

Course Title

City as Text: Berlin

Division, Unity, Diversity

Course Number

CAT-UF.9301D01

Instruction Mode: Blended

Fall 2020

If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for NYU Berlin, please make sure that you have completed the online academic orientation via NYU Classes so you are aware of site specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact berlin.academics@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the NYU Classes site.

Syllabus last updated on: 17 Sep 2020

Lecturer Contact Information

TBA

Your instructor will inform you about the office hours.

Course Details

Wednesdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm

All times are Central European Time (Daylight Saving Time ends Oct 25, 2020).

Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class.

Remote Participants: Your instructor will provide you with the Zoom link via NYU Classes.

Prerequisites

This course is reserved for students of Global Liberal Studies in their junior year.

Units earned

4

Course Description

3 October 2020 will mark the 30th anniversary of German reunification. But to what extent has unity actually been achieved? And what can unity mean in the face of the country's conflicting pasts and diverse present? This course will introduce you to Berlin by exploring the history, reality and legacy of the city's division, its impact on the urban environment as well as its memorialization after 1990. Moreover, we will question traditional notions of national unity by thematizing histories of colonialism and migration connected to the German capital. Combining the exploration of sites with a variety of media for preparation, contextualization as well as discussion, this course will guide you in developing interdisciplinary perspectives on Berlin's multilayered identity as a city.

Course Objective

- understand theoretical concepts of place
- develop an interdisciplinary understanding of the local, regional, national, and global forces that have shaped the character of the city
- engage the cultural and social practices of the city through firsthand experiences
- advance research skills and sharpen the ability to analyze and interpret the surrounding environment

Assessment Components

You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously.

1. Class Participation: 20% of total grade

Students are expected to productively contribute to discussions in class and demonstrate knowledge of the pertinent texts or media. On occasion, students may be asked to chair class discussion or set the discussion agenda.

2. 4 Reflection Writings (approximately 500 words each): 20% of total grade

In their reflection writings, students will engage more closely with an aspect of a 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. These reflections may be academic in character, or they may use different forms of writing such as journalistic or literary.

3. "Through the Lens" Concentration Assignment (1500 words): 25% of total grade

This assignment allows students to approach their experiential study of place through the lens of their concentration. Students will be required to investigate a site, space, or place using the critical methodologies of the concentration field. The topic of the assignment will be identified and refined by the students, with instructor approval and guidance.

The assignment may be produced in any form of scholarship (digital or print), and it may also take the form of a class presentation.

4. Final Project (2500 words): 35% of total grade

The topic of the final project will be developed independently by the students and formally proposed to the instructor. There will be individual meetings with the instructor to discuss and approve each topic. In any case, the final project should reflect one, or more, of the course's learning objective whereby students achieve:

- a. an interdisciplinary understanding of the local, regional, national, and global forces that have shaped the character of the city;
- b. an understanding of the theoretical conceptions of place
- c. a meaningful first-hand experience of the cultural and social practices of the city
- d. advanced ability to analyze and interpret the surrounding environment.

The project may be produced in any form of scholarship (digital or print).

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

Required Text(s)

All texts will be made available electronically via NYU Classes/NYU Libraries.

Please follow this link for the [NYU Berlin Library Catalogue](#) or the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

To be discussed in class.

Internet Research Guidelines

To be discussed in class.

Additional Required Equipment

n/a

Session 1 – Wednesday, 2 Sep 2020

Introduction

Some scholars have described Berlin as a palimpsest, a cityscape overwritten time and again by successive states and societies, confronting us with the task of disentangling conflicting layers of meaning. Others have emphasized the gaps and voids in Berlin's topography, characterizing the city as a site of traumatic loss caused by dictatorship, war, and division. Presenting these frequently used paradigms in relation to the Berlin Wall and its memorialization, the first session will introduce you to the city text of Berlin as well as the course aims. Detailed information will be given on the organization of the course, assignments as well as assessment.

