BERLIN: EXPERIMENT IN MODERNITY
Core Course of the “Bard in Berlin” Junior Semester Abroad Program

Dr. Florian Becker
Monday and Wednesday 10.45-12.15, Friday Excursions: 15.10-19.00 (approx.)
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“Berlin ist mehr ein Weltteil als eine Stadt.”
“Berlin is not so much a city as a slice of the world.”
Jean Paul

“Berlin, ein Trümmerhaufen bei Potsdam.”
“Berlin, a pile of rubble near Potsdam.”
Bertolt Brecht

More than any other city, Berlin has been a source and a theater for the forces shaping Western modernity. The city’s importance and its by turns glorious and catastrophic role in European culture and history have their origins in its peculiar development. Built on a swamp, in a poor duchy surrounded by more powerful states, it was remade during the Enlightenment as a center not only of military discipline and administrative control but also of learning and innovation. Increasingly characterized in the later nineteenth century by almost uncontrolled growth, it rose to the status of capital of the German Empire and became a center of science and technology. With rapid industrialization came sharp social polarization and bitter political conflict, but also the birth of aesthetic modernism and avantgarde culture. After the clamor for imperial power and colonial expansion culminated in the cataclysm of World War I, Berlin witnessed the unparalleled artistic explosion of the Weimar Republic. During the Nazi dictatorship the city became the point of origin of political terror, war and genocide. Still reduced to little more than “a pile of rubble near Potsdam” (Brecht), Berlin found itself after World War II on the frontline of the Cold War and remained forcibly divided for more than four decades between two radically different political and economic systems. Through a combination of historical sources, literature, philosophy, and a wide range of artifacts—from paintings over photographs to film, from archival to contemporary—we shall seek to understand Berlin’s significance and its current position at the heart of Europe. And we will speculate about its possible futures as a place of gathering and experiment for a population from across the world.

Class Format
Although “Berlin: Experiment in Modernity” is a single-credit course (4 US credits/ 8 ECTS), you should expect to spend more time on this course than you would for a “regular” course, e.g. a US junior seminar or BCB elective: In addition to the two 90-minute seminar meetings each week (on Mondays and Wednesdays), we will go on excursions almost every Friday afternoon. Excursions may involve student presentations, lectures or discussions. Most of them will take us to places in central Berlin. Excursions farther afield may take place on Saturdays. There is one overnight trip—to the baroque city of Dresden, the capital of Saxony—from Friday, December 5 to Sunday, December 7.

All excursions are an integral and mandatory part of the course.
Required Texts (available for pickup at the Library)
Course Reader
Frank Mecklenburg and Manfred Stassen (eds.), *German Essays on Socialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Continuum, 1990)
Peter Weiss, *The Investigation* (Marion Boyars, 2000)

Additional texts are available on your Bard College Berlin “Google Drive” for download. Please print double-sided whenever possible, get a binder for the course, and bring paper copies of all readings to class.

Requirements
- Short weekly responses to the readings. (Please post them using the forms provided on Google Drive.)
- Three essays (draft and final versions).
- Informal writing assignments and quizzes.

***Please note: Use your new Bard College Berlin email account (j.doe@berlin.bard.edu) for all correspondence.***

Participation
This course is a seminar. Your consistent, vociferous, and thoughtful participation in our discussions is crucial to your success. Class sessions may include brainstorming and writing periods, in which you may work alone or with a partner. You are expected to take an active part in all activities.

***The use of laptop computers, tablets, smartphones or other electronic devices in the classroom is prohibited.***

Seminar Preparation and Weekly Responses
Please come prepared to seminar meetings and excursions. Upon reading the assigned texts every week, formulate a question or observation that you want the group to address in class. Paste it into the blank document shared with you on Google Drive (labeled “Response Week x”), no later than Sunday, 19.00h. Before our meeting on Monday, please print out the document, read everybody else’s questions and prepare responses to some of them. Your notes should help you present your thoughts coherently in class.

Essays and Tutorials
All essays must be submitted both through the Bard College Berlin online system and in hard copy.

