

# LT329 The Writing Life

Seminar Leader: Andreas Martin Widmann  
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Course Times: Wednesday, 9:00-12:15  
Office Hours: By appointment

## Course Description

This course is designed for students who are interested in the various and multiple intersections of literary studies, creative writing, and the publishing world. To find out how the literary scene works and develops in Berlin and elsewhere, we will examine lines of tradition and current trends in German writing, both literary and other. Students will learn to engage with literature beyond the page by exploring questions such as: how do manuscripts get published and/or become books? What role do journals and magazines play, both corporate and independent, in the literary scene? How do writers make a living and what are the functions of literary awards, fellowships etc.? Where do the German and international literary communities interact? And how do writers and publishers respond to the challenges of the digital era? Areas to be covered by the reading material include the editing practices, translation, non-fiction, audiobooks and the book market. In addition to seminar discussions there will be field trips to literary institutions, publishing houses, magazines and events, such as readings and talks during the *internationales literaturfestival berlin* (ilb) in September. Guest speakers will include professionals from the world of publishing: editors, translators, journalists and writers.

*NB: Reading material and discussions will be both in German and English; students should therefore have at least B1-B2 level competence of German.*

## Requirements

Students are required to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and texts, as well as to take part in field-trips to places off-campus. This may involve allowing for extra-time to get back to BCB during the lunch break.

Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Reading materials will be made available prior to classes dedicated to these texts and subjects. Unless stated otherwise, these texts should be printed for use in class. COMPUTERS, TABLETS OR PHONES should usually not be used during in-person classes.

*Please note that essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If an extension for an essay is agreed, the essay must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

All assignment must be completed to pass the course.

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity (e.g. due to plagiarism) will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

### 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 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. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays:

### Grade Breakdown

Participation and Homework: 35%

Midterm Essay (1500 words): 20%

Review of Literature (700 words): 10%

In-Class Presentation: 10%

Final Essay (2000 words): 25%

## Schedule

*Please note that this syllabus is subject to change. Texts and other course material will be distributed through Google Classroom. You are responsible throughout the semester for knowing what you have to do for each class.*

### Week 1: (German) Literature within Global Frameworks

Wednesday, September 3

Introduction

Gerard Genette: *Paratext* (excerpt, in class)

Terry Eagleton: „What is Literature?/Was ist Literatur?“ (excerpts, in class)

### Week 2: What Is an Author?

Wednesday, September 10

Michel Foucault: „What Is an Author? / Was ist ein Autor?“

Anke Biendarra: “Authorship: Changed Paradigms”, p. 23-35

Clayton Childress: *Under the Cover. The Creation, Production and Reception of a Novel.* (excerpt)

[German text: Andreas Maier: *Ich* (Excerpts), optional]

### Week 3: Literature as Spectacle

Wednesday, September 17

**Please not that this session is split into a morning and an evening half:**

**Side A: In the Morning (10:45-12:15)**

Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle* / Die Gesellschaft des Spektakels (excerpt)

Deutscher Buchpreis Lotto

**Side B: In the Evening (19:30 – 21:00)**

Field Trip: *internationales literaturfestival berlin – Ein Abend mit Herta Müller*

This event takes place in the evening, 7:30-8:45pm

#### Week 4: The Workshop

Wednesday, September 24

Side A: Can Creative Writing Be Learned?

Chad Harbach: „NYC vs. MFA“

**Side B: Field trip to Literarisches Colloquium Berlin**

#### Week 5: Writers in the Marketplace

Wednesday, October 1

Side A:

Deborah Levy: *The Cost of Living. A Writing Autobiography* (Excerpts)

German text: Ingo Schulze: “Meine kopernikanische Wende“

Gabrielle Drolet: „How to Make a Living as a Writer“

Side B:

Susan Rubin Suleiman: „The Question of Readability in Avant-Garde Fiction“

#### Week 6: Work

Monday, October 6

Lunch Talk: Christine Wallich (Optional)

Wednesday, October 8

Side A: Lorenz Just: „Der Flaschensammler“ (German)

**Side B: Guest: Lorenz Just (writer)**

#### Week 7: Release, Re-Release

Wednesday, October 15

Frankfurt Book Fair and the “Deutscher Buchpreis“

Pierre Bourdieu: *The Market of Symbolic Goods* (excerpt)

Pascale Casanova: *The World Republic of Letters* (Excerpts)

Shields: *The Man Who Wrote the Perfect Novel: John Williams, Stoner, and the Writing Life* (Excerpts)

**Friday, October 17: Midterm Essay due**

**Fall Break (Oct. 20 – Oct. 26)**

#### Week 8: What Editors Do

Wednesday, October 29

Side A  
Peter Ginna: *What Editors Do: The Art, Craft, and Business of Book Editing* (Excerpts)

Side B:  
*Turn Every Page* (Movie)

#### Week 9: What Editors Really Do

Wednesday, November 5

Side A:  
Matthew Gasda: Can Indie Novels Save Our Minds?

Side B:  
Guest Speaker: Beatrice Fassbender (Berenberg Verlag) (tbc.)

#### Week 10: Literary Agents/LitFest at BCB

Wednesday, November 12

Please note that this week's session is split into two halves (Wednesday morning and Thursday evening):

Side A: Wednesday morning section (10:45-12:15)

Literary Agents

Interview mit Karin Graf

Karin Graf im Gespräch (Podcast)

**Side B: Thursday November 13 (19:00 – 20:30)  
Evening (LitFest at Bard College Berlin)**

**Monday, November 17: *Review of Literature due***

### Week 11: Beyond Print

Wednesday, November 19

Side A: Digital Publishing (and the Resurgence of Print)

Reading tbc.

Side B: Audiobooks

Reading tbc.

### Woche 12: The Publishing-Industrial Complex

Wednesday, November 26

Side A:  
Clayton Childress: Under the Cover. The Creation, Production, and Reception of a Novel (2017): p. 169 - p. 174

Marcel Reich-Ranicki und die Literaturkritik (Podcast)

Side B:  
Field Trip S. Fischer Verlag (tbc.)

### Woche 13: Translation

Wednesday, December 3

Side A:  
Susan Sontag: "The World as India / Die Welt als Indien"

Damion Searls: The Philosophy of Translation  
(excerpts)

Side B:

Guest speaker: Milena Adam (translator) (tbc.)

## Woche 14: Global Writing

Wednesday, December 10

Side A:

Yasemin Yildiz: *Beyond the Mother Tongue*  
(Excerpts)

Yoko Tawada: Poems

Uljana Wolf: "Spitzen"

Kito Lorenc: Poems

David Damrosh: *What is World Literature?*  
(Excerpts)

Emine Sevgi Özdamar: Ah, hier hat es auch  
geschneit (Excerpts) (in German)

Side B:

Final Discussion

## Completion Week

**Thursday, December 18: Final Essay due (deadline for graduating students: December 8)**

The Fall semester runs from Monday, September 1 and runs until Friday, December 19, with the Fall break planned from Monday, October 20, - Sunday, October 26, 2025. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>