Course Title

Global Orientations: German Histories in Contemporary Life

Course Number
GLBL-UA.9102001

Syllabus last updated on: 20 Aug 2014

Instructor Contact Information
Dr. Joseph Pearson, Course Coordinator: joseph.pearson@nyu.edu

German language section coordinator:
Denise Uhl: denise.uhl@nyu.edu

Course Details
Fall 2014
Introductory Required Course
Locations: NYU-Academic Center and others

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
0-credit course, with 15 contact hours

Course Description
This course offers a survey of Modern Germany (its history, politics and culture) and an investigation of how Germany’s past, always very present, shapes responses to contemporary challenges and new opportunities. The overview investigates not only the country's experiments with authoritarianism—the experiences of mass murder, war and division—but also its emergence as a democratic leader, in the arts and human rights, and as Europe's power broker. We examine questions of citizenship and diversity, Germany's 'special' responsibility as a leader in Europe, the role of the Holocaust in State governance, Berlin's status and development as an industrial and cosmopolitan metropolis, and new avenues for German identity. We ask how these histories have made today's Berlin Europe's most exciting capital—a nexus of youth culture and the international arts scene—and Germany a vanguard of the arts, sustainable energy, technical development and global politics.
Course Objective
The course’s aim is to provide students with a background to the history and contemporary issues facing Germany, and in particular Berlin. Lectures, panels, group discussions and on-site visits encourage students to develop a deeper engagement with German society, and to reflect on questions of citizenship and cultural sensitivity. This inquiry is facilitated through the discussion of related histories of German identity, diversity, cosmopolitanism and the metropolis, foreign policy and development aid, energy policy regarding the environment, governance and historical responsibility. The course also introduces students to the resources Berlin has to offer: institutionally at the Humboldt University (and with the inclusion of German students in the course); professionally through invited speakers who draw on multiple perspectives (we include policy makers, activists, journalists, academics, arts leaders, filmmakers, and others); and spatially through on-site visits to memorials and monuments. As part of a comprehensive introduction to the histories of Germany and its capital, students will also acquire German language skills. The course, with its interdisciplinary approach, is designed for students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Assessment Components
The course is pass/fail. Note that attendance of all events is mandatory and will be recorded at each event. In addition to required attendance and participation, students will be assessed with a Written Assignment: (100%) of 500-600 words (min.-max.) due 25 September 2014 by 6pm. Your assignment is based in experiential learning, a personal reflection on your observations of Berlin during the Orientations Course. Students may experiment, for example, with the genres of autobiographical writing, a flaneur's diary, on-site sociological observation, or other forms of first-person reflection. The scope and subject of your inquiry is open, but we would like you to refer to the assigned reading and course sessions when appropriate.

It must be submitted by email and as a paper copy to the Assistant Director for Academic Programs, Dr. Roland Pietsch <roland.pietsch@nyu.edu>; and sent by email to the Course Coordinator, Dr. Joseph Pearson <joseph.pearson@nyu.edu>. The written assignment will be evaluated with a grade, but remember the course is pass/fail. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations
The course is pass/fail.

Grade A: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays / exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

Grade B: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.
**Grade C**: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D**: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

**Grade F**: The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

**Grade Conversion**
NYU Berlin uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80-89</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-66</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 65</td>
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**Attendance Policy**
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in NYU Berlin’s content courses that, unlike most courses at NYU NY, meet only once a week for three hours. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail. Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially and not shared with your professor, please approach NYUB's Director or Wellness Counselor. Your professor may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from the Director or Wellness Counselor.

Unexcused absences affect students' grades: each unexcused absence leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Faculty is also entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival to class or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late for class counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the announced meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

Exams, tests, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class. Three unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course.

**Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being
absent because of any religious observance should notify the Director or Assistant Director for Academics in advance of the anticipated absence. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Director or Assistant Director will re-schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments.