*****Wednesday, 9 Sep 2020 – NO CLASS (Make-up day for Monday courses)*****

Session 2 – Wednesday, 16 Sep 2020

Theorizing (Berlin) Space

We may be familiar with reading a city in terms of its past, but what other kinds of perspectives may we develop on the spaces and sites of a city? How can we understand urban space as a text, and what kinds of questions can we direct at it to explore a city's political, social, and cultural life? What particular challenges as well as opportunities does the city text of Berlin

pose to attempts at theorizing? This session will introduce you to some fundamental approaches and concepts in studying the semantics of the urban which we will refine throughout the semester, above all with regard to questions of community and identity at the intersection between local, national, and global.

Preparation:

Cresswell, Tim. "Working with Place – Creating Places". *Place: An Introduction*. Chichester/Malden: Wiley & Sons, 2014, pp. 115-64.

Huysen, Andreas. "The Voids of Berlin". *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1997), pp. 57-81.

Session 3 – Wednesday, 23 Sep 2020

Mapping Division: History, Reality, and Impact of the Berlin Wall

What were the historical roots and geographical implications of the division of Berlin? What did the Wall mean for political and social life in East and West, and what kinds of cultural responses did it provoke? Using a variety of works and media, we will discuss the Berlin Wall, its construction and consequences, from national as well international points of view.

Preparation:

Something to Do with the Wall (1990), documentary film by Marilyn Levine and Ross McElwee (90min).

Schneider, Peter. *The Wall Jumper*. Penguin: London, 2005, pp. 105-28.

Taylor, Frederick. "Barbed Wire Sunday". *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006, pp. 167-85.

Session 4 – Wednesday, 30 Sep 2020

Political Surveillance and Repression at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen

On official maps of East Berlin, there was a white spot: the site of the remand prison of the GDR's state security service at Hohenschönhausen. We will discuss the site as part of an entire system designed to manipulate and destroy the personalities of those deemed hostile to the Socialist state. Moreover, we will ask what attempts were made to come to terms with the effects of East German political surveillance and repression after 1990.

Preparation:

Funder, Anna. *Stasiland*. Melbourne: Text, 2002, pp. 204-34.

Gieseke, Jens. "Blanket Surveillance? State Security in East German Society". *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015, pp. 98-123.

*****deadline for first Reflection Writing*****

Session 5 – Wednesday, 7 Oct 2020

In Conversation with Peter Keup

Peter Keup, born 1958 in Radebeul near Dresden in East Germany, was a successful ballroom dancer and represented the GDR in numerous championships. He hoped to participate in dance competitions in the West in order to further his career. In July 1981, Keup attempted to escape via Czechoslovakia but failed. He was convicted of illegal emigration and sentenced

to ten months' imprisonment. **Peter Keup** has generously agreed to share his experiences with us and answer our questions.

Preparation:

A number of texts and media introducing you to Peter Keup and his life story will be circulated in advance of our conversation with him.

Session 6 – Wednesday, 14 Oct 2020

Good Lives in a Bad System? The Debate about “Ostalgie”

Around the turn of the millennium, attempts were made to replace the bleak image of life in the GDR with a more colorful and positive one. Novels and films began to explore the experiences of East Germans beyond totalitarianism and surveillance. They allowed for “Ostalgie”, i.e. nostalgia for the East, often combined with a heavy dose of irony, and were quickly accused of banalizing historical reality. But were they? This session will explore a few Berlin-related cultural responses to the disappearance of East German life experiences after 1990.

Preparation:

Sonnenallee, feature film by Leander Hausmann (1999).

Klein, Olaf Georg. *Suddenly Everything Was Different. German Lives in Upheaval*. Rochester: Camden House, 2007 (excerpts).

Mueller, Gabriele. “Re-Imaging the Niche: Visual Reconstructions of Private Spaces in the GDR”. *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*. Edited by Ann Saunders and Debbie Pinfold. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 197-213.

