EXPRESSIVE CULTURE:
Art and Politics in 20th Century Germany

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Course Number: CORE-UA.9763001

Course Details
Wed 1:30 – 4:15pm

NYU Berlin – AC at Kulturbravurei
Schönhauser Allee 36,
Haus 2, Aufgang F
10435 Berlin

Lecturer Contact
Dania Hückmann – dania@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Wed. 4.30 – 5.30

Prerequisites – None
Units earned – 4

Course Description:

Berlin offers an ideal context to study the relation between culture and radical shifts in German national identity. We will focus on how art depicts the effects of these violent events on cultural identity. We will focus on the 20th century, which was shaped by both the diversity of modern art and the violent politics leading to Auschwitz. How did the World Wars affect and alter art and literary forms? What separates art from propaganda? We will pay special attention to scandals, censorship, as well as to the subversive power of art and literature.

The course is organized around historical ruptures in 20th-century Germany: The World Wars, the Weimar Republic, and its division. We will discuss the “scandalous” (Schnitzler, Wolf), propaganda (Cohen) and explore how violence affects representation (Benjamin, Celan) and the analysis of (national) identity (Freud, Améry).

This interdisciplinary course introduces you to a range of methods and combines the analyses of cultural narratives with visits to museums and the theater. We will work with a variety of written genre (novels, essays, political theory), as well as visual art, architecture, and film.
Course Objectives:

As part of the College Core Curriculum, the course is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major and to further your critical engagement with socio-political challenges at home and abroad. It seeks to show you how to:

- collect sources, use art as evidence, formulate a working thesis
- use 20th Century art and history to understand politics and culture today
- consider how your cultural background factors into your interpretation
- connect your experience at the global site and the critical engagement with Berlin culture to your own studies
- apply a humanities framework to the analysis of culture and politics at the global site and beyond

Assessment Components:

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<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>4 short papers</td>
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<td>2 short assignments for field trips</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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Participation (15%): Active participation in class. A) Read and bring the assigned texts to class, be ready to discuss them. B) Prepare 2-3 questions about the assigned text or film. Post them in the “forum” section on NYU Classes by 9 am on the day of each class.

Midterm (20%): Topic: What is the relation between (modern) art and politics?

Oral component: 5-7-minute presentation of your thesis in class, including PPT. Use this presentation to test the thesis of your midterm paper.

Written component: 4-5 pg. paper on the relationship between politics and art.

A) Define (modern) art: Base your definition on a concrete work (painting, passage). Develop a thesis about how this work speaks to (present or past) politics.

4 Response Papers (20%): An exercise in close reading and formulating a thesis.

Papers are a 2- to 3-page critical analysis of the readings. A) Pick 1-2 passage(s) or image(s) and analyze their form and content closely. B) Formulate a short thesis that ties your analysis to the themes of the course. C) You may use the questions for each essay as a guideline.

2 Field Notes (15%): Prepare a 2- to 3-page paper on the topic of each of the museum and theater visits.

Final Paper (30%): 5- to 7-page paper. We will have a workshop for the final paper. Exact assignment TBD.
Assessment Expectations:

**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and their 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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<td>F</td>
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Alternatively:

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**Attendance Policy**

Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. 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. 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 must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.

Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, your professor
is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

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 the Academics Office; 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.

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 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 lecturer or to the Academics Office, 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 (excluding weekends and public or religious 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.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

(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).

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.

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 texts marked Title* are available on NYU Classes.

Monika Maron, Silent Close No. 6, transl by David N. Marinelli (Readers International, 2004).

One copy of each book is kept in the Reading Room of NYU Berlin’s Academic Center, for you to read in the center but not to take out.

NYU Berlin Library Catalogue: http://guides.nyu.edu/global/berlin or follow the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

Supplemental Texts (not required to purchase; available in the NYU library)

Session Plan:

Session 1 – August 30:  
**Art and Politics – An Introduction**  
This session will give you a brief overview of the history and prominent art movements of 20th century Germany. How did the 20th century change the relationship of art and politics? To what extent is art critical and/or complicit in political movements?

Session 2 – September 6:  
no class

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SCANDALS

Session 3 – September 13:  
**Honor and Its Codes**  
What does the duel tell us about social and political norms at the turn of the century? Reading Heinrich von Kleist’s *The Duel* (1811) alongside Arthur Schnitzler’s *Lieutenant Gustl* (1901) shows how the significance of the duel changed over time. We will consider how the duel relates to the authority of church, state, and society.

Heinrich von Kleist, *The Duel* [Zweikampf] (1811)*
Arthur Schnitzler, *Lieutenant Gustl* [Leutnant Gustl] (1901)*

**Guiding questions:**

-> How does Kleist’s text portray the belief that the outcome of a duel reflects God’s will?