Late Submission of Work

1. Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

2. Late work should be submitted in person to the instructor or to the Academic Coordinator, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work, and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

3. Unless an extension has been approved, work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late.

4. Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 weekdays following the session date fails and is given a zero.

5. Please note: end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

6. If for whatever reason you feel you cannot submit any written work in time, you should discuss this with the Academic Coordinator at least a week in advance and fill in an Incomplete Form.

7. Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

Plagiarism Policy

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing: [http://nyu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=27555&sid=200118](http://nyu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=27555&sid=200118)).

NYUB takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form. All assignments in this course will be checked for plagiarism using TurnItIn.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the
subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

**Required Texts**

We ask you to read both parts of the *course reader in advance* of arriving in Berlin. These are available on NYU Classes. The reader is a collection of individualized and diary narratives about Berlin. In this way they relate directly to your assignment, which is also a personal reflection on your first days in the city during the course. The readings also relate more broadly to the themes of the course sessions, as indicated in the introduction to the reader.

**Internet Research Guidelines**

None

**Additional Required Equipment**

None

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**DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST**

*NYUB-sponsored breakfast* at Hotel Angleterre, 9h-1030h.

**Session 1 – EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: BERLIN WALL STORIES**

**Time:** 1030h-1430h (Groups A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I), with NYUB Faculty: Ares Kalandides (A), Sigismund Sliwinski (B), Joseph Pearson (C), Roland Pietsch (D), Elke Bruens (E), Antje Rebecchi/Denise Uhl (F), Jochen Steinbicker (G), Matthew Antezzo (H), Jan-Henrik Meyer (I), Heinke Fabritius (J)

Fall 2014 is the 25\(^{th}\) anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of the most important moments in 20\(^{th}\)-century history. Students will explore the city in small groups with NYUB Faculty, who will introduce students to their experience of the divided and reunited city, reflecting on their “Berlin Wall Stories”. Venues will vary depending on faculty choice. Students will depart from the Hotel Angleterre with their assigned faculty member after breakfast.

*Bagged lunch will be provided for the excursion.*

**Session 2 - CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES IN GERMAN HISTORY**

**Time/Venue:** 1730h-1830h, venue: Hackesche Höfe Kino

**Speaker:** Dr. Joseph Pearson (Historian, NYU-Berlin)

This is an introductory lecture to the narratives of German history from the end of the Imperial period to the present. To what extent has there been ‘five Germanies’ over the course of the twentieth century? What continuities can one trace among the discontinuities? How do the achievements and atrocities of the past weigh on the society and politics of
today’s Germany? The lecture will also introduce the course and the film which will begin after a short break.

Session 3 - FILM SCREENING: BERLIN SYMPHONY OF A METROPOLIS
Time/Venue 1845h–20h, Hackesche Höfe Kino
Participants: Tronthaim

We watch this landmark 1927 film from Weimar Germany, with electronic music duo Tronthaim providing a live electronic score. The film is one of the most important ‘city films’ from the period, showing Berlin's development as an industrially confident capital, casting off the shadow of defeat and economic ruin. It is also, in retrospect, an important document of the city before its destruction by air war.

DAY TWO: THURSDAY 28 AUGUST

*Independent breakfast

Session 4 – SURVIVAL GERMAN
Time/Venue: 1030h–1200, Humboldt University, Universitätsgebäude, Dorotheenstr. 24, Seminar Rooms: 1.401 to 1.405
Discussants: German Language Instructors

This session will be focused on the learning and use of expressions from everyday life and cultural life in Germany and Berlin. Students will learn how to use expressions for travelling, ordering food and vocabulary for engaging the city. The group is divided into four levels: elementary, advanced elementary, intermediate and advanced.

*NYUB-sponsored lunch 1230h-1400h.