Students write two versions of each essay. The first version has to be a complete and coherent essay. For the first paper: After handing in the first version, students will have individual tutorial meetings with me. For the second and final essays: Students bring two paper copies to class, one for
me and one for a writing partner of their choice. Writing partners are expected to provide critical questions, comments, and suggestions for each other, and to bring these (in writing) to the next seminar meeting. It is worth spending a substantial amount of time on revisions for your final version. For this process to function, hard copies of both the first and second versions have to be handed in on time. Extensions can only be granted in medical or other emergencies.

***Please note: All electronically submitted papers have to be in the European “A4” format! In the MS Word “file” menu, choose “page setup,” then change the “paper size” from “US letter” to “A4.”***

Academic Honesty

Bard College Berlin does not tolerate plagiarism. Intellectual honesty is at the heart of academic ethics, and plagiarism is the most serious offence against it. Penalties include failure of the course, suspension from the university and expulsion. Please cite the ideas of others properly. See me if you have any questions about when or how to acknowledge your sources.

Default Due Dates

Unless announced otherwise, papers are due at the following times:

| Essay 1, First Version | Monday, September 23 12.30h |
| Essay 1, Final Version | Wednesday, October 2 23.59h |
| Essay 2, First Version | Monday, November 4 12.30h |
| Essay 2, Final Version | Monday, November 11 23.59h |
| Final Essay, First Version | Wednesday, December 11 12.30h |
| Final Essay, Final Version | Wednesday, December 18 23.59h |

Grading

Seminar Participation: 25% (quality and quantity of preparation and contributions)

Essay 1: 20%
Essay 2: 20%
Final Essay: 25%

Excursion Participation: 10% (visual analysis exercises; quality and quantity of preparation and contributions)

***Please note: At Bard College Berlin, professors submit Midterm Grades for essays and participation to the Bard College Berlin Registrar, from whom students can then retrieve them.***

Absences

In accordance with the Academic Statutes of Bard College Berlin, you are allowed no more than two absences (for seminars and excursions combined) during the semester. I will notify you after your third absence. Absences should be limited to documented health problems or emergencies, close family functions or emergencies, and observance of major religious holidays. Whenever possible, please inform me about any potential absence in advance. Any additional absence results in automatic penalties (grade reductions).

Finally, please be punctual and considerate. Switch off your mobile phone and keep bathroom breaks to a minimum.
***This syllabus is subject to change. You remain responsible throughout the semester for knowing where and when we meet for classes and outings, and what your assignments are for each meeting.***
Semester Overview

Orientation Week

Events with Professor Becker:

August 27 Welcome to Bard College Berlin. Student Center, 17.00
Informal Welcome Dinner, 18.30

August 28 Administrative Orientation, 10.30 (Lecture Hall, P98a)
Academic Orientation, 16.30 (Seminar Room 2, P98)

August 29 Individual Advising Meetings, 11.00-16.30 (Room 010, P24)
College Welcome Dinner, 18.00

August 30 Saturday Excursion to Potsdam. Visit to Sanssouci Palace, the royal parks and
the old city. With Dr. Aya Soika, Professor of Art History. You will be taken from
campus to the S-Bahn station Potsdam Park Sanssouci.

August 31 Sunday Excursion: Visit to “The Story of Berlin.” You will be taken from
campus to the museum’s entrance inside the mall located at
Kurfürstendamm 207 (U1 Uhlandstraße).

Week One

September 1 2014: Where Are We Now? (Introduction to the Course)
David Bowie, “Where Are We Now?” (Video, January 2013)

September 3 1237-1871: Berlin—Brandenburg—Prussia—Germany
With Professor Soika.
“Chronology: Germany, 1800-1990,” in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), German History
since 1800 (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 585-595
in Irit Rogoff (ed.), The Divided Heritage: Themes and Problems in
German Modernism (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 223-224
Architecture. Study (online) images of:
Berlin City Palace (1443-1845)
Carl Gotthard Langhans (1732-1808), Brandenburg Gate (1788-1791)
Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850), Quadriga (1793)
Friedrich August Stüler (1800-1865), Old National Gallery (1876)
Paul Wallot (1841-1912), Reichstag Building (1884-1894)

September 5 Friday Excursion: “Layers of History.” A guided walk in Mitte. You will be taken
from campus to the S-Bahn station Brandenburger Tor.
Week Two

September 8
1870-1890: Berlin, Capital of the German Empire

September 10
1888-1914: Berlin under Wilhelm II

September 12
No Friday Excursion.

