

FM 245: From Caligari to Hitler? German Cinema in the Weimar Republic

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

Course Times: Wednesday, 17.30 – 20.45; Thursday, 19.30 – 22.00 (film screening)
Lecture Hall (P98a)

Course Description

Foundational Course (Module: Art and Artists in Context, Approaching Arts through Theory)

According to Siegfried Kracauer German films of the 1920s represented the troubled mentality of the German people in the decade of political and economic crisis after World War I and foreshadowed the rise of Hitler and fascism. With Kracauer's famous (but controversial) claim about the "psychological history of the German film" of the Weimar Republic and its political implications as starting point, we will watch and discuss German films of the 1920s and early 1930s in their historical, social and aesthetic contexts. As an introduction to film studies the course will also introduce basic concepts of film history, film theory and film analysis.

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.

Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

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.

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 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.

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

Assessment / Assignments

Two screening reports (1000 words each), due in week 3 (deadline for screening report # 1: Sunday, September 22, 2024, noon, i.e. 12:01 pm), and week 7 (deadline for screening report # 2: Sunday, October 20, 2024, noon, i.e. 12:01 pm)

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

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Thursday, December 19, 2024, midnight
* **Please note: Graduating students** – Final essay due in week 14, Thursday, December 12, 2024, 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: The Weimar Republic (1)

Nerves (1919, Robert Reinert) – The “Nervous Epidemic”

WEEK 2

The Weimar Republic (2)

Siegfried Kracauer: *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film.*

Madame Dubarry (1919, Ernst Lubitsch) – History and Revolution

WEEK 3

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920, Robert Wiene) – Expressionism / The Uncanny (1):

WEEK 4

Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horror (1922, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau) – Tyrant Figures / The Uncanny (2)

WEEK 5

The Last Laugh (1924, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau) – Irony and Social Criticism / ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ (New Objectivity)

No film screening on Thursday, October 3 (Public holiday!)

WEEK 6

The Holy Mountain (1926, Arnold Fanck) – Nature, Spectacle, and Melodrama

WEEK 7

Metropolis (1927, Fritz Lang) – City, Spectacle (2) and Dystopia

Spring Break: Monday, October 21 – Sunday, October 27, 2024

WEEK 8

Berlin – The Symphony of a Great City (1927, Walter Ruttmann) – Avantgarde / ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ (2)

WEEK 9

Pandora’s Box (1929, Georg Wilhelm Pabst) – *Femme fatale* & Bourgeois Decline (1):

WEEK 10

The Blue Angel (1930, Josef von Sternberg) – Sound: *Femme fatale* & Bourgeois Decline (2):

WEEK 11

The Threepenny Opera (1931, Georg Wilhelm Pabst) – Bertolt Brecht / Socialist Tendencies and Epic Theatre on Film

WEEK 12

M (1931, Fritz Lang) – Murderers Among Us: Social Disquiet, Unrest and Paranoia

WEEK 13

Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World (1932, Slatan Dudow) – B. Brecht (2) / Communism

WEEK 14

Wrap-up and prospect: German Cinema in the Third Reich

* Final essay for graduating students due on Thursday, December 12, 2024, midnight

WEEK 15 Completion week: Monday, December 16 – Friday, December 20, 2024

* Final essay due on Thursday, December 19, 2024, midnight

Literature:

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

Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Fifth Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 630-641.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI Publishing 1999 (reprint 2004).

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 Ontology of the Photographic Image." In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 9-16.

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.

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.

- Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Seventh Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Brockman, Stephen. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (N. Y.): Camden House, 2010.
- 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.
- 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. *Weimar Cinema and After. Germany's Historical Imaginary*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Gibbs, John. *Mise-en-Scène. Film Style and Interpretation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press 2003.
- Grant, Barry Keith (ed.). *Fritz Lang. Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

- Kreimeier, Klaus. *The UFA Story. A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company 1918-1945*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1996.
- MacGregor, Neil. *Germany. Memories of a Nation*. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2016.
- McGilligan, Patrick. *Fritz Lang. The Nature of the Beast*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Minden, Michael, and Holger Bachmann (eds.). *Fritz Lang's Metropolis. Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*. Rochester/Woodbridge: Camden House, 2008.
- 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.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey (ed.). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- 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.
- Scheunemann, Dietrich (ed.). *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011.
- Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History. An Introduction*. Second edition. New York: McGraw-Hill (Higher Education), 2003.

Essay Deadlines

Screening report # 1: Week 3, Sunday, Sep 22, 2024, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

Screening report # 2: Week 7, Sunday, Oct 20, 2024, noon (i.e. 12:01 pm)

Final essay: Week 14, Thursday, Dec 12, 2024, midnight (for graduating students only)

Week 15, Thursday, Dec 19, 2024, midnight