Course Title

**Classic Albums: The Berlin/Germany Edition**

Course Number
REMU-UT 9817 D01

Spring 2019

Syllabus last updated on: 23-Dec-2018

Lecturer Contact Information

Course Details
Wednesdays, 6:15pm to 7:30pm (14 weeks)

Location
NYU Berlin Academic Center, Room BLAC 101

Prerequisites
No pre-requisites

Units earned
2 credits

Course Description
A classic album is one that has been deemed by many — or even just a select influential few — as a standard bearer within or without its genre. In this class—a companion to the Classic Albums class offered in New York—we will look and listen at a selection of classic albums recorded in Berlin, or recorded in Germany more broadly, and how the city/country shaped them — from David Bowie's famous Berlin trilogy from 1977 – 79 to Ricardo Villalobos' minimal house masterpiece *Alcachofa*. We will deconstruct the music and production of these albums, putting them in full social and political context and exploring the range of reasons why they have garnered classic status. Artists, producers and engineers involved in the making of these albums will be invited to discuss their seminal works with the students. Along the way we will also consider the history of German electronic music. We will particularly look at how electronic music developed in Germany before the advent of house and techno in the late 1980s as well as the arrival of Techno, a new musical movement, and new technology in Berlin and Germany in the turbulent years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, up to the present. As students
listen to classic albums, they’ll consider Berlin’s slow transformation from divided city in those anarchic and pioneering days of the early 1990s into the bustling, world-class nightlife capital it is today—alongside the changing and controversial cultural and socio-economic landscape of the city, and how Berlin continues to retain its uncompromising, avant-garde ethos.

On one hand, the phrase “classic albums” suggests pre-eminent status, high standards, top quality. On the other hand, the term classic can infer elitism and exclusion, and, too often, the work of white male rock artists is often venerated in this tradition at the expense of women and people of color subjects. Given that what gets constituted as “classic” or “canonical” is a vexed issue in popular music, as it is in literature and other fields, this class will also look at non-traditional classics, music that was once critically panned — as well as albums by women that might be easily reclassified as “classic” especially if we interrogate the criteria used to make the assessments in the first place. Students will be expected to write a final research paper drawing on issues discussed in class and in the readings.

Course Objective
1. To educate students about key German artists, seminal albums by international artists that were recorded in Berlin and indispensible/classic electronic music recordings;
2. To develop students’ understanding and appreciation for the history, culture, and politics of German post-War popular music and sound, with a specific focus on electronic, avant garde and experimental traditions;
3. To teach students about the history of popular music and sound in the city of Berlin before and after the fall of the Wall; to connect Berlin’s current nightlife and music scene to political, economic and social developments of the past with an eye to complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class and nationality;
4. To inform students about links and comparisons between US and German/European music cultures, and specifically the connections between Berlin and US cities like Detroit in the formation of genres like Techno;
5. To encourage greater sophistication in artistic appreciation, critical thinking, research and writing skills.

Assessment Components

Class Participation – 10%
Everyone is required to participate in class discussion, present arguments and ask questions of the instructor and guests. This course, in particular, relies upon the full participation and engagement of students. Be involved; be thoughtful; be respectful. Dialogue and debate are encouraged. If there is something you do not understand, or an idea comes to mind, do not hesitate to ask.

Quizzes – 30%
Students are given six quizzes over the course of the semester, to test their knowledge of the readings and their grasp of concepts. Quizzes are usually five questions and are returned back to students at the start of the next class.
You will be given a 10-minute exam based on vocabulary terms taken from the readings and class discussions. A more detailed description is available on NYU Classes. Please book a time-slot with Professor Heiko Hoffmann for the middle of the semester, times TBA.

**Final Research Paper – 35%**
You may write on a topic of your choice. You are required to compose a substantive research paper of 2,000 words, including a works cited section. Final papers are due via email before the last class at 5 PM and as a print-out in class. The paper must use 1-inch margins, a 12-point font and double-spacing; use single breaks between paragraphs.

There will be up to 50 pages of reading each week, of varying intensity, films to be watched online and music to be listened to. Please carve out enough time each week to properly review this material. Streaming links for films will be provided, and a Spotify account is necessary for music listening. A complete breakdown of what you need to listen to and when you need to listen to it will be issued by the instructor.

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

**Required Texts**
All literature is supplied via NYU Classes.

**NYU Berlin Library Catalogue:**
NYU Berlin Library Catalogue or follow the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

**Internet Research Guidelines**
to be discussed in class

*** 6 Feb 2019 no Classic Albums class today. ***

**Session 1 – 13 Feb 2019, 5pm *** please note change of time and place
*** SPECIAL FIELD TRIP TO MUSIKINSTRUMENTENMUSEUM***
We will visit the Musikinstrumentenmuseum to see the Mixtur-Trautonium and other early electronic instruments followed by a silent movie screening. **Students should meet the instructor at 5pm** sharp at the entrance to Tiergartenstrasse 1, nearest U-Bahn stop is Potsdamer Platz.

**Electronic Pioneers: From early synthesizers to the WDR electronic music studio and Stockhausen**
• Music to listen to: Oskar Sala “Five Short Pieces for Trautonium”, Karlheinz Stockhausen “Gesang der Jünglinge / Kontakte”
• Film to watch before class: Oskar Sala – *Klang und Verwendung* (1996, 5min)

Session 2 – 15 Feb 2019, 6:15pm *** please note change of time and place ***
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW
Students are expected to briefly talk about a German artist they know or a musician whose music they associate with Berlin. Please send the name of the artist by mail to Heiko before Wednesday, February 13th.

