

PL 244 Resonance: Time, Attention, and the Arts of Connection

Seminar Leader: Manuel Gebhardt
Email: m.gebhardt@berlin.bard.edu
Office hours: Wed 12:45 – 13:45
and by appointment

Tuesday: 14:00 – 17:30

Course Description

How do we cultivate a life that is meaningful rather than merely busy? This seminar introduces the contemporary German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, best known for his account of social acceleration (why life feels ever faster) and resonance (what makes life feel alive and connected). Resonance arises when we enter into a reciprocal, responsive contact with the world—whether with people, nature, art, music, work, or ideas. It is the opposite of alienation, where the world remains silent or is treated merely as a resource. For Rosa, it is not material possessions or mere productivity, but this living, reciprocal responsiveness that is essential to a fulfilled life. Building on this account, we use resonance as a cross-disciplinary lens on time, attention, and the arts of connection across art, work, education, and technology. We pair accessible selections from Rosa with readings in philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and creative nonfiction, and we practice what we study through weekly “resonance labs” – brief field exercises such as sound-mapping, slow looking, micro-craft, and attention walks. Students learn to analyze sites of alienation and to articulate conditions for more resonant spaces in classrooms, workplaces, communities, and the arts. Assignments include short reflection notes, one seminar facilitation, a midterm essay, and a final research or creative project with critical commentary. No background in theory is required; curiosity and an openness to co-create resonance spaces are.

Requirements

Students are required to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and texts, as well as to take part in fieldtrips to places off-campus. This may involve allowing for extra-time for making the way to and from BCB campus; if necessary, a class may be moved to the evening, e.g. to attend a theater performance. Students should also be willing to make time for one or two film screenings in the evening.

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 through Google Classroom prior to classes dedicated to these texts and subjects. Unless stated otherwise, these texts should be printed for use in class.

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.

Accommodations

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 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).

Use of Generative AI in This Course

It is generally acceptable to use generative AI to search for information and to deepen your understanding of course content. For example, using AI-powered web searches or engaging in conversations with tools like ChatGPT can be helpful for exploring ideas, refining your thinking, identifying examples, or clarifying complex material.

However, unless explicitly stated otherwise, it is not permissible to submit work that has been predominantly written by generative AI. This includes simply rewriting or slightly editing a draft produced by an AI tool. Such use would be comparable to copying from a book or article without proper attribution and does not meet the academic integrity standards of this course.

Please note that computer-generated text and ideas (including anything from ChatGPT) are sources that require citation, cf. "Academic Integrity".

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

This course combines short reflective writing, one formal midterm essays, a class presentation and one final research or creative project with critical commentary. . Students are expected to come prepared, submit drafts on time, and revise based on feedback. Writing support (peer feedback or Learning Commons) is strongly encouraged, especially for the longer assignments.

Graded Components and Timeline:

- 4 Short Responses (tbd): ungraded but required for essay development
- Mid Term Essay – Draft (Week 6), Final (Week 7)
- Final Essay / or Project – Draft (Week 14), Final (Week Completion Week)
- Presentation (t.b.d. in 2nd session)
- Preparation and Participation (ongoing)

Assignments

Over the course of the semester, students will complete a series of written assignments totaling approximately **6000–6500 words**, in accordance with departmental guidelines. These include shorter and longer writing formats designed to build toward independent analytical thinking and structured academic writing.

- **Short Responses (4 total, spaced across the semester)**
You will submit four 1–2 page reflections on the assigned readings or “resonance labs”. These regular exercises are meant to help you develop ideas, clarify your perspective, and prepare for the longer essays.
Estimated total: 1500–2000 words
- **Mid-Term Essay Draft & Final Version**
In your mid-term essay, you will be engaging critically with one of the course’s core topics. You are expected to bring at least two course readings into a productive dialogue. A draft is required and will receive oral feedback during office hours.
Estimated total: 1500–2000 words
- **Final Essay / Project – Draft & Final Version**
A 2500–3000 word essay due at the end of the semester. This assignment invites you to synthesize and extend course discussions by developing a focused argument based on the readings and concepts we have explored. A draft is required and must be submitted two weeks prior to the final version.
Estimated total: 2500–3000 words

- If you choose to pursue a creative project, a 1000 – 1500 words reflection paper is required to consider the project as completed.

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 will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. 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

Preparation and Participation (weeks 1 – 7)	15%
Preparation and Participation (weeks 8 – 14)	15%
Midterm Essay (ca. 2000 words):	20%
One In-Class Presentation:	25%
Final Essay/Project (ca. 3000 words):	25%

Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

We will often read excerpts from the works listed.

To bring several perspectives of theory and practice into a dialogue, we will – based on Hartmut Rosa as a foundational thinker for our topic aim to connect broader historical or philosophical contexts – whether a period, a school of thought, or a single author – with our own thinking and argumentation, grounded in a solid foundation of understanding. It follows the Socratic idea that opinion (*doxa*) should be replaced by knowledge (*episteme*), which then allows us to form our own well-considered judgments (*kritike*), leading ideally to a form of intuition. I invite you to walk this path with genuine benevolence toward one another's perspectives – and with a sharp mind (and still: benevolence) when it comes to critically examining our own positions. As we go along, I will either designate in advance – depending on our seminar progress – the passages we will focus our collective discussion on, or I will ask you to suggest the parts you feel deserve particular attention. If we find that we wish to devote more time to a specific aspect, or if you have reading suggestions based on your own studies, we may adapt accordingly. Readings can be adjusted or rescheduled in response to our shared interests.

