

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

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Aya Soika

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

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Office Hours: by email appointment & Tuesdays 11:30-13:30 (please get in touch beforehand)

## **Module: Art and Artists in Context**

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

## **Course Description**

What aspects of the past are being remembered in German culture of the 20th and 21st centuries? How do Berlin's numerous memorials, buildings and museums add to the dynamics of the remembrance culture discourse? And how do art and architecture reflect past and present attempts to define and redefine the nation's narratives and memories? The seminar focuses on "the place of Germany's past" in the country's development throughout the twentieth century up until today, through an examination of art works, memorials and buildings. The many places in Berlin that deal with the Nazi dictatorship, with persecution, war and genocide will be central to our discussion; however, we will also address broader questions, for example on the relationship between history and memory (Aleida Assmann), Germany's alleged special path (Mary Fulbrook), the development of the counter memorial (James E. Young), or the distinctive topography of Berlin (Andreas Huyssen). Our overview of the role of memory in 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century German art and culture ends with an exploration of more recent debates concerning multidirectional memory and the future of Germany's memory discourse. Site visits will be an important part of the seminar.

## **Requirements**

### **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, one absence from AH212 should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Beyond that, unexcused absences will affect the participation grade and you will be asked to make up for it by submitting a 800 word response, discussing the topic of the missed 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.

### **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](http://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 notebooks 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.

### **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 (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 20 October, midnight.

The final essay is due on 19 December, 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 which requires reading around the subject matter and topic, acquiring a sense of cultural and political debates at the time, 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 also 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 receive feedback on class progress, oral performance and written work. 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, 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

05.09.2022, Tuesday, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

#### **Aleida Assmann, “On Cultural Memory”**

Memory through Art, Architecture and Memorials: Examples and Running through Syllabus

The *Reichstag* as Symbol and Citation

Short round of student presentations (see padlet task below)

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=Hjwo7\\_A--sg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hjwo7_A--sg)

Reading: Aleida Assmann, Transformations between History and Memory, in: Social Research 2008, vol 75, no 1, pp.49-72

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 Monday, 10:00 am.**

### Week 2

12.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Meet at 14:00 at Brandenburg Gate, bring your passports or IDs

#### **Bundestag Visit**

#### **Urban Monuments and the Question of national Identity**

Brandenburg Gate, Holocaust Memorial, Memorial to Homosexuals, from there via

Memorial to Sinti & Roma, Memorials to killed Parliamentarians to Bundestag security

check-in. Tour of Bundestag with option of climbing the cupola afterwards.

Reading:

Rolf J. Goebel, Berlin’s Architectural Citations: Reconstruction, Simulation, and the Problem of Historical Authenticity, PMLA, vol. 118, no. 5 (Oct 20039), pp. 1268-1289

OR (TBC)

“Der Bevölkerung”: A Conversation. Rosalyn Deutsche, Hans Haacke and Miwon Kwon, Grey Room, no 16, summer 2004, pp. 60-81

### Week 3

19.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

#### **Historical Narratives: Introduction & Timeline**

#### **The Concept of “Opferkonkurrenz”**

Reading:

Miriam Sarah Brusius, “Memory Cultures 2.0: From *Opferkonkurrenz* to Solidarity. Introduction”, in: Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, November 2022, pp. 3-20

### Week 4

26.09.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Meet in Humboldt Forum covered courtyard

**Reconstructing the Past? The Humboldt Forum and its problems**

“History of the Place”: Video Panorama Analysis

Visit of different galleries, introduction to key debates through objects

Readings:

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

**Week 5**

3 October, federal holiday, co class

**Week 6**

10.10.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

**Holocaust Memories and the Nazi Past.**

**“Art after Auschwitz”? Theodor Adorno’s Dictum**

**“How was it possible?”: The German “Special Path” (Sonderweg) Theory**

Listening:

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

Reading:

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**

17.10.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, meet at Topography of Terror

**Topography of Terror & City Walk**

Reading:

Karen Till, *The Gestapo Terrain: Landscape, Digging, Open Wounds*. In: *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, University of Minnesota Press 2005, pp. 63-105; Karen Till, *Berlin’s Ort der Täter: A historic Site of Perpetrators*, *ibid*, pp. 121-152 (selection TBC)

**Midterm essay due on Friday, 20 October** (*please email your essays to me directly, for grading criteria see page 2*). Prompt: “Discuss German memory culture – and some of its key debates and/or developments (e. g. with regard to “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”, “Opferkonkurrenz”, architectural citation, the counter-memorial etc.) – through the lens of a site that we have visited: This could be the memorials near Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, the reconstructed city palace (Humboldt Forum), or the Topography of Terror”

**23.10.-27.10.2023: Fall Break**

**Week 8**

31.10.2022, NO CLASS

Instead: Excursion on Sat 4 November, Meet at entrance of Memorial by 12:15, our tour starts at 12:30

**Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Site**

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

Reading:

Bill Niven, Concentration camp memorial sites, in: Facing the Past. United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich, New York 2001, pp. 9-38

**Week 9**

07.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

**Post-War Memories**

**Hannah Arendt: The Banality of Evil / Eichmann in Jerusalem**

**Walk to Soviet Memorial Schönholzer Heide (TBC)**

Reading:

Bill Niven, “8 May 1945 in political discourse”, Chapter 4 in: 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**

14.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15

**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 11**

21.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, BCB Campus

**Counter-Monuments: Memorial Debates in Berlin and Beyond**

Reading:

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 12**

28.11.2022, 14:00 – 17:15

Campus or Neue Nationalgalerie

**Germany's Memory Discourse in the Visual Arts**

**Works by Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter**

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 13**

05.12.2022, 14:00 – 17:15, Joint Class with Dartmouth University “Memory” Class, Prof. Dr. Veronika Fuechtner, readings and details TBC

**Week 14**

12.12.2022, 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

**Final Essay due on 19 December 2023**

**Essay Deadlines**

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

The midterm essay is due on 20 October, midnight.

The final term essay is due on 19 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.