Course Title
German Intellectual Tradition: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud

Course Number
GERM-UA.9240, SOC-UA.9942

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

Course Details
Tuesdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm
NYUB in the Kulturbrauerei, Room: “Prenzlauer Berg”

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
4

Course Description
This interdisciplinary course examines the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, three German-speaking writers who pioneered radically different and influential interpretations of modern life, which continue to shape our contemporary understanding of society and individuality. The seminar not only delves into the origins of these prominent traditions of modern Western thought, but also underscores their relevance in modern social theories and poetics. Hence, the course will also include references to the writings of their contemporaries, as well as explications of the direct and indirect influences of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud on other writers.

Course Objective
The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to some central ideas and texts of each author and to construct interdisciplinary dialogues on topics such as history, politics, morality, religion, subjectivity, interpretation, and art. While taking account of the historical complexities and stylized conventions of each text, the course also aims to highlight the recurrent themes that animate these influential writings.

Assessment Components
Students are expected to do the readings, attend all sessions, participate in discussions, and complete written assignments. Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of four components: attendance & class participation, presentation & reading responses, a midterm essay and a final writing assignment.
(1) Attendance & Participation  10%
(2) Class Presentation & Reading Responses  30%
(3) Writing Assignment I: Midterm  20%
(4) Writing Assignment II: Final Paper  40%

(1) Participation in discussions constitutes an important component of course activities and makes up a significant portion of student grades. You will have the opportunity to further explore the course readings, seek clarification, express your views, and engage in peer discussion.

(2) In order to prepare for discussion in class, students are required to submit 10 short reading responses (250 words) before each class by uploading them to NYU Classes. These reading responses serve to develop a habit of critical engagement with the texts and regular writing practice. They can also help to identify your research interests early on. Furthermore, students will convey their negotiations of a reading by giving one in-class presentation of 10 to 15 minutes, which incorporates exemplary close readings of selected passages and the development of critical discussion questions for the seminar.

(3) The course is also writing-intensive. Students will write a midterm paper (5 pages), based on discussion questions, which will be provided one week before the deadline.

(4) Finally, students will write a critical essay (final paper of 12 – 15 pages) on a topic of their choosing. This work can be an extension of the midterm paper but demands argumentative writing. Please arrange to meet with me at the earliest opportunity to discuss your research interests and final project.

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

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

Alternatively, your professor may give your grades in the scale of 0 to 4:

\[
\begin{align*}
A &= 4.0 \\
A- &= 3.7 \\
B+ &= 3.3 \\
B &= 3.0 \\
B- &= 2.7 \\
C+ &= 2.3 \\
C &= 2.0 \\
C- &= 1.7 \\
D+ &= 1.3 \\
D &= 1.0 \\
F &= 0.0.
\end{align*}
\]

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 per week in a double-session 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 email 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 NYUB's Director or Wellness Counselor. Your professor or NYUB's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from the 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. Three unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. In German Language classes three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, 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 always 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.

**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 Assistant Director for Academics, 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 (with a doctor's note or by approval of the Director or Assistant Director), 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) 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.

**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](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

- Course Reader
- Electronic Resources (via NYU Classes / NYU Library)

Books can be bought at Saint Georges in Wörther Straße 27 near NYUB. Readers can be bought at Sprintout behind Humboldt University (Georgenstraße/Universitätsstraße – S-Bahn-Bogen 190 - please allow five hours between booking and collecting readers).

Supplemental Texts (not required to purchase)


Internet Research Guidelines
To be discussed in class
Additional Required Equipment
None

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

**Session 1 – 1 Sep 2015: Introduction**
In this session, we will talk about the objectives of the course and start looking at some defining quotes by the three authors. We will also discuss a short passage by Michel Foucault in order to come to an understanding of the different methodologies we will encounter this semester.

**KARL MARX**

**Session 2 – 8 Sep 2015: Towards a “Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing”**
We will start our discussion of Marx with four of his earliest texts, which already foreshadow Marx's later analyses. Here, Marx negotiates the realms of philosophy and religion in order to arrive at his own methodological point of view.

*For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing* (1843/44)

*On the Jewish Question* (1843)

*Toward a Critique of Hegel's “Philosophy of Right”: Introduction* (1843/44)

*Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)

**Session 3 – 15 Sep 2015: History & Revolution**
In this session, we will look at two of the most pivotal texts by Marx and Engels, which enter into a discussion of philosophical problems in the light of historical developments and arrive at pragmatic conclusions for the re-shaping of the world.

