema of Wim Wenders. The Celluloid Highway*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2002.
- Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions. Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." [1986] In: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.). *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI 1990, pp. 56-62.

- Gunning, Tom. *The Films of Fritz Lang. Allegories of Vision and Modernity*. London: bfi British Film Institute, 2006.
- Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. London/New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hill, John, and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Isenberg, Noah (ed.). *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Kaes, Anton. "German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript." *New German Critique*, No. 65 (Spring-Summer 1995), pp. 47-58.
- Kardish, Laurence. *Weimar Cinema, 1919 – 1933. Daydreams and Nightmares*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010.
- Knight, Julia. *New German Cinema. Images of a Generation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2004.
- Kolker, Robert Phillip, and Peter Beicken. *The Films of Wim Wenders. Cinema as Vision and Desire*. Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*. Revised and expanded edition. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality*. [1960] Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Kreimeier, Klaus. *The UFA Story. A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company 1918-1945*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1996.
- Lebeau, Vicky. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema. The Play of Shadows*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002.
- Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*. New York/London: Routledge, 2002.
- MacGregor, Neil. *Germany. Memories of a Nation*. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2016.
- McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, 1996.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1994.
- Metz, Christian. *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Minden, Michael, and Holger Bachmann (eds.). *Fritz Lang's Metropolis. Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*. Rochester/Woodbridge: Camden House, 2008.
- Monaco, James. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 198-209.
- Murray, Bruce. *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic. From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Nelmes, Jill (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey (ed.). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Porter, Burton F. *Philosophy Through Fiction and Film*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education/Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Prager, Brad. *The Cinema of Werner Herzog. Aesthetic Ecstasy and Truth*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2011.
- Read, Rupert, and Jerry Goodenough (eds.). *Film as Philosophy. Essays in Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell*. Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Rentschler, Eric. *The Use and Abuse of Cinema. German Legacies from the Weimar Era to the Present*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Roberts, Ian. *German Expressionist Cinema. The World of Light and Shadow*. London/New York: Wallflower, 2008.
- Rogowski, Christian (ed.). *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema. Rediscovering Germany's Filmic Legacy*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2012.
- Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Scharf, Inga. *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema. Homeless at Home*. New York/London: Routledge, 2009.
- Scheunemann, Dietrich (ed.). *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011.
- Smith, Murray, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.). *Thinking Through Cinema. Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2006.
- Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell: *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E., and Angela Curran (eds.). *The Philosophy of Film. Introductory Text and Readings*. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell, 2005.

Essay Deadlines

Screening report # 1 (1000 words): Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 2:00 pm

Screening report # 2 (1000 words): Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 2:00 pm

Final essay (3000-3500 words): Friday, May 19, 2023, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

Graduating students: Deadline for final essay: Monday, May 15, 2023, midnight!

