

Modern Languages and Literatures
University of Western Ontario

German 2256G Berlin Snapshots

Winter 2018
Tuesdays, 9.30–11.30, KB-K208
Thursdays, 10.30–11.30, LWH-2210

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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 under examination;
- to develop and improve students’ skills in German-language conversation (during the tutorial hour), reading, and writing; 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 languages of instruction are English and German: the 2-hour lecture class on Tuesdays, cross-listed with CLC, will be in English; and the 1-hour tutorial class on Thursdays will be in German. The readings will be in German or in some cases a combination of German and English. Written assignments and class presentations will be in German, and the final examination will be written in German or English (students may choose). Assignments will be graded on content, organization, and linguistic accuracy.

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;
- improved German-language skills in reading comprehension, aural comprehension, oral expression, and written expression.

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, „Des Veters Eckfenster“
- Early city guides
- Heinrich Heine, „Briefe aus Berlin“

Snapshot 2: Berlin, Imperial Capital

- Theodor Fontane, *Irrungen, Wirrungen*
- Walter Benjamin, „Berliner Kindheit um 1900“
- Expressionism

Snapshot 3: Berlin in the Weimar Republic

- Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin, Symphonie einer Großstadt* (film)
- Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (excerpts)
- Fritz Lang, *M* (film)
- Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*
- Kurt Weill, et al., Berlin cabaret songs

Snapshot 4: Berlin under National Socialism

- Hans Fallada, *Jeder stirbt für sich allein*
- Wolfgang Staudte, *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (film)

Snapshot 5: Divided Berlin

- Christa Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel* (excerpts)
- Wim Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin* (film)
- Peter Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer* (excerpts)
- Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, *Das Leben der Anderen* (film)

Snapshot 6: Post-Unification Berlin

- Leander Haußmann, *Sonnenallee* (film)
- Emine Sevgi Özdamar, „Mein Berlin“
- Wladimir Kaminer, *Russendisko* (excerpts)
- Fatih Akin, *Gegen die Wand* (film)
- Tom Tykwer, *Lola rennt* (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.