-> Schnitzler’s military rank was downgraded after he published *Lieutenant Gustl*. Underline passages that could explain this reaction by the military.

-> Does the duel in the works of Kleist (What is God’s will?) and Schnitzler (What is Gustl supposed to do?) represent a crisis of grasping – of reading – the world around us?

REALITY / MODERNITY

Session 4 – September 20:  
**Hysteria and Society**  
What roles do society and censorship play in the development of psychoanalysis? We will analyze how Freud changed his theory of hysteria and what Viennese society had to do with it. What does the case of Freud’s theory of hysteria tell us about how society and politics generally deals with (sexual) trauma?

Sigmund Freud, *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (“Dora”), 172-206.*

**Guiding questions:**

-> Why do Freud and Breuer compare the psychoanalyst to an explorer / archeologist?

-> Is Freud’s analysis of Dora influenced by his relationship to her father. Find examples.

-> What is at stake in Freud’s interpretation of a patient’s “no”? (see 203)

-> What does Freud’s theory of hysteria tell us about the history of trauma? (Herman)

RESPONSE PAPER I DUE IN CLASS – Pick one passage from Kleist, Schnitzler, or Freud that presents a conflict. A) Explain the conflict; b) discuss what role it plays in the text as a whole.
Session 5 – September 27:  
**Art in the Age of Capitalism**

What impact does industrialization have on the production and (our) perception of art?

Thomas Mann and Walter Benjamin’s texts deal with the reproduction of art. However, while Mann depicts it ironically (pre World War II), Benjamin considers it in the face of the rise of fascism. Does the nature of art change through technical innovations?

Thomas Mann, *Gladius Dei* (1902), in *Death in Venice and Other Stories*, pp 91-113.*  

**Guiding questions:**

--> In what institutional contexts is the Madonna displayed in Mann’s text?
--> How does Mann represent the reproduction and commercialization of art?
--> What is the effect of mechanical reproduction on art according to Benjamin?
--> Can Benjamin’s critique be applied to Mann’s text / our everyday?

Session 6 – October 4:  
**Theater in Nazi Germany**

Heinrich von Kleist’s *Battle of Herman* (1808) was the play most often staged in Nazi Germany. Does Kleist’s play have a nationalist dimension or does it have subversive elements that undercut its use as propaganda?


**Guiding questions:**

**Group A:** Focus on *Battle of Herman* as nationalistic play. Identify passages in Kleist’s play that reflect a nationalist agenda.

**Group B:** Focus on *Battle of Herman* as subverting nationalist ideals. Identify passages in Kleist’s play that criticize nationalism.

**RESPONSE PAPER II DUE IN CLASS** – Define Walter Benjamin’s understanding of “aura” then chose one work of art (Mann’s Madonna, DADA, or work of your choice) and discuss how either this work reflects or challenges Benjamin’s concept.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 5:  
**THEATER VISIT**

*Terror by Ferdinand von Schirach* at Deutsches Theater – we will meet at 19.15 in front of Deutsches Theater (Schumannstrasse 13a, 10117 Berlin)

WAR / ART

Session 7 – October 11:  
**Visit to Berlinische Galerie**

Do collages lend themselves to cultural criticism? Hannah Höch was part of the Berlin DADA avant-garde art scene. We will mainly focus on the formal invention of the Dadaist: collages. We will discuss the political implications this technique. Particular emphasis will be put on the representation of gender and the military. We will visit the archive of the Berlinische Galerie and look at collages by Hannah Höch. We will meet at Berlinische Galerie at 1.30h (Alte Jakobstraße 124-128, 10969 Berlin)

Ralf Burmeister, “‘Slashes through the thickest skin’ – Dada Berlin between provocation and enlightenment,” (pp. 150-57) and Valentine Plisner, “Non-Western art in Dada photography and photomontage,” (pp-191-197), in *dada Africa*, ed. by Ralf
Burmeister, Michaela Oberhofer, and Esther Tisa Francini (Berlin: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016).*


Also have a look at Höch’s Photocollages from Hannah Höch. Aller Anfang ist DADA ! ed. by Ralf Burmeister (Berlinische Galerie, 2007).*

Guiding questions:
-> How do collages – made of newspaper and magazine clippings – depict the world?
-> (How) can a collage reshape the representation of normative ideas of gender, masculinity, femininity?

FIELD NOTES II DUE in class: How does Schirach’s play represent the effect of terrorism on society and human relations? You can either write about formal aspects (light, stage, sound) or content (one scene). Choose one aspect/ one example and elaborate.

