

TH 207 Intensifying Reality: A Survey and Staging of 21st Century German Drama

Seminar Leader: Julia Hart
Course Times: Fridays 3:45-7:00pm
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Office Hours: Fridays 2:30-3:30pm (by appointment)

Course Description

German dramatists in the 21st Century have been developing new methods of ordering and processing verbal material for the stage. Some writers, like Fritz Kater, are said to create a special kind of compression, an intensification of reality. Other dramatists, like Elfriede Jelinek, do not break down their texts into individual speakers. It is up to the director and actors to distribute the text and position them in a living space. This course will examine a selection of German plays from 2000-2012. We will be discussing the dramaturgy of these sometimes shocking plays as well as exploring methods of staging these works in translation. We will be reading and rehearsing plays by writers in translation including: Dea Loher, Falk Richter, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Anja Hilling, Elfriede Jelinek, and Sascha Marianna Salzmann. Students will work as directors and actors throughout the semester. Questions we will be wrestling with include: What are the issues that German dramatists are addressing? How are they experimenting with different forms of storytelling characterisation, and narration? And how can these plays, that experiment radically with theatrical form and language, be staged?

Requirements

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from their professors in a timely manner.
- Inform their professors at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park

for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

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).

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.

Scene Study (Final Project) Requirements: 11.12.2026

- choose one scene from one of the plays discussed that you would like to explore and conceptualise, devise, and rehearse as an actor or director.
- One additional three hour rehearsal per week to be completed outside of class Scene Study will be discussed and critiqued on 11.12.2026
- Additional assignments to prepare the Scene Study will be posted on Google Classroom

Scene Study (Final Project) Assessment

- Students will be graded on their preparation, completion of rehearsal reports (uploaded to Google classroom after each rehearsal, 1-2 paragraphs in length), and the ability to discuss their ideas about the situation and characters in the scene. Actors will be assessed on their preparation, physicality, use of movement/gesture, delivery of lines, and a clear approach to their characters. Directors will be assessed on their preparation, use of space, movement/gesture, and clear intention of what is being explored in the scene.

The participation grade will be based on students' participation in class discussions. The following exercises will also be part of the participation grade for this course:

Monologue Assignment: 2.10.2026

- Students will choose a short monologue from one of the plays recently discussed to memorize and present in class.

Performance Exercise: 30.10.2026

- Students will develop a short experimental scene in class using one of the plays by Fritz Kater, Lukas Bärfuss, Anja Hilling or Falk Richter. This performance exercise will be worked on in class, yet also prepared outside of class.

Written requirements:

Scene Study Essays (2000 words due 21.12.2026)

Scene Study Essay should contain the following:

- Rehearsal process: how the scene was chosen, a brief analysis of the scene (the situation, the characters, the central conflict), descriptions from rehearsal, including what rehearsal (as actors or directors) methods and exercises were implemented, how they were implemented, and any relevant challenges and observations from rehearsals
- Evaluation of the scene presentation and a critical evaluation of the rehearsal process.

Grade Breakdown: Scene Study 40%
Written Assignments 30%
Class Participation 30%.

Policy on Late Submission

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). Professor is not obliged

to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where Professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it 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.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations

Assignments (artworks, essays, performances, oral presentations) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (Example: B+ becomes C+). The Professor is not obliged to accept assignments 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 may make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive 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.

*Course readings will be posted on Google Classroom each week.

*Please note that we will visit two theatre productions in Berlin. Those dates will be given on the first day of class.

Schedule

- 4.9 Introduction to Contemporary German Theater
Overview of authors, directors, plays, and key concepts
- 11.9 Setting the Scene: A deeper look into the historical context of German playwriting, production methods and directing trends in the 2000s
- Reading: David Barnett: *Representation and Its Discontents* (305-331) in the book *A History of German Theatre* (on reserve in the library)
Johannes Birringer: *A New Europe* 26-40
Peter Boenisch: *Introduction: The dissensus of Regie:rethinking director's theatre* (1-9)
David Barnett: *"I've been told... that play is far too German"* (153-156)
- 18.9 Fritz Kater: *Vineta (Riverwaterwont)* 2001
WE ARE CAMERA (Jasonmaterial) 2003
*Monologues/Dialogues selected for assignment.
- 25.9 Falk Richter *Electronic City* (2003)
Lukas Barfüss *THE BUS* (2005)
Reading: *Belief and Unbelief in the Twenty First Century: Lukas Barfüss's DER BUS* (131-141)

- 2.10 Anja Hilling: *Sense* (2007)
*Scene Study scenes chosen and groups formed
*Monologue/Dialogue Presentation in class
- 10.10 12-3pm in the Factory. Practical Workshop on rehearsal techniques and exercises involving Spielweise and movement.
Groups formed for Scene Exercise.
- 16.10 Rehearsals for Scene Exercise
- 23.10 FALL BREAK
- 30.10 Scene Exercise Presentations and Feedback
- 6.11 Dea Loher: *The Last Fire* (2011)
Roland Schimmelpfennig: *The Golden Dragon* (2010)
- 13.11 Sascha Marianna Salzmann: *Birthmarks Window Blue* (2012)
Mameloschn Mother Tongue (2012)
*Groups formed for Final Project
- 20.11 Rehearsals for Final Project
- 27.11 In-Class Workshop - Staging techniques. Rehearsals for Final Project
- 4.12 Rehearsals for Final Project
- 11.12 Final Project Presentations
*Evening Show in the Factory - (Date will be finalised at the beginning of the semester with the other Arts Faculty)
- 21.12 Scene Study Essay Due

Policy on the use of facilities:

1. The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
2. Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all.
3. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building.

4. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building.
5. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building.
6. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster.
7. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline.
8. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed.
9. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110

Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 116 117