Week 1	<u>Why "resonance" now?</u>
	Rosa, The Uncontrollability of the World: 'Beyond Control: A Note from the Author...'
	Resonance Lab: Personal time-map: where do days feel fast, flat, or full?

Week 2	<p><u>Why "resonance" now? Control, availability, and modern life</u></p> <p>Rosa, The Uncontrollability of the World, ch. 1-2.</p> <p>Rosa, Social Acceleration, Introduction (focus: shrinking of the present; slipping slopes).</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Personal time-map (refined): identify 2 'control moves' + 1 'contact move'.</p>
Week 3	<p><u>Alienation, recognition, strong evaluations</u></p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, Introduction, V.3-V.5 ('Resonance,' 'Alienation,' 'Dialectic').</p> <p>Companions: Marx on alienation; Honneth on recognition; Taylor on strong evaluation</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Mini-interviews: 'felt contact' vs. friction (what makes the world answer?).</p>
Week 4	<p><u>The temporal structure of modern life</u></p> <p>Rosa, Social Acceleration, ch. 2 ('What Is Social Acceleration?' esp. the three dimensions).</p> <p>Byung-Chul Han, The Burnout Society (entire short book).</p> <p>Resonance Lab: 'Slow 30'</p>
Week 5	<p><u>Attention, distraction, and refusal</u></p> <p>Jenny Odell, How to Do Nothing, ch. 1-3</p> <p>Simone Weil, 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies' (attention).</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, III.2 'Media of Our Relationship to the World'</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Silent sit + local 'attention atlas' (where attention opens vs. gets captured).</p>
Week 6	<p><u>Craft as resonance</u></p> <p>Matthew B. Crawford, Shop Class as Soulcraft, ch. 1-2</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, VIII.2 'Work: When Material Begins to Respond' .</p> <p>Richard Sennett, The Craftsman, Introduction + ch. 1</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Micro-skill atelier (repair/sharpen/join/analog fix)</p>
Week 7	<p><u>Nature, reciprocity, and gratitude</u></p> <p>Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: 'The Gift of Strawberries,' 'The Honorable Harvest,' and 'Skywoman Falling' or 'Allegiance to Gratitude').</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, IX.2 'The Voice of Nature' (selective).</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Field walk + reciprocity journal (tiny gift-return practice).</p>

Week 8	<p><u>Aesthetic education + music: arts of connection</u></p> <p>Friedrich Schiller, On the Aesthetic Education of Man: selected Letters (1-2, 6, 14-15, 20, 26-27).</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, IX.3 'The Power of Art'</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, II.4 'Voice, Gaze, Countenance'</p> <p>Oliver Sacks, Musicophilia: 'Earworms' or 'A Bolt from the Blue' or 'The Key of Clear Green'</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Sound-mapping + 'call-and-response' experiment (pair listening with micro slow-looking).</p>
Week 9	<p><u>Institutions, democracy, and resonance</u></p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, VII.3 'Politics: The Four Voices of Democracy'</p> <p>Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition: excerpt on action/public realm</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Design sprint: prototype a 'resonant town-hall' format (tempo, turn-taking, response).</p>
Week 10	<p><u>HOLIDAY WEEK</u></p> <p>Self-guided lab (sound-mapping or attention walk) + brief notes for yourself.</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Optional: 60 minutes 'resonance time' (no feeds; no headphones).</p>
Week 11	<p><u>Technology and (un)controllability</u></p> <p>Rosa, The Uncontrollability of the World, ch. 3-4.</p> <p>Sherry Turkle, Alone Together: Introduction</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, III.2 'Media of Our Relationship to the World' (review)</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Phone-use audit + 'humane-tech proposal'</p>
Week 12	<p><u>Teaching, learning, and presence + work/care/burnout</u></p> <p>bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress, ch. 1 'Engaged Pedagogy.'</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, VIII.3 'Schools as Resonant Spaces'</p> <p>Arlie Hochschild, The Managed Heart, Introduction + ch. 1</p> <p>Byung-Chul Han, The Burnout Society (revision)</p> <p>Parker J. Palmer, The Courage to Teach, ch. 1 (optional).</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Co-create and test one 'resonant classroom' practice (format change + feedback ritual + boundary rule).</p>
Week 13	<p><u>Literature and ethics of attention (reading as listening)</u></p> <p>Ursula K. Le Guin, 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' (short).</p>

	<p>Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha: selected chapters ('Awakening,' 'Kamala,' 'By the River,' 'The Ferryman,' 'Om').</p> <p>Rosa, Resonance, X.2 'The Muting of the World in Literature and Philosophy'.</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Narrative case studies: where does the text 'answer,' where does it remain silent?</p>
Week 14	<p><u>Resonance Space for Students' recommended readings</u></p> <p>Required Reading</p> <p>No new reading.</p> <p>Resonance Lab: Personal 'Resonance Manifesto' (2 pages): conditions, practices, and two institutional changes.</p>
Week 15	<p><u>Synthesis and student project showcases</u></p> <p>Resonance Lab: Personal 'Resonance Manifesto' (2 pages): conditions, practices, and two institutional changes.</p>