Week Three

September 15
1870-1900: The Metropolis and the Arts I
With Professor Soika.
Large, Berlin, “World City?” pp. 62-81
Shearer West, The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890–1937: Utopia and Despair,
Chapter 1, pp. 12-32
Study images online:
Adolph Menzel (1815-1905): Departure of King Wilhelm I for the Army, July 31
1870 (1871), Iron Rolling Mill (1872-1875)
Anton von Werner (1843-1915): A Billet outside Paris, October 24, 1870 (1894),
The Proclamation of the German Empire (18th January 1871) (1885)
Robert Köhler (1850-1917), The Socialist (1885), The Strike (1886)
Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), Misery (1895-1896), The Weavers’ Revolt (cycle of
six prints, 1895-1897)
Max Liebermann (1847-1935), Cobbler’s Workshop (1881), The Net Menders
(1887-1889)
Walter Leistikow (1865-1908), Lake Grunewald (1895)
Lovis Corinth (1858-1925), Self-Portrait with Skeleton (1896), The Blinded
Samson (1912)

September 17
1891-1918: The German Empire and German Colonialism
Exberliner 108: “Africa in Berlin” (September 2012)
Otto von Bismarck, Speech on “Pragmatic” Colonization (June 26, 1884), PDF
“The Congo Conference: Points of Dispute Shown in the Opening Speeches,”
The New York Times, November 18, 1884
Wilhelm II., The “Hun Speech” (1900), PDF
Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop, “Introduction,” in
Friedrichsmeyer et al. (ed.), The Imperialist Imagination: German
Colonialism and Its Legacy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press),
pp. 1-29.

September 19
Friday Excursion: Alte Nationalgalerie (Museum Island). With Professor Soika.
Week Four

September 22

**1905-1914: The Metropolis and the Visual Arts II: Expressionism**
With Professor Soika.

*Large,* *Berlin,* pp. 136-146 (“Keep Hittin’ ‘Em”), and reread p. 73

Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903), in Donald N. Levine (ed.), *Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 174-185

Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany,* chapter 2, pp. 48-58


Study images online:

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1937), *Berlin Street Scene* (1913), *Street Scene* (1913), *Potsdamer Platz* (1914)

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976), *Three Nudes (Nidden)* (1913)

Erich Heckel (1883-1970), *Glassy Day* (1913)

Max Pechstein (1881-1955), *The Yellow and Black Tricot* (1910); *On Nidden Beach, Portrait of his Wife Lotte* (1911)

Emil Nolde (1867-1956), *Papua Boys* (1914)

**Essay 1, First Version Due.**

September 24

**1848-1914: The German Empire and the Labor Movement**

Special Session with Sebastian Gerhardt, Topography of Terror and Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte.


Paul Göhre, *Three Months as a Factory Worker and Journeymen* (Leipzig, 1891)

September 25-29

Individual tutorials on your essays.

September 27

**Saturday (!) Excursion: Exhibition “Weltenbruch—The Brücke Artists and World War One.” Brücke-Museum, Bussardsteig 9, 14195 Berlin-Dahlem.** Guided by Professor Soika, who curated the show.

Week Five

September 29

**1918-1923: Defeat, Revolution, Inflation**

*Large,* *Berlin,* “The Great Disorder,” pp. 157-184, reread pp. 146-155


Study photographic documents of Berlin 1918-1919, in reader and online.
October 1

“Wer gegen Dada ist, ist Dadaist”
Richard Huelsenbeck and Raoul Hausmann, “What is Dadaism and What Does It Want in Germany?” (1919), in Motherwell (ed.), pp. 41-42
Study images online:
Hannah Höch, Cut With the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany (1919)
Georg Grosz and John Heartfield, Life and Activity in Universal City, 12:05 pm (1919)

Essay 1, Final Version Due.

October 3

Day of German Unity: no excursion.

October 4


Week Six

October 6

1924-1932: The Glittering Thing
Film: Walter Ruttmann, Berlin Symphony of a Great City (1927)
Alfred Döblin, “East of Alexanderplatz,” in Constantine (ed.), Berlin Tales

October 8

Bertolt Brecht, The Threepenny Opera (1928)

October 9

Thursday Excursion: Brecht-Haus, Chausséestraße 125. Meet there by 17.40; tour starts promptly at 17.45.

