

# LT352 – Happy in Berlin?

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti  
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Office Hours: by appointment  
Course Times: Mondays 15:45-19:00

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

In the interwar years, Berlin was a kind of myth - it embodied for a short while the idea of a radical modernity, which partly overshadowed its status as the capital of a state, Prussia, associated with an ethos of militarization. In the 1920s, it became a magnet for writers, artists and intellectuals from many countries, who arrived in the city with different goals: to live openly their non-normative sexualities, to enjoy and be inspired by the modernity of the entertainment industry and the freedom of the city's famed unconventional nightlife, to become acquainted with the more recent developments in the new disciplines of psychoanalysis and sexology, to be part of international artistic networks. How did writers and artists represent this experience? How did their social and cultural lives affect literary and artistic forms? How did the "myth of Berlin" relate to other versions of modernism and modernity? The course is based on the exhibition "Happy in Berlin?" (2021), organized by the GBZ (Grossbritannienzentrum) at the Humboldt University, and will offer an interdisciplinary exploration of written and visual artworks about Berlin mainly by artists and writers (many of them British) who visited Berlin in the interwar years, such as Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Alix Strachey, Bryher, Djuna Barnes. Students will read these texts in dialogue with contemporary works on architecture, cultural history, psychoanalysis, sexology, cinema, by, among others, Walter Benjamin, Franz Hessel, Magnus Hirschfeld, Gabriele Tergit, Irmgard Keun, Alfred Döblin., Georg Simmel. Students will also read critical and theoretical texts on modernism, psychoanalysis, cultural history and the history of modernity. The course is taught in collaboration with the GBZ (HU) and will involve collaborative sessions, as well as multiple excursions in the city.

## Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass 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.

Bard College Berlin may 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.

### Assessment

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

### Assignments

Assignments for this course consist in:

- 2 response papers of 1000 words each (students can decide which texts they want to respond to. The response papers are due just before class starts, on the day in which the chosen text is discussed). Response papers cannot be written for the texts chosen for the presentation. The first response paper must be submitted before week 5.
- 1 presentation on a chosen assigned text: max 20 minutes. Students should submit their presentation notes after delivering the presentation – circa 1500 words).
- 1 final essay (circa 3000 words). Deadline:

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Should a student be sick during the exam days or on the day of their scheduled presentations, it will be possible to schedule an alternative date for the missed exam.

An unexcused absence on the day of the assigned presentation or exam will result in a F for that assignment.

### 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:	30%
2 Response papers (1000 words each: 2000 words in total):	20% (10% each)
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1000 words):	20%
Final essay (3000 words):	30%

## Library and Book Purchase Policies

Students are asked to buy or borrow from the library the following texts:

Sabahattin Ali, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (London: Penguin, 2017)  
Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*  
Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*

All other assigned texts will be made available in digital format.  
A reserve shelf with critical readings is available in the library.

## Schedule

### Weeks 1-3: Berlin, Modern Metropolis – History and Myth

#### Monday 29 January – Introduction

Readings:

Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis. A History of Berlin* (selection)  
Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (selection)

Visual art:

Film: Walther Ruttmann, *Berlin. Symphonie einer Großstadt* (1927)  
Photography: Mario von Bucovich, *Berlin 1928*  
Paintings and drawings by Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

#### Monday 6 February

Readings:

Franz Hessel, *Walking in Berlin. A Flaneur in the Capital* (1929) – selection  
Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) – excerpts

#### Monday 12 February

Readings:

Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* and *A Berlin Chronicle* (excerpts)  
Sigfried Krakauer, "Farewell to the Linden Arcade" (1930), in *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*, pp. 337-342

### Weeks 4-9: Eros, Freedom, Entertainment

#### Week 4 - Monday 19 February -The New Woman

Readings: Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl* (1932) – excerpts  
Paintings by Jeanne Mammen

Weeks 5-7 - Monday 26 February to Wednesday 11 March – Queer Metropolis I

Readings: Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) and Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936) - excerpts

Week 8 – Monday 18 March – Excursion TBC

Guided visit of the exhibition Happy in Berlin? at the Grossbritannienzentrum, HU

Readings: excerpts from the exhibition catalogue

Spring Break

Week 9: Monday 1 April - Queer Metropolis II

Excursion through Schöneberg and at the Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation

Reading: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlin Third Sex* (selection); Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette Timm, Thomas Herr (eds), *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld* (2017) - selection

Week 10 – Monday 8 April – Cafés, Clubs and Cabarets

Readings:

Gesa Stedman, “An Habitué of the Romanisches Café: Alyx Strachey’s 1920s Berlin” (2017); and others  
TBD

Film: Benjamin Cantu, *Eldorado. Everything the Nazi Hated* (2023)

**Weeks 11-12 – Happy in Berlin? Intellectuals in Search of the Myth**

Week 11 - Monday 15 April

Readings: Sabahattin Ali, *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (1943)

Week 12 - Monday 22 April – W. H. Auden’s and Stephen Spender’s Berlin

Readings:

W.H. Auden, *Collected Poems* (selection)

Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (1951) - selection

Week 13 – Monday 29 April – Else Lasker-Schüler - Expressionism and Jewish Modernism

Readings:

Else Lasker-Schüler, *Your Diamond Dreams Cut Open My Arteries: Poems by Else Lasker Schüler* (selection)

**Sunday 5 May, 23:59 hrs: ESSAY DEADLINE**

Week 14 – Wednesday 8 May – Russian Exiles

Readings:

Viktor Shklovsky, *Zoo, or Letters of About Love* (1923, excerpts)

Week 15 – Completion week

