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| Course Title | Writing the City |
| Category | Language, Literature & Writing |
| Class Time | Session 2, July 23th – August 17th 2018 Track B Weekly schedule Monday: 9 am – 10.30 am & 11 am – 12.30 pm Wednesday: 9 am – 10.30 am & 11 am – 12.30 pm Thursday: 1.30 pm – 3 pm & 3.30 pm – 4.15 pm |
| Course Level & Target Group | Everyone who would like to explore or improve their creative writing skills, B.A. to Ph.D. level. No writing experience required. |
| Course Language | This course is taught in English, including readings in English. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class a language level C1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required. |
| ECTS | 5 ECTS (45 contact hours) |
| Instructor | Dr. Dorothea Löbbermann |

Course Description

To some, the city is a text that asks to be read; to others, the city is a multi-layered phenomenon that defies readability. None of this has ever prevented writers from writing about the city – and write about the city is what you will do in this course!

In numerous writing exercises, students will develop their creative and their critical selves. Writing assignments will draw on your own experiences of Berlin: capture the moment of your arrival, the strangeness of the new environment, the possible misunderstandings, and turn them into texts. Walk through a neighborhood, ride your bike or the subway looking for motifs and stories. Describe people you meet and turn them into characters. Research the history of a person, a building, a trend, a scene and take ownership of your urban experience – observe how you become a writer of Berlin. Writing will take place in-class, on-site and in take-home exercises. Be prepared to share some of your writing in class and to learn to give and receive constructive feedback.

Your writing will be supported by a class reader with various examples of urban writing, which we will use to study modes of narration, motifs, and kinds of composition. Reading assignments will be from European and American city texts but will eventually zoom in on representations of Berlin. How can literature, through the work of images, narrative perspective, plot structure, rhythms and juxtapositions capture the voices, spaces and characters of the city? What meanings of the city do individual texts create? With these questions in mind, you will venture out into the city and look for your own ways of capturing its essence, and/or the events that can unfold in its space.

Make sure you have a computer with you on which you can write your longer texts.

Course Objective & Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have

- discovered/expanded their creative talents
- discovered Berlin's multi-layered spaces
- reflected on their own experience of the city in their writing
- familiarized themselves with the literary discourse of the city in general and Berlin in particular
- learned to critically respond to fictional texts
- developed their reading, writing and communication skills

Readings

A course reader will be made available in the first session.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Arrival

Reflect upon your own situation as a newcomer to Berlin
Excursion to Märkisches Museum (Berlin's City Museum)
Literature of Arrival

Week 2: Places

Research and write about specific Berlin sites
Excursion to the State Library (Staatsbibliothek)
Space and Place in Literature

Week 3: People

Write a character study based on a Berliner you've met
Excursion/guided tour to a hidden part of Berlin
Character in Literature; People and Cities

Week 4: My Berlin

Write an extended piece/short story set in Berlin
City and Self in Literature

Syllabus and writing exercises are subject to change depending on students' needs and interests.

Assignments

You will write many smaller pieces, both in class and on special assignments that lead you into the city, and then share them in class. In order to create good texts, some assignments will take you on weekend explorations in Berlin. You will submit one longer text for feedback during the semester and a portfolio of revised texts after the end of classes. In addition to writing, your work in class will consist of contributing to the discussion and, most importantly, giving feedback to your peers' writings.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the amount and quality of your work during the semester (30%), the portfolio (40%), the quality of your feedback and active participation in the class discussion (30%).

A minimum of 80% class attendance is required.

Failure to fulfil one of the above-mentioned components will result in your failing the class.

Expectations & Policies

Preparation for lively discussions in the classroom: be on time, have the required readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on schedule including submission to the lecturer.

Commitment in class: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturer's, locals engaged with on field trips).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical), especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct (see *FAQs* on www.huwisu.de).

Attendance policy: No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse an absence please contact the HUWISU office (80% class attendance is required).