Week Seven

October 13

Bertolt Brecht, The Threepenny Opera

October 15

1918-1933: The New Architecture: Modernism for the Masses
Reread Large, Berlin, pp. 206-207, 241
Study photographic evidence of Weimar housing, in reader and online.

**October 17**

No excursion.

—Fall Break—

**Week Eight**

**October 27**

1933-1939: Terror, Persecution, and Acquiescence
Study images of Nazi architecture:
Ernst Sagebiel: Imperial Aviation Ministry (1935), Tempelhof Airport Terminal (1935-1941)
Werner March: Olympiastadion (1936)
Plans for “Germania”: Albert Speer, model of the “Great Hall” (ca. 1940), model of the “North-South Axis” (ca. 1940)
Wilhelm Kreis, model of the “Soldiers’ Hall” (ca. 1943)

**October 29**

1939-1945: War and Genocide
Large, *Berlin*, “Now People, Arise, and Storm, Break Loose!,” pp. 319-367

**October 31**

Friday Excursion: Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. Visit of the Information Center, guided by Sebastian Gerhardt.

**Week Nine**

**November 3**


Essay 2, First Version Due.

**November 5**

Peter Weiss, *The Investigation*

**November 7**

Friday Excursion: Visit to the Bundestag (Reichstag Building), Special Art and Architecture Tour and visit of Norman Foster’s dome. Meet at the security checkpoint (west façade) by 16.00. Please bring your passports; you will need them to be admitted.

**Week Ten**

**November 10**

1945-1949: Four-Power Occupation and “Denazification”
Large, *Berlin*, “Coming into the Cold,” pp. 369-417 (to “…richer relatives.”)
Film: Wolfgang Staudte, *The Murderers Are among Us* (1946)
The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949)

Essay 2, Final Version Due.

**November 12**

Large, *Berlin*, “Coming into the Cold,” pp. 418-443
Stalinallee (now Karl-Marx-Allee): Herbert Henselmann, Straußberger Platz and Frankfurter Tor; Richard Paulick, Residential Block

November 14
Friday Excursion: Professor Aya Soika’s Kreuzberg,
Meet Aya at U-Bahnhof Schlesisches Tor.

Week Eleven

November 17

1961-1989: The Wall
Large, *Berlin*, “The Divided City,” pp. 445-460 (to “…size and beauty.”)

November 19
Film: Beyer, *The Trace of Stones*

November 21
Friday Excursion: Former Prison of the GDR Ministry of State Security (“Stasi”), Hohenschönhausen.

Week Twelve

November 24

1961-1970: West Berlin—The City as Theater
Large, *Berlin*, “The Divided City,” pp. 460-466 (to “over the wall.”), 469-495
Ulrike Meinhof “Napalm and Pudding,” “Vietnam and Germany,” in Meinhof (ed. Karin Bauer), *Everybody Talks About the Weather . . . We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof* (Seven Stories Press, 2008)

November 26

1989-1994: Peaceful Revolution and Reunification

November 28

Week Thirteen

December 1

1961-2014: City of Immigration
Emine Sevgi Özdamar, “My Berlin,” in Constantine (ed.), *Berlin Tales*
Gökçe Yurdakul and Y. Michal Bodemann, “‘We Don’t Want to Be the Jews of Tomorrow’: Jews and Turks in Germany after 9/11,” *German

December 3
Wladimir Kaminer, Russian Disco

December 5-7
Weekend Excursion to Dresden
Leave: Berlin Hbf, Friday afternoon.
Return: Berlin Hbf on Sunday night (late).

Week Fourteen
December 8
1990-2014: Berlin and the Future of Europe

December 10
No meeting. Final Essay, First Version Due.

December 12
Friday Excursion: Jüdisches Museum, Lindenstraße 9-14, Berlin-Kreuzberg.
With Professor Soika.
Andreas Huyssen “The Voids of Berlin,” Critical Inquiry 24:1 (Fall 1997), pp. 57-81

Completion Week

Friday, December 19
Final Essay, Final Version Due.