

PT320 Discussing Deutschland: What Germans Are Talking About Today (in German)
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Fall Term 2023
Wednesdays 3:45 pm to 7:00 pm
Location: TDB

Office hours: by appointment

Dropbox link for reader:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q64uc7c03uyxwol/AACxqHxzQJAs8coqKRRqiepma?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

- German newspapers, talks shows and satire shows, and online content
- German coverage of the war in Ukraine
- Far-right politics in Germany and the AfD
- German state elections in Bavaria and Hesse
- Local politics in Berlin
- Germany's remembrance culture and fascism today, including Gerhard Richter's "Birkenau" cycle in the Neue Nationalgalerie
- Postwar generational memory in Germany and among German immigrants
- East and West Germany today, looking back at singer Wolf Biermann

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. We will explicitly address the use of AI tools such as DeepL or ChatGPT in language learning. 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).

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.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars. Please note: You will be allowed no more than one absence during the semester (because we meet once a week instead of twice, each weekly meeting counts as two regular sessions, which is the Bard-defined limit for absences.) 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, including AI Tools

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://flcl.bard.edu/resources/german/>.

We will directly address the use of tools such as DeepL, Google Translate, and ChatGPT in class. Do not turn in writing produced with these tools as your own. Similarly, do not ask native speakers to correct or help you correct your essays. Your corrections should reflect your own work. Work turned in that is not entirely your own will not be given credit.

Writing

Writing assignments turned in late may be accepted at my discretion; grades may be lowered one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example) for each day late. I am not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late.

Writing assignments will include a process of correcting your work. This is the most important part of the assignment.

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. 6 Public sphere/public space: an introduction
- 2 Sep. 13 *Heute Journal* + *Magazine royale*, using AI in language learning
- 3 Sep. 20 **EXCURSION: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Wolf Biermann**
- 4 Sep. 27 Wolf Biermann, East/West Germany today, AfD in Germany
- 5 Oct. 4 German newspapers: focus on war in Ukraine
- 6 Oct. 11 *Landtagswahl* Bavaria + Hestia, local politics in Berlin
- 7 Oct. 18 Postwar generational memories, Burkhard Bilger, *Fatherland*
Oct. 25 FALL BREAK
- 8 Nov. 1 **EXCURSION: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Ort der Information**
- 9 Nov. 8 Discussion: Germany’s past, Susan Neiman and the Holocaust Memorial
- 10 Nov. 15 Discussion: Germany’s past and the war in Ukraine, Timothy Snyder
- 11 Nov. 22 **EXCURSION: Neue Nationalgalerie, Gerhard Richter**
- 12 Nov. 29 Discussion of Richter
- 13 Dec. 6 Final projects
- 14 Dec. 13 Final projects

Sep. 6	<p>Public sphere/public space: an introduction</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"> • Read Wikipedia article on “Public Sphere.” • Buy a copy of the <i>Bild Zeitung</i> from September 4, 2023, and bring it to class. <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch two segments of <i>Magazine royale</i>—one we picked last week, and one that you pick. • Write five to ten sentences about the <i>Magazine royale</i>. DO NOT USE ANY ELECTRONIC SOURCES EXCEPT FOR dict.cc or Duden.
Sep. 13	<p><i>Heute Journal</i> + <i>Magazine royale</i>, using AI in language learning</p> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Magazine royale</i> paragraph <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of <i>Magazine royale</i> + <i>Heute journal</i> • Workshop on using AI in language learning (using your paragraphs) <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Sep. 20	<p>Excursion: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Wolf Biermann</p> <p>Readings to complete before we go to the museum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katja Hoyer, <i>Beyond the Wall; East Germany 1949–1990</i> (London: Penguin, 2023), chapter 7. • Adrian Daub, <i>What the Ballad Knows: The Ballad Genre, Memory Culture, and German Nationalism</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pages tbd.
Sep. 27	<p>Wolf Biermann, East/West Germany today, AfD in Germany</p> <p>Assignment due at the beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A five-minute PowerPoint presentation (in German, with images) giving us your perspective on your visit to the museum. Include at least one idea from Hoyer, Daub, and one online source (in German) about the exhibition. <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition presentations • Discussion of East/West Germany today; right-wing populism and the AfD (using online sources to be examined during class)
Oct. 4	<p>German newspapers: focus on war in Ukraine</p> <p>Assignments due at beginning of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A five-minute PowerPoint presentation (in German) on your assigned newspaper and how it is covering the war in Ukraine
Oct. 11	<p>Landtagswahl Bavaria + Hestia, local politics in Berlin</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring your newspaper and be prepared to present to us on how it is covering the German state elections <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you do the reading from Burkhard Bilger's book • Find one article online (in German) about how Germans are engaging today with the past of their own families.
Oct. 18	<p>Postwar generational memories, Burkhard Bilger, <i>Fatherland</i></p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read selections (tbd) from Burkhard Bilger, <i>Fatherland: A Memoir of War, Conscience, and Family Secrets</i> (New York: Random House, 2023). • Be prepared to present for five minutes in German on the article you found about how Germans are engaging with the past of their own families. <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Bilger (in English) • Discussion of articles • Prepare excursion to the Holocaust Memorial
Oct. 25	FALL BREAK

Nov. 1	<p>Excursion: Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Ort der Information</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a five-minute presentation (in German, with photos that can also be taken from online) about your visit to the memorial and information center. Make sure you include at least one idea from Jordan.
Nov. 8	<p>Discussion: Germany’s past, Susan Neiman and the Holocaust Memorial</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Neiman, chapters 1 and 2, in <i>Learning from the Germans</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019). Come prepared with one passage you would like the whole class to discuss. • Five-minute presentation of your visit to Holocaust Memorial. <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of excursion to Holocaust Memorial • Discussion of Neiman (in English) <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Timothy Snyder, “Preface” and “Conclusion: Humanity,” in <i>Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin</i> (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
Nov. 15	<p>Discussion: Germany’s past and the war in Ukraine, Timothy Snyder</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Timothy Snyder, “Preface” and “Conclusion: Humanity,” in <i>Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin</i> (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Come prepared with a discussion question for the whole class. <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Snyder (in English) • Online workshop: current coverage of the war in Ukraine <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Nov. 22	<p>EXCURSION: Neue Nationalgalerie, Gerhard Richter</p> <p>To prepare for class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find and watch/read three articles or videos online about the exhibition. <p>During class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to exhibition. <p>Assignments for next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in pairs or teams (tbd), prepare presentations (in German) on assigned topics.

Nov. 29	Discussion of Richter To prepare for class: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentations about assigned topics. During class: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion of exhibition. Planning for last two weeks.
Dec. 6	Student projects
Dec. 13	Student projects Assignments due: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your final project first draft is due Dec. 18.• Your revised final project for uploading is due Dec. 29.