*****deadline for second Reflection Writing*****

Session 7 – Wednesday, 21 Oct 2020

From Symbol of Division to Learning Environment: The Berlin Wall Memorial

The Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Straße is the city's main memorial to the German division. As a mixture of historical site, open-air exhibition, space for commemoration, and modern architecture, the memorial is a kind of experiential learning environment, inviting discussion about the mediation of historical knowledge through space. At the same time, the memorial's incoherent structure and design betrays how the fall of the Wall was followed by conflicts about the ownership, significance, and use of urban space. Tracing these conflicts, we will get to know some of the political, social, and cultural debates characterizing the city post-1989. **Anja Bellmann**, responsible for historical and political education at the memorial, will join us for discussion.

Preparation:

Harrison, Hope M. “Creating a Berlin Wall Memorial Ensemble at Bernauer Strasse”. *After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 111-60.

Ladd, Brian. “Berlin Walls”. *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 7-39.

*****deadline for “Through the Lens” Concentration Assignment*****

Session 8 – Wednesday, 28 Oct 2020

Contested Heritage: Soviet and Socialist Monuments in Reunified Berlin

After the end of the Cold War, Eastern Europe saw a modern, secular wave of iconoclasm as numerous statues of Socialist leaders were being dismantled. East Berlin was no exception: in 1991/92, its colossal Lenin statue was removed despite public protest. This session will trace the political debates about/social and cultural responses to Soviet as well as GDR memorials in reunified Germany. Which memorials still exist, and how have they been contextualized to fit into the city's topography of memory?

Preparation:

The detachment, installation by Sophie Calle (1996).

Olsen, Jon Berndt. *Tailoring Truth. Politicizing the Past and Negotiating Memory in East Germany, 1945-1990*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2015 (excerpts).

Session 9 – Wednesday, 4 Nov 2020

At the Limits of Representation: Memorializing Nazi Crimes

Berlin post-1990 faced (and continues to face) the challenge of coming to terms with the legacy of the Third Reich in the urban environment, from remnants of Nazi architecture to sites of Nazi crimes. What kinds of memorials dealing with that aspect of the city's history existed in East and West Berlin, respectively, and which ones were (re-)designed after 1990? What were the processes of decision-making, and what attempts were made to reconcile the aims of historical education with the languages of architecture and art?

Preparation:

Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994 (excerpts).

Niven, Bill and Paver, Chloe (eds). *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (excerpts).

Session 10 – Wednesday, 11 Nov 2020

Comrades of Color: Migrants During – and After – the GDR

Officially, due to its Socialist doctrine, the GDR was an internationalist, anti-racist state. But what were the living conditions of migrants in East Germany, be they contract workers or guest students from other Socialist countries? This session will provide an overview of migrant groups in the GDR and give particular attention to the history of Vietnamese guest workers, their situation after 1990 as well as Vietnamese-German life in Berlin today.

Preparation:

Bösch, Frank and Su, Phi Hong. "Invisible, Successful, and Divided: Vietnamese in Germany since the Late 1970s", WIDER Working Paper, 15/2018.

Schenck, Marcia C. "Between Hammer, Machete, and Kalashnikov: Contract Labor Migration from Angola and Mozambique to East Germany, 1979-1990". *Europe Now*, 15/2018.

deadline for fourth Reflection Writing

Session 11 – Wednesday, 18 Nov 2020

Decolonizing Berlin: Addressing Colonial Legacies and Racist Structures

The recent decision to rename Berlin Mitte's Mohrenstraße into Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Straße is just one of many examples for the ongoing reevaluation of the city's colonial legacy. How is this legacy inscribed into Berlin's representational and residential architecture, its sites of memory and street names? And how should this legacy be addressed, by means of removal, renaming, and/or contextualization? This session will highlight a controversy that is currently redefining the face of Berlin, its sense of place and identity. **Christian Kopp**, historian, activist, and leading figure of the association "Berlin Postkolonial" will present and discuss his work with us.

