Course Title
Cities, Communities, and Urban Life: Exploring Historical and Contemporary Berlin

Course Number
GERM-UA 9293-001 (2721); HIST-UA 9460-001 (2777); SOC-UA 9460-001 (2776)

Summer 2016

Syllabus last updated on 29-Jun-2016

Instructor Contact Information
Dr. Katrin Dettmer
katrin.dettmer@nyu.edu

Course Details
Wednesdays, 1.30pm to 4.30pm
Thursdays, 1.30pm to 4.30pm
Location: NYU Berlin Academic Center, Room: “Prenzlauer Berg”
Detailed information on where and when to meet for the excursions will be given during the respective preceding session.

Prerequisites
Interest in the history of Germany and Berlin; interest in questions of public memory and urban design; motivation to engage with sites, their development and architecture; willingness to contribute to discussions during excursions as well as in class.

Units earned
4

Course Description
Berlin was a focal point of 20th century German, European, and international history. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city has undergone profound transformation, redefining both its relationship with the past and its identity in the present. This course will introduce you to historical and contemporary Berlin by exploring key sites connected with the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the division of Germany, as well as the post-Wall period. Organized chronologically, the course will give you the opportunity to gradually expand your knowledge of the city and its history. At the same time, a major focus will be the overlaying of past and present in Berlin’s cityscape and the processes of repurposing and memorialization that these illustrate. In addition to the spatial experience of the sites, we will use testimonial accounts, historiographical texts as well as artistic responses to critically engage with the palimpsest of Berlin’s urban structure.
Course Objective
Explore key sites of German history; trace the transformation of Berlin since 1900; analyze and interpret urban space; use testimonial, historiographical, and artistic material for contextualization.

Assessment Components
Class participation: 30% of total grade
Students are expected to attend all sessions, do the reading on time, and productively contribute to discussion on site as well as in class and to demonstrate knowledge of the prescribed texts.

4 Response Papers (2 pages, double spaced, standard font and margins): 40%
In their response papers, students will engage more closely with one aspect of each site that they find particularly interesting. This may include the history of a site, its architecture and memorialization, voices of testimony, as well as reflections in literature, film, and art. The deadlines for submission are 13 July, 20 July, 27 July, and 3 August at 1.30pm (in paper before the session).

1 Final Paper (10 pages, double spaced, standard font and margins): 30%
In your final paper, you will undertake a broader survey of an aspect of the course. The topic of your paper will be based on your own suggestion, to be confirmed by the course instructor. You will be required to consult and reference the relevant scholarly literature. The deadline for submission is 1.30pm on 11 August (in paper before the session).

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments

Assessment Expectations
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 / answers to 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
Your instructor may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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\begin{align*}
A & = 94-100 \\
A- & = 90-93 \\
B+ & = 87-89 \\
B & = 84-86 \\
B- & = 80-83 \\
C+ & = 77-79 \\
C & = 74-76 \\
C- & = 70-73 \\
D+ & = 67-69 \\
D & = 65-66 \\
F & = below 65
\end{align*}
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Alternatively:

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**Attendance Policy**

Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success. 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 immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). 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 the summer program director Tom Ertman (te11@nyu.edu).

Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: Missing one week’s worth of classes (consecutive or non-consecutive) without an excuse leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Three unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, your Professor 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 always require a doctor’s note as documentation. It is the student’s responsibility to produce this doctor’s note and submit it to the Program Director Tom Ertman; 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.

**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 their instructor AND the Program Director Professor Tom Ertman in writing via e-mail one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Program Director will re-schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html)

**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 Program Director, 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) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late, unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor’s note or by approval of the Program Director), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

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

(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.

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

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website (http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.

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 styles: http://nyu.libguides.com/citations).

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.

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.