Field trips: if classes involve a field trip or other external visits, these require attendance as well as appearance on time – transportation difficulties are never valid reasons for an excused absence.

Cultural Extra-curricular Activities

HUWISU offers a fine selection of interesting extra-curricular activities and aims to help all participants have an unforgettable stay in Berlin. Your program includes excursions, sport activities and social gatherings providing you with the opportunity to get to know the city, the university and your classmates better and to meet students from all parts of the world. The costs for these offers are included in the course fees. Below you will find examples of previously offered cultural activities. You will be informed about the respective cultural program after your enrolment via email as well as during the course period.

Political and historical guided tours:

- **Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt):** The central coordination point for the entire government policy. The office is in constant contact with departments and other authorities.
- **German Parliament (Bundestag):** As the highest organ of the legislative in Germany it's elected by the German people. In practice Germany is governed by a bicameral legislature, of which the Bundestag serves as the lower house and the Bundesrat equals the upper house.
- **House of Representatives (Abgeordnetenhaus):** The state parliament (Landtag) of Berlin and located in the center of the reunified city. Together with the Martin Gropius Bau, the Topography of Terror and the Bundesrat, it presents an arresting contrast to the flair of the new Potsdamer Platz.
- **Topography of Terror:** A permanent exhibition with focus on the central institutions of the SS and police during the "Third Reich" and the crimes they committed throughout Europe. With the help of mostly photographic material, visitors are led through the major themes of the exhibition's five main segments.
- **Political Archive:** As the "memory" of the Federal Foreign Office it preserves the files on German diplomacy since 1867, as well as the international treaties signed by the Federal Republic of Germany and its predecessors in title. The records are preserved, processed and made available for academic research.

Cultural guided tours:

- **Kreuzberg Tour:** Kreuzberg has emerged from its history as one of the poorest quarters in Berlin in the late 1970s to a cultural center of today's Berlin. A unique area and one of the hippest neighborhoods in Berlin with many bars, pubs and clubs.
- **Berlin's Museum Island (Museumsinsel):** was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status in 1999 and is an ensemble of five museums: Old Museum, New Museum, Old National Gallery, Pergamon Museum and Bode Museum.
- **Berliner Dom:** Berlin's largest and most important Protestant church is located on the Museum Island.
- **Daytrip to Potsdam:** Be inspired by the illustrious attractions of the UNESCO's World Heritage while exploring the city of Potsdam. Immerse yourself in the history and present of Potsdam and discover many palaces, gardens, and historic quarters such as the "Holländisches Viertel" and the "Nikolaikirche."
- **Exhibitions:** Berlin is known for its unique galleries and exhibitions, that is why we will visit at least one during the Winter University.

Social gatherings

- **Welcome Get-Together:** We invite you to meet all participants as well as the HUWISU staff in a relaxed atmosphere.
- **Boat trip:** Get to know Berlin from a completely new perspective and see Berlin's famous sights while floating along the river Spree.
- **Beach Volleyball:** A fun outdoor sport activity on long warm summer evenings for those who love to play and everyone who just want to enjoy watching the others play, lying in the sand, meeting friends for drinks, or simply relaxing in the middle of Berlin.
- **Biergarten:** You can't leave Berlin without having experienced a Biergarten. The perfect place to finish off your busy day with a cool "Feierabend" drink.
- **Farewell Party:** At the end of the Summer University we will come together to celebrate the exciting time we've had with HUWISU.

Your Instructor

Dr. Dorothea Löbbermann teaches American Studies, literature and film at Humboldt University Berlin and IES Berlin (Institute for the International Education of Students).

She has a strong research interest in the cultures and representations of urban space, and has published widely in this field (book publications: *Memories of Harlem*, 2000; *Cinematographies: Visual Discourses and Literary Strategies in 1990s' New York*, co-edited, 2006). She occasionally writes fiction and attends creative writing seminars. She adores the creative process that wandering in the city can set off.