Preparation:

tba

Session 12 – Wednesday, 25 Nov 2020

Divided Nations with Close Relations: The Case of Germany and Korea

Both Germany and Korea were divided as a result of World War II, if for different reasons and under different conditions. We will explore these different histories and highlight the manifold transnational encounters between the divided nations' socialist as well as capitalist parts. What kinds of flows of migration existed between them, what traces did these leave in Berlin, and what is the state of German-Korean relations today?

Preparation:

Cho, Joanne Miyang and Roberts, Lee M. (eds). *Transnational Encounters between Germany and Korea: Affinity in Culture and Politics since the 1880s*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018 (excerpts).

Session 13 – Wednesday, 2 Dec 2020

Greening Berlin: Environmentalism Past and Present

When in the 1970s, environmentalism gained momentum in Germany, it was divided between East and West as well. What were the agendas of the green movements in the two German states, and were there any connections between them? And what role did environmentalism play in the redesign of Berlin after 1990? This session will lead us from the beginnings of the green movement in divided Germany to exemplary sites of urban greening and sustainability in today's Berlin.

Preparation:

Ault, Julia E. (2019). "Defending God's Creation? The Environment in State, Church and Society in the German Democratic Republic, 1975–1989". *German History*, 37 (2), 205-26.

Brown, Tim. "The History of the Green Movement in East and West Germany." Lecture at the Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 17 March 2017.

<https://ies.berkeley.edu/blog/history-green-movement-east-and-west-germany>

deadline for fourth Reflection Writing

Session 14 – Wednesday, 9 Dec 2020

Final Discussion

Session 15 – Wednesday, 16 Dec 2020

deadline for Final Project

Important Hygiene/Social Distancing Regulations in the Classroom

In the interest of protecting the NYU Berlin community, we are closely following guidance around COVID-19 from the Robert Koch Institute (Germany's institute for disease control and prevention), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization, and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being is our top priority. Please consult the NYU Berlin Resource Page frequently for the latest information. You are required to adhere to the most recent policies.

If you are attending in person, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol. ***Please note that you are expected to attend every class meeting in-person; however, this may change during the drop/add period if in-person student registration increases significantly or at any point during the semester if local COVID-19 regulations require additional physical distancing.***

Classroom Etiquette

To optimize the experience in a blended learning environment, please consider the following:

- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary).
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (ie COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class.

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities

To be discussed in class.

Your Lecturer

Axel Bangert graduated from Humboldt University Berlin in 2006, with an M.A. thesis on contemporary Holocaust film. From 2004 to 2006, he worked as a research assistant at the Holocaust Memorial Foundation in Berlin. This was followed by a PhD in German film at the University of Cambridge. Since then, Axel Bangert held post-doctoral fellowships at Homerton College, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Leeds. His main research interests are German cinema and television, in particular portrayals of the Third Reich, European heritage film as well as transnational moving image production. His monograph *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film: Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion* appeared with Camden House in December 2014.

Academic Policies

Grade Conversion

Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0
A- = 90-93 or 3.7
B+ = 87-89 or 3.3
B = 84-86 or 3.0
B- = 80-83 or 2.7
C+ = 77-79 or 2.3
C = 74-76 or 2.0
C- = 70-73 or 1.7
D+ = 67-69 or 1.3
D = 65-66 or 1.0
F = below 65 or 0

Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, or online through NYU Classes if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to berlin.academics@nyu.edu to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team (berlin.academics@nyu.edu) by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequently joining the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, 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 berlin.academics@nyu.edu; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

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 due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will 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 [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team by writing to berlin.academics@nyu.edu. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Late Submission of Work

- (1) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.
- (2) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.
- (3) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director Dr. Gabriella Etmektsoglou (ge377@nyu.edu).
- (4) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.
- (5) 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.

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Berlin (berlin.academics@nyu.edu).

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

As the University's policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

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. 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 guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, "...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities." At NYU Berlin, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavors.