

Modern Languages and Literatures
University of Western Ontario

CLC 2136G Berlin Snapshots

Winter 2018
Tuesdays, 9.30–11.30, KB-K208
Thursdays, 9.30–10.30, AHB-2B02

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Course Content and Aims

This course introduces students to the literature and culture of modern Berlin through the study of six “snapshots,” each illuminating a moment in the city’s turbulent and ever-evolving history:

- The Emergence of Modern Berlin
- Berlin, Imperial Capital
- Berlin in the Weimar Republic
- Berlin under National Socialism
- Divided Berlin
- Post-Unification Berlin

While these snapshots are taken at intervals throughout the last 200 years of Berlin’s development, the major focus of the course (as is evident in the above list) is on the time between 1900 and the present.

Each snapshot will include prescribed readings, and, in keeping with the metaphor, each will incorporate elements of visual culture, including film.

This course has the following interrelated objectives:

- to introduce students to a broad variety of literary texts and other cultural artefacts that provide key orientation points in the cultural history of Berlin;
- to illuminate the historical contexts that inform the cultural documents of Berlin that are studied;
- to develop and improve students’ skills in writing about and discussing cultural texts; and
- to develop the research skills that are necessary for an informed and critical understanding of cultural phenomena.

Course Structure and Methodology

The course involves regular readings, and it is essential that students complete the prescribed readings before each week’s classes, so that they can participate fully in class discussions.

The films will not be viewed during class hours, so students are to make time in their own schedules for viewings.

The language of instruction is English. The readings will be in English, but they will also be available in German for students who seek access to them in that language.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students are expected to have acquired:

- a sound knowledge of key developments in the history of the literature and culture of Berlin through the last 200 years in relation to their respective historical contexts;
- familiarity with major literary texts and cultural products that exemplify and illuminate aspects of those developments;
- a critical understanding of the meaning of cultural products and an ability to present clear, persuasive, original arguments about them in writing and in classroom presentations/discussions; and
- an understanding of ways in which history and cultural production interrelate, in regard particularly to the contexts of Germany and Berlin.

Assessment

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| • Participation | 10% |
| • 5 Written assignments | 50% |
| • Presentation | 15% |
| • Final examination | 25% |

Course Materials

Below is a preliminary list of readings and films. The final list will be available in January 2018.

Snapshot 1: The Emergence of Modern Berlin

- E.T.A. Hoffmann, “My Cousin’s Corner Window”
- Early city guides
- Heinrich Heine, “Letters from Berlin”

Snapshot 2: Berlin, Imperial Capital

- Theodor Fontane, *Confusions, Delusions*
- Walter Benjamin, “A Berlin Childhood around 1900”
- Expressionism

Snapshot 3: Berlin in the Weimar Republic

- Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin, Symphony of a City* (film)
- Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (excerpts)
- Fritz Lang, *M* (film)

- Bertolt Brecht, *Three-Penny Opera*
- Kurt Weill, et al., Berlin cabaret songs

Snapshot 4: Berlin under National Socialism

- Hans Fallada, *Everyone Dies Alone*
- Wolfgang Staudte, *The Murderers are among us* (film)

Snapshot 5: Divided Berlin

- Christa Wolf, *Divided Heaven* (excerpts)
- Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire* (film)
- Peter Schneider, *The Wall-Jumper* (excerpts)
- Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, *The Lives of Others* (film)

Snapshot 6: Post-Unification Berlin

- Leander Haußmann, *Sonnenallee* (film)
- Emine Sevgi Özdamar, “My Berlin”
- Wladimir Kaminer, *Russian Disko* (excerpts)
- Fatih Akin, *Head On* (film)
- Tom Tykwer, *Run, Lola, Run* (film)

Materials will be available in OWL, online, at the Film Resource Centre (AHB 1G19), at the Western Bookstore, or at Weldon Library.

The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Modern Languages and Literatures courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures website at <http://www.uwo.ca/modlang/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.