For a summary of NYU Global’s academic policies please see: www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies

Required Texts
All titles are available in NYU Berlin’s Reading Room and/or on NYU Classes.
Session 1 – 7 Jul 2016: Course Introduction; Excursion: Museum Island, Unter den Linden, and Friedrichstraße
How can we explore a city’s past and present through its spaces? What kinds of spaces are we going to discover in the case of Berlin, and what is their interrelation? The first session will begin by introducing you to the German capital in the 20th century as well as canonical approaches to the semantics of space and the construction of memory. We will visit Museum Island and Neues Museum, which was created to collect artifacts and art, but which became itself a site that exhibits a complex layering of histories. We will walk down Unter den Linden to experience the boulevard pivotal to the self-understanding of the city, and then continue on to Friedrichstraße, which was one of the entertainment centers of the Weimar Republic during the so-called Golden Twenties.

Session 2 – 13 Jul 2016: Berlin at the beginning of the 20th century
Based on our first exploration of the city, we will discuss how memory and space constitute one another and can be constructed and reconstructed. With the example of the Neues Museum, we will discover how spaces within cityscapes change and thus affect the city in return, while also discussing how Berlin strives to commemorate different periods of its history at the same time. Furthermore, we will focus historically on Berlin during the Weimar Republic and how the city invented itself as a metropolis, which has been able to sustain its aura of the extraordinary to this day. In class, we will also watch excerpts from Walther Ruttmann’s film *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927).

Readings:

*deadline for first response paper*

Session 3 – 14 Jul 2016: Excursion: Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial
Please note: In order to make this excursion possible, the class will meet from 2.30pm to 5.30pm!
In 1933, one of the first Nazi concentration camps was set up in Oranienburg, 35km north of Berlin. Three years later, it was replaced by the much larger, meticulously planned Sachsenhausen concentration camp and Oranienburg became the administrative center of the German camp system. After the end of the war, Sachsenhausen was used by the Soviet secret service as a special camp for former Nazi functionaries. A guided tour will introduce us to the violent and complex history of the site. We will get to know the different phases of the camp’s memorialization after 1945 and discuss its position within the memorial landscape of Berlin today.
Session 4 – 20 Jul 2016: Berlin during the Third Reich
In this class, we will analyze National Socialist sites of terror such as the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and how they reshaped the German landscape and also human relations. Based on our visit to the memorial site, we will discuss how these sites become public spaces of remembrance and how the horrific events of the World War II and the Shoah are commemorated. We will then take a closer look at the city of Berlin during the Nazi period, from Adolf Hitler’s vision of the future world capital Germania to the everyday day life of its inhabitants.

Readings:

*deadline for second response paper*

Session 5 – 21 Jul 2016: Excursion: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and other memorials in Tiergarten and Mitte
On 10 May 2015, Berlin’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was inaugurated. Designed by Peter Eisenmann, the field of 2,711 concrete slabs or “stelae”, arranged in a grid pattern on a sloping field, has attracted much controversy throughout the disciplines as it challenges traditional assumptions of how memorials should function. While the memorial has now also become a symbol of the city and its interaction with its past, it took the city of Berlin remarkably long to also acknowledge other victim groups and dedicate sites of remembrance to them, for example the Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism (in 2008) and the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism (in 2012). We will visit these multiple sites that commemorate the horrific crimes of World War II and the Shoah.

Session 6 – 27 Jul 2016: Berlin at the “Zero Hour”
Based on our visits to Sachsenhausen and the various memorials in Berlin Mitte, we will discuss how the end of the Second World War was remembered in East as well as West Germany, and what its significance is today. We will explore the scars, which the battle for Berlin left on the city and how the destruction was reflected in literature and film of the post-war period. Particular attention will be given to the “Stunde Null” (zero hour), the idea that the unconditional surrender also meant a fresh start for a new Germany, and criticism of this idea then and now. Among the works discussed in class is the film *The Murderers Are Among Us* (1946) by Wolfgang Staudte, which is also available on DVD at the Academic Center.
Readings:


**deadline for third response paper**

Session 7 – 28 Jul 2016: **Excursion: Berlin Wall Memorial Bernauer Straße**

At the Berlin Wall Memorial, we will gain a concrete spatial and visual sense of the German division. We will understand where the erection of the Berlin Wall began on 13 August 1961 and how the border developed until the end of the 1980s. Traces and testimonies will help to illustrate how citizens were affected by the division. In a second step, we will discuss how the original infrastructure was preserved after 1989 and how it was complemented with historical information.