*** October 18 – Fall Break – No Class***

Session 8 – October 25: Art, World War II and Midterm Presentations
We will begin by discussing how Nazi Germany viewed modern art. What makes modern art political? During this session, you will present the key argument from your midterm paper in an oral presentation (5-7 min.), including a PPT.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvz2HDTvJ4A

Guiding questions:
-> How did the Nazis link medicine and art? What did this mean for modern art?

FIELD NOTES I DUE in class: a) Write ½ page about the representation of (gender/ social) politics in DADA collages; b) make a DADA collage yourself that reflects current issues; and c) write ½ page on how your collage is informed by DADA’s use of collages.

Session 9 – November 1: Propaganda?
First, we will consider different forms of propaganda during Nazi Germany – scenes from Leni Riefenstahl’s Olympia, posters, excerpts from Hitler’s speeches. Second, we will discuss Jünger’s On Pain – a text by a writer who has been called subversive by some and nationalist by others.

Ernst Jünger, On Pain [Über den Schmerz] (1934).*

Guiding questions:
-> How does Jünger understand the relation between the individual and collective?
-> What is his critique of the bourgeoisie?
MIDTERM PAPER DUE in class

HOME(LAND)

Session 10 – November 8: Homeland and Human Rights
This session deals with the concept and experience of Heimat [home(land)] in the face of expulsion and war. Two thinkers highlight the existential need of belonging to a community through a political (Arendt) and literary (Améry) lens.
Reading them alongside one another unfolds the legal, social, and linguistic dimensions of the politics of belonging.


Guiding questions:

– What does Améry mean by “the borders of my body are the borders of myself”?
– Why does Améry reject the term “human dignity”?
– What is the paradox of human rights according to Arendt?
– What is “new” about the situation of the so-called “stateless”?

Session 11 – November 15: Poetry after Auschwitz

In this session we will consider the dialogue between philosophy (Adorno) and poetry (Celan, Domin, Ausländer). What is the effect of Nazi politics on the arts? What effect did the Holocaust have on the way we think and tell (hi)story?


Paul Celan, Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen” [1958], in Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan, transl. by John Felstiner (New York: Norton, 2001), 395-396.*

Selected poems by Hilde Domin, Paul Celan, and Rose Ausländer.*

Guiding questions:

– What is the effect of violence on language/one’s ability to speak? (Celan)
– What does Celan mean by language was “‘enriched [angereichert’] by all this”? (395)
– Describe Adorno’s dictum “poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” “in your own words.

RESPONSE PAPER III DUE IN CLASS – How was artistic production affected by World War II? Pick one term/image from (Améry, Celan, Domin, Ausländer) and discuss how its meaning has changed through war.

HISTORICAL / GENERATIONAL SHIFTS

Session 12 – November 22: Generational Conflicts

How do radical political shifts affect generations? We will discuss who has the power to decide how history is taught and told. Banned from writing during the GDR, Monika Maron’s novel portrays a generational and deeply political conflict after 1989.

Monika Maron, Silent Close No. 6 [Stille Zeile 6] (1991)

Guiding questions:

– What constitutes the generational conflict between Polkowski and Beerenbaum?
– What do memoirs and historical texts share/what differentiates them?

Session 13 – November 29: Transcultural Identity

Almanya: Welcome to Germany (2011) depicts the story of an (immigrant) family who came to Germany as Gastarbeiter [guest workers] in the 1960s. The comedy follows the family over generations and addresses issues of identity, integration
and cultural curiosities. We will compare this comedy with excerpts of Emine Sevigi Özdamar's novel and discuss the politics and art of immigration. Sandereli, Yasemin and Janson Uwe, Almanya: Welcome to Germany (2011). Emine Sevigi Özdamar, Mothertongue, transl. by Craig Thomas and Alberto Manguel (Lincolnwood: Passport Books NTC Publishing Group, 1994), EXCERPTS*

Guiding questions:

--> What does each generation in Almanya consider “home”? What role does language play in Özdamar’s conception of “home”?

--> How is returning home depicted in the film?

RESPONSE PAPER IV DUE IN CLASS– How do politics influence our sense of belonging to a community, a family, a culture? Chose a concrete example.

Session 14 – December 6 : Final Discussion

December 13 Submission of Final Paper by noon (email a version to dania@nyu.edu and drop off a hard copy at my office)

Your Lecturer:
Dania Hückmann is a faculty member at New York University in Berlin. Her research interests include discourses of law in literature and film, narratology, censorship and representations of trauma and violence, from German Classicism to the post World War II period. In her first book project, she examines revenge in German Realist literature. She has published on metaphor in Jean Améry and Heinrich von Kleist, on revenge in Thomas Bernhard’s Extinction and Quentin Tarantino’s Inglourious Basterds, and edited a volume on Containment in Realism for the The Germanic Review.