BERLIN INTERNSHIP SEMINAR: WORKING CULTURES, URBAN CULTURES

Seminar Leader: Agata Lisiak
Course Times: Mondays 9-10.30 am
Email: a.lisiak@berlin.bard.edu

Course Description

The Berlin Internship Seminar accompanies students’ undertaking of an internship or period of practical training, and addresses such issues as: the successful functioning of institutions, the role of guiding principles and values in determining the direction and structure of projects and initiatives, and the relationship between the various spheres of society (the EU, the state, the market, and the individual) in influencing the way institutions operate. Over the course of the seminar we will talk about contemporary ways of living and working in Berlin and beyond: How is work organized temporally and spatially and how does it, in turn, affect the city and its residents? What distinguishes the spaces in which we live and work today? Which new forms of work have emerged in Berlin recently? Which of them seem to thrive? How do Berlin’s political, artistic, and citizen-activist organizations operate? What can we learn from these institutions?

Besides in-class discussions and off-campus visits to various Berlin organizations, the seminar offers a platform for the exchange of observations, reflections, and comments on students’ internships. Each session is divided in two parts: the first 20-30 minutes are devoted to discussing the practicalities of students’ internships, and during the rest of the class we discuss the assigned readings (when possible, in relation to the internships).

Requirements

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. A class participation mark will be awarded on the basis of your engagement in class discussions. All students should read all the assigned readings and prepare their questions and comments.

Writing Assignments

Reading response

Each student is required to submit one reading response paper before the fall break. The purpose of this response is not to summarize the readings. Rather, it should engage with the readings and take positions in support of, or against, the points of view expressed in the readings. Where possible, these responses should draw on your internship or work experiences and use these to shed light on the
reading materials. The choice to which class readings you would like to respond is yours. Each response should be two pages, double-spaced in Times New Roman, size 12, and emailed to a.lisiak@berlin.bard.edu by October 12, 2015 (or anytime before that date).

Review of an off-campus visit

Over the course of the semester we will have three classes off campus. We will visit a start-up, a co-working space, and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. The exact dates for each of the visits will be confirmed in February. Each student is required to submit one short review of a visit at the respective organization. You can choose which one you want to review, but make sure to submit the one-page review no later than a week after the visit.

Final paper

This 2000-word paper can be a standard essay or a case-study analysis and should reference at least one of the readings we covered over the course of the semester. Interdisciplinary and creative approaches and methodologies are encouraged. The following deadlines apply for the submission of various parts of the paper:

- paper topic or main question – November 27, 2015
- paper abstract (200 words) – December 4, 2015
- final paper deadline – December 20, 2015

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

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 I agree to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than a C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 30%
Reading response: 20%
Report/review: 10%
Final paper: 40%

Schedule*

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<tr>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>August 29, 2015: Your Internship: Practicalities and Expectations</th>
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This class will address the practicalities of commencing your respective internships. We will go over the internship documents for the semester: the "Internship Guidelines," your "Internship Agreement," and the "Internship Time Sheet." This class also addresses the course content, pedagogical goals, and grading requirements. No readings are required.

* The schedule is subject to change. You will be informed about any changes via email. Please always update your calendar accordingly.
Class 2
September 7, 2015: Life and Work in Berlin: An Introduction

We will discuss the political and economic situation in Berlin after the fall of the Wall and after the start of the recent economic crisis. Based on the assigned articles, we will reflect on the new role of Germany in the EU and beyond. This class also introduces the main topics we will be discussing this semester: working cultures, creative industries, start-ups, gentrification, and citizenship.

Required readings:

Videos to watch:

Class 3
September 14, 2015: Bartleby at the Water Cooler – an introduction to office literature

Compared to the amount of time we spend at work, our offices fill far fewer pages of novels than our adulteries. In this class, we look at several literary workplaces, ranging from mid-19th century New York to pre- and post-internet bubble Silicon Valley. We ask what makes some work more productive, what role we play in work hierarchies, and whether it matters where your desk is in relation to the copier.

Required reading:
* Ferris, Joshua. Then We Came to the End. New York: Little, Brown, 2007. 3-12.

Class 4
September 21, 2015: Working Together

Hierarchies and dynamics at work can have productive or unproductive results—sometimes none of us play too well with others. This class is devoted to exploring old and new forms of work and its organization.

Required reading:

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The creative economy requires not just new forms of labor, but also new ways of organizing the office. We read about recent developments in this field and visit a co-working space.

Required reading (READ ONLINE):

Class 6
**September 28, 2015:** Chasing Dreams? Start-Up Cultures

Berlin has been repeatedly hailed as Europe’s Silicon Valley. We will discuss the validity of this comparison, inquiring into the inner workings of startups, their power dynamics, and their impact on the cities they are located.

Required reading:

Videos to watch:
Berlin startups ecosystem: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzX3YVyxSx8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzX3YVyxSx8).
A new beginning: Startups Berlin:
[http://www.dw.de/part-1-a-new-beginning/a-17442373](http://www.dw.de/part-1-a-new-beginning/a-17442373) (click: report as video on demand)

Class 7
**DATE TBA:** Visit to a Berlin start-up

Required reading (ONLINE ONLY):

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Class 8
October 12, 2015: The Urge to Create, the Urge to Succeed

After a general discussion on the so-called creative industries and their place in urban economies, politics, and cultures, we will discuss the role the creative classes play in gentrification and a change in the cultural and political climate.

Required reading:

Class 9
October 26, 2015: Civil Society and Values

Some of the issues we will discuss in this class include: definitions of civil society, the role of cities and new media in the formation and development of civil society, and the difficulties civil society organizations might face in trying to be the voice of a minority.

Required reading:

Homework
Read Holm’s and Novy’s chapters and Henke’s article, note down comments and questions, then go for a walk or take the tram and explore a Berlin neighborhood or street. Take pictures of what you think are signs of gentrification or touristification. Choose one of the pictures and post it on our googledoc with a short description of the neighborhood and the street where the photo was taken. We will discuss all the posted photos in class.

Class 10
November 2, 2015: Life in Berlin Today: Who Owns the City?

Gentrification and touristification are among the most-discussed problems in any major city across the world – Berlin is no exception. Hitherto affordable parts of the city are undergoing tremendous changes, former residents are forced out while wealthier newcomers move in, and airbnb and EasyJet boost urban tourism on an unprecedented scale. This session, we will talk about how to make sense of the processes underway in today’s Berlin.

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Required reading:

Class 11
November 9, 2015: The “Good Berlin Citizen”
We will talk about the importance of values in citizen participation in general and in Berlin in particular, as well as the impact of values on the specificities of different types of citizenship (EU, national, urban, etc.).
Required reading:

Recommended reading:

Class 12
November 16, 2015: Values and Engagement: Rosa Luxemburg
Based on the writings and biography of Rosa Luxemburg, co-founder of the German Communist Party, we consider multifarious factors leading to a person’s engagement in a political, social, and/or artistic cause, the impact of individual values on the creation of an institution, and the complex relations between individual and institutional values.
Required reading:

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<tr>
<th>Class 13</th>
<th><strong>DATE TBA:</strong> Visit to the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung</th>
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<td>Class 14</td>
<td><strong>December 7, 2015:</strong> Berlin’s Art Scene, Cooperation and Activism</td>
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How does working and participating in the arts in Berlin look like? Do artists get paid? How is artistic work organized? Where does it take place? Does Berlin have something unique to offer the international art scene? How do art institutions directly and indirectly shape people’s sense of aesthetics and practices in Berlin and beyond?

**Required reading:**


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