Music to listen to before the first Class: “Milestones in German Electronic Music” playlist on Spotify

Session 3 – 20 Feb 2019
CAN – TAGO MAGO (1971)
• Film to watch before class: *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany* (2009, 58 min)

Session 4 – 27 Feb 2019
NEU! – NEU! (1972)
*There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.*
• Music to listen to: Neu! „Neu!”
• Film to watch before class: *Conny Plank – The Potential of Noise* (2017, watch first 40min)

Session 5 – 6 March 2019
DAVID BOWIE – LOW (1977)
• Film to watch before class: *Hansa Studios By The Wall – 1976 - 1990* (2018, 90min)

Session 6 – 13 March 2019
KRAFTWERK – TRANS EUROPE EXPRESS (1977)
There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.

- Music to listen to: Kraftwerk “Trans Europe Express”, “Katalog12345678”
- Film to watch before class: Kraftwerk: Pop Art (BBC, 2013, 52min)

March 20th:
Midterm Exam (please sign up for a time-slot with Professor Heiko Hoffmann)

Session 7 – 20 March 2019
There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.

- Music to listen to: Manuel Göttsching “E2-E4”, “Kosmische Musik” Playlist on Spotify
- Literature: Théo Lessour - excerpt from Berlin Sampler (194 - 207), Mark Richardson “Manuel Göttsching: E2-E4 Review” (Pitchfork, 2016), David Stubbs – excerpt from Future Days (399 - 405)

-- -- SPRING BREAK -- --

Session 8 – 3 April 2019
EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN – HALBER MENSCH (1985)
MALARIA – EMOTION (1982)

- Music to listen to: Einstürzende Neubauten „Halber Mensch“, Malaria „Emotion“, “New German Wave” playlist on Spotify
- Film to watch before class: B-Movie – Lust & Sound in West-Berlin 1979 – 1989 (2015, 92min)

Session 9 – 10 April 2019
FROM EURO DISCO TO EURO DANCE: THE SINGLES
There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.

- Music to listen to: “Euro Disco” and “Euro Dance” playlists on Spotify
- Literature: Josie Le Blond "G.I. Disco Revival: How US Nightclubs Revolutionized West German..."
Music" (Spiegel, 2010), Spencer Kornhaber "Milli Vanilli, Pop Music's Original Fakes" (The Atlantic, 2015), Simon Reynolds “Song from the Future: The Story of Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder’s “I Feel Love”” (Pitchfork, 2017) • Audio documentary to listen to before class:
  • Electric Dreams – The Giorgio Moroder Story (BBC, 2013, 56min)
  • Film to watch before class: Daft Funk Collaborators: Giorgio Moroder (2013, 8min), Eurodance Spotlighted (2013, 15min)

Session 10 – 17 April 2019
4:45pm FILM SCREENING: Depeche Mode 101 (1989, 79m)

• Music to listen to: Depeche Mode “Some Great Reward”, “The Singles 81 - 85” •

Session 11 – 24 April 2019
U2 – ACHTUNG BABY (1991)
There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.
***Deadline for submission of abstract for final paper (further instructions under Assessments and on NYU Classes).***

• Music to listen to: U2 “Achtung Baby”
  • Film to watch before class: Soundtracks: Fall of the Berlin Fall (2017) – – – May 1st no class today – – –

Session 12 – 3 May 2019 MAKE UP DAY: please note change of date !!!

• Music to listen to: Peaches “Teaches of Peaches”
  • Literature: Jessica Hopper “The Pleasure of Peaches” (Pitchfork, 2015), Kitty Empire “Ripe for stardom” (The Observer, 2003), Peaches – excerpt from What Else Is In the Teaches of Peaches (2015)
  • Podcast to listen to before class: Peaches on the song that defined her new sound (2018, 16min)

Session 13 – 8 May 2019
There will be a quiz at the beginning of class.

- Music to listen to: Vilalobos “Alcachofa”, “Berlin techno, house 1997 – 2012” playlist on Spotify

Session 14 – 8 May 2019
BERLIN NOW: The city’s avantgarde and electronic music scene

today • Music to listen to: “Berlin now” playlist on Spotify

- Film to watch before class: Real Scenes Berlin (Resident Advisor, 2011, 18min)

Session 15 – 15 May 2019
Submission of final paper (further instructions under Assessments and on NYU Classes).

Classroom Etiquette
The use of cell phones (including text messaging), tablets and computers is prohibited during class. All phones, web-browsing and messaging devices must be turned off.

Your Lecturer
Heiko Hoffmann is director of artist and label relations at Beatport. He’s also a journalist, curator, lecturer and consultant. He was editor-in-chief of Groove magazine, an industry leading electronic music magazine, for almost two decades. Since graduating from University of Pennsylvania he has written for international publications such as Pitchfork, Spin and Sound & Recording (Japan) and hosted his own show called Nightflight on German public radio station Fritz. Heiko has been a key-note speaker and panelist at festivals such as Sonar, MIDEM, ATP and ADE. He is a jury member of a number of international artist programs.
Academic Policies

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

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\begin{align*}
A &= 94-100 \text{ or } 4.0 \\
A- &= 90-93 \text{ or } 3.7 \\
B+ &= 87-89 \text{ or } 3.3 \\
B &= 84-86 \text{ or } 3.0 \\
B- &= 80-83 \text{ or } 2.7 \\
C+ &= 77-79 \text{ or } 2.3 \\
C &= 74-76 \text{ or } 2.0 \\
C- &= 70-73 \text{ or } 1.7 \\
D+ &= 67-69 \text{ or } 1.3 \\
D &= 65-66 \text{ or } 1.0 \\
F &= \text{below } 65 \text{ or } 0
\end{align*}
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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. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. 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.
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](#).

### 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](#) 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.

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 please follow the link to NYU Global's academic policies.