Session 5 – ON-SITE WALKS: GERMAN GOVERNANCE, THE HOLOCAUST AND STATE RESPONSIBILITY
Time: 14h–17h
Leaders: (Groups I, II, III, IV, V): I: Cristiana da Silva (Architect, tbc), II: Joseph Pearson (Historian, NYUB Faculty), III: Jan-Henrik Meyer (NYUB Faculty), IV: Sigismund Sliwinski (NYUB Faculty), V: Matthew Antezzo (NYUB Faculty).

Students will walk up Unter den Linden to visit the Brandenburg Gate, the seat of German government, the Reichstag, and the surrounding Holocaust memorial sites. The Reichstag walk will examine how architectural choices (such as transparency and
environmental concerns) reflect civic commitments, in particular in relation to Germany’s post-war responsibilities. The visits to the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe and adjacent monuments to the murdered Roma and Sinti, and murdered sexual minorities, will look at what formal and historical choices were made to officially atone for state crimes. The students will be divided into small groups for these visits.

**DAY THREE: FRIDAY 29 AUGUST**

*Independent breakfast*

**Session 6– GERMANY IN THE HEADLINES**

**Time/Venue:** 10-12h, venue Frannz Club

**Invited Speakers:** Patrick Donahue (Bloomberg News Government correspondent, Berlin), Kimberly Bradley (Monocle, Berlin Correspondent, NYUB Faculty), Tobias Timm (Arts Correspondent, Feuilleton, Die Zeit), Bernhard Pötter (Energy, Climate and Environment Correspondent, Die Tageszeitung (Taz)).

What role does German play, as reported by the international press corps? This session will investigate Germany's leadership role in a troubled Europe from the perspective of the public sphere. How is Germany a leader in nuclear issues/energy issues, foreign and military policy, and in the economic crisis? What of Berlin’s role as an arts capital? What continuities from the past do we see in German involvement in European affairs? Is Germany an environmental leader? Journalists, both German and non-German, will be invited to present how Germany appears in the international headlines, in this final session of the course.

**Session will be followed by paperwork at the Academic Center and "Faculty Day" (your courses being presented and a dinner with the professors) in the Frannz Club.**

**DAY FOUR: THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER**

**Session 7- DISCUSSION: CONTEMPORARY GERMAN IDENTITY**

**Time/Venue:** 1900h–2100h, Humboldt University Senatssaal

**Discussants:** Dr. Ulrich Raiser (Officer, City of Berlin. Berlin Senate Directorate for Education, Youth and Research); Çiğdem İpek (Social Scientist and policy expert); Dr. Gabriella Etmektsoglou (Director, NYU-Berlin); Dr. Joseph Pearson (NYU-Berlin, moderator).

This session of the course looks at the question of German identity today in a broad perspective. We will address the state of debate in today’s Germany regarding integration, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, citizenship, asylum and diversity. These issues will be
contextualized within definitions of a 'cosmopolitan' city (regarding flows of knowledge, cultures and capital). We will ask whether Berlin is such city, or whether it can be. Is Chancellor Merkel correct in saying multiculturalism has “utterly failed” in Germany? What does she mean and what does it mean for contemporary politics according to policy makers from diverse standpoints? If it has failed, what explains the influx of so many foreigners to Berlin? What does Germany’s future hold for these identities?

Classroom Etiquette
No eating or use of mobile/smart phones during sessions or walks.

Required Co-curricular Activities
Are listed in the course sessions.

Your Course Coordinator

Joseph Pearson (Course Coordinator) is a cultural historian specialized in German and European 20th-century history of memory based in Berlin. He taught in the Core Curriculum of Columbia University, New York, and received his doctorate from Cambridge University, UK. In addition to his academic work, he corresponded for the Canadian national newspaper from Berlin and worked for the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and he writes fiction. He is the editor of The Needle: Berlin (www.needleberlin.com).

Your German Language Coordinator

Denise Uhl teaches classes for the German language Department at NYU Berlin. She holds an M.A. German Literature, Comparative Literature, Modern History and German as a Foreign Language from the Freie Universität Berlin.