*The German Ideology*: Part 1 (1845-46)

*Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)
Session 4 – 22 Sep 2015: Society & Capitalism
We will dedicate ample time to discuss Marx’s magnum opus Das Kapital, as we will trace the development of Marx’s analytical work as well as the complex structure of his argument and its ramifications for Marx’s objectives. At the same time, we will also address the historical evolution of his theory.

[Marx on the History of His Opinions] (1859)

Capital, vol. I (1867), selected passages

Session 5 – 29 Sep 2015: Ruthless Criticism & The Frankfurt School
We will continue our discussion of Das Kapital and venture to look at Marx’s project as a whole. Furthermore, we will look at the work of the Frankfurt School, which has continued critical Marxist thinking and adapted it for contemporary analysis.

Capital, vol. I (1867), selected passages

Walter Benjamin. Theses on the Philosophy of History (1940)


FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Session 6 – 6 Oct 2015: Art & Civilization
Our discussion of Nietzsche starts with one of his first publications, which seeks to bring a fresh perspective to a traditional field while establishing Nietzsche himself as a creative thinker and writer. The second text offers us Nietzsche’s seasoned perspective on his earlier work as a fascinating attempt at self-criticism.

The Birth of Tragedy (1872), Sections 1 – 15
Session 7 – 13 Oct 2015: Language & History
In this session, we will engage with Nietzsche’s thoughts on the roles of language and history for the shaping of the modern mind.

On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense (1873)

On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life (1874)

Midterm is due in class

20 Oct 2015 – no class: Fall Break

Session 8 – 27 Oct 2015: The Failure of Teaching
This entire session is dedicated to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, which Harold Bloom calls a “gorgeous disaster” of a book. We will trace and critically engage with some of the most popular concepts coined by Nietzsche such as the “Übermensch” and the “will to power”.

Thus spoke Zarathustra. A Book For All And None (1883 – 85), First Part and additional selected passages

Session 9 – 3 Nov 2015: Society & Morality
We will discuss the first two essays of On the Genealogy of Morality, which investigate the development of morality as a value system, the internalization of guilt, and the rise of the institution of Law respectively.

On the Genealogy of Morality (1887), Sections I & II

Session 10 – 10 Nov 2015: Will to Truth & Deconstruction
We will continue our discussion of the *Genealogy* with an analysis of the third essay, which negotiates ascetic ideals in the light of modern institutions. Finally, we take a look at a text by Jacques Derrida to trace Nietzsche’s influence on French Post-Structuralism.

*On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Section III


**SIGMUND FREUD**

**Session 11 – 17 Nov 2015: Dreams & Sexuality**
We will begin our investigation of Freud with his early publications on dream interpretation and sexuality, which introduce Freud’s first model of the mind, including the Unconscious.

*Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), selected passages

*On Dreams* (1901/1911), selected passages

*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), selected passages

**Session 12 – 24 Nov 2015: Eros & Thanatos, Ego & Id**
First, we will look at one of the few works by Freud that also incorporate a discussion of aesthetics while further exploring the workings of the mind. Then, we will discuss the first major shift in Freud’s theory as he leaves his first model of the mind behind for a second, more complex model.

*The Uncanny* (1919)

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), selected passages

*The Ego and the Id* (1923), selected passages
Session 13 – 1 Dec 2015: Religion & Civilization
Moving from the individual mind to questions of civilization and society, we will analyze the two predominant works, in which Freud negotiates the developments of religion and morality for the contemporary state of humanity and its repercussions for the individual.

_The Future of an Illusion_ (1927)

_Civilization and its Discontents_ (1930), selected passages

Session 14 – 8 Dec 2015: History & Rhizome
We conclude our discussion of Freud with his last major work, which not only builds on a number of Freud’s prior texts but also illuminates interpretations of history and formations of community in light of the regime of the Third Reich.

_Moses and Monotheism_ (1939), selected passages


Session 15 – 15 Dec 2015: Résumé
In our last session, we will review major milestones of the seminar and take a brief look at the final projects.

Michel Foucault. “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”

_Final Writing Assignment Due, incl. short in-class presentation of the final project_

Classroom Etiquette
The use of cell phones and laptops in the classroom is not permitted. Students may not eat during class, except during breaks. Drinks, including coffee and tea, are fine.

Required Co-Curricular Activities
We may be able to visit the theater production *Also sprach Zarathustra*, depending on the repertory schedule of the Schaubühne Berlin. Information will be provided as soon as it becomes available.

**Your Instructor**

Katrin Dettmer is the Arts Coordinator for 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 offered courses in 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. Katrin is currently co-editing a collection of essays on the creative power of myths, *Mythen machen*, set to be published in 2015. 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.