Session 8 – 3 Aug 2016: **Divided Berlin**

Building on our excursion to Bernauer Straße, we will place the history of the Berlin Wall from its erection to its demolition into a wider context. In particular, we will assess the impact, which the wall had on the city and how it continues to shape Berlin as a site of remembrance. We will look back on Berlin’s celebration of the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Wall and discuss the relevance of the event for German identity and Germany’s self-image today.

Readings:


**deadline for fourth response paper**

Session 9 – 4 Aug 2016: **Excursion: Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Stasi-Prison Memorial**

The Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial is a key site for remembering political persecution in the Soviet occupied zone and the GDR. Both the Soviet Secret Police and the East German Ministry of State Security used the site to detain and interrogate political prisoners. Thousands of dissidents passed through this jail, including nearly all of the prominent figures opposing the GDR regime. Today, the memorial offers guided tours by former inmates, a unique approach among the German memorials devoted to the Socialist past.
Session 10 [Make-Up Day] – 5 Aug 2016: Political Persecution in GDR Berlin
In class, we will broaden our discussion of political persecution during the GDR in two ways. Firstly, we will learn about GDR figures that due to their political views or actions were under threat from the Socialist regime. Secondly, we will explore the contested image of the GDR in post-reunification Germany, and the role which political persecution continues to play in this debate. In this context, we will discuss extracts from the feature films The Lives of Others (2006) by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and Barbara (2012) by Christian Petzold. DVDs of the films are available at the Academic Center.

Readings:
• Taylor, The Berlin Wall, 186-201.
• Anna Funder, Stasiland (Melbourne: Text, 2002), 10-53.

Session 11 – 10 Aug 2016: Excursion: Berlin Tempelhof Airport
Expanded during the Third Reich as part of Albert Speer’s plans for the German capital, Tempelhof Airport was also the site of the Berlin Airlift (1948-49). Closed in 2008, today the airport stands at the center of a debate about its public or commercial usage. Gaining access to the terminal building, we will discover the site’s layered history from within and analyze the debate and decision process about its future.

Session 12 – 11 Aug 2016: Tempelhof Airport and 21st Century Berlin
Our excursion to Tempelhof will prompt us to unite the various strands of discussion emerging throughout the course. What strategies are followed in memorializing sites with multiple and often violent histories? How are decisions about urban redesign and the use of public space taken? Finally, how should national history be memorialized in a society more and more characterized by migration, as the former airport’s location close to the multicultural district of Neukölln illustrates?

Readings:
• Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (eds), German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-first Century: Beyond Normalization (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 1-16.
• Taylor, The Berlin Wall, 50-61.

*deadline for the final paper*

Classroom Etiquette
No laptops allowed during class. Mobile phones are to be switched off. Drinks are allowed in the classroom, but food is not.
Your Instructor
Katrin Dettmer is the Arts Coordinator at NYU Berlin. She received her Ph.D. in German Studies from Brown University in 2012. Since then she has taught for Brown University and Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, where she taught German Studies and Theatre Arts with a special focus on dramaturgy. In her dissertation on East-German playwright Heiner Müller, entitled *The Touch of the Dead*, Katrin negotiates the dynamics between history and performance in both Müller’s writing and his stage work. Her research focuses on 20th and 21st century German literature; GDR literature and intellectual life; literatures of trauma, memory, and remembrance; Theater and Performance Studies; Media Studies; intellectual history; and aesthetics of presence. In addition to her academic work, Katrin has also been working as a dramaturg for a variety of productions, both in the US and in Germany. Her latest production, in cooperation with *lunatiks produktion* and Theater Lüneburg, *Senkungen*, a devised piece based on extensive regional research, premiered in Lüneburg in February 2016.