

Literaten in und um Berlin: Aktuelle Bücher in der Diskussion

Writers in and around Berlin: Reflections on Currently Discussed Books

15 July – 09 August 2024

CATEGORY Cultural Studies & Religion

COURSE STRUCTURE

You will receive a total of **45 hours of academic lessons** (one lesson equals 45 minutes; 15 hours per week). Lessons will comprise lectures, group work, discussion sessions, and excursions.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

HUWISU courses are grouped into different time tracks. Your course will take place in **Track B**

Monday: 9.00 am – 10.30 am & 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

Wednesday: 9.00 am – 10.30 am & 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

Thursday: 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm & 3.30 pm – 5.00 pm

COURSE LANGUAGE

Der Kurs wird **in deutscher Sprache** gehalten. Für Deutschlernende bzw. Teilnehmende mit einer anderen Erstsprache als Deutsch ist zum Lesen der Texte und für Gruppendiskussionen mindestens das **Deutsch-Sprachniveau B2** erforderlich. Empfohlen wird das Niveau C1 oder C2. Sprachliche Fehler in eigenen Texten werden korrigiert, aber nicht im Unterricht diskutiert. Sie fließen nicht in die Bewertung mit ein. Muttersprachler:innen sind ebenfalls willkommen, am Kurs teilzunehmen.

*This course **is taught in German**, including readings in German. For participants who are learning German and for whom German is not the first language, a **language level B2** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required for understanding the texts and discussions in class. A language level of C1 or C2 is recommended. Linguistic errors in the students' texts will be corrected but not discussed in class. They do not have any effect on the overall assessment of the participant's performance. Native speakers are also welcome to the class.*

TARGET GROUP

Studierende aller Fachrichtungen (Bachelor, Master und Promotion) mit Interesse am Schreiben, an Sprache, Kultur und Literatur sowie an der Stadt Berlin und ihrer Umgebung.

Students of all subjects (undergraduate, graduate and Ph.D. candidates) and professionals with an interest in writing, language, culture, literature, and the city of Berlin as well as its surroundings.

CREDITS & CERTIFICATES

Participants will receive **6 ECTS** credit points and a certificate if they attend regularly (at least 80% attendance), participate actively and fulfil all course assignments. Additionally, six weeks after the end of the course a Transcript of Records is issued by Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

You are invited to **join our cultural and social program**. We offer a fine selection of interesting activities that aim to give you an unforgettable stay in Berlin. Through excursions, social gatherings, and sport activities, you have the opportunity to get to know the city, the university, and to meet students from all parts of the world. **Costs for these offers are included in the program fee.** Below, you find examples of previously offered cultural activities. You will be informed about the respective cultural program shortly before the start of the program via email as well as during the course period.



POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL GUIDED TOURS

- Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*)
- German Parliament (*Bundestag*)
- House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus*)
- Topography of Terror exhibition
- Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office

CULTURAL GUIDED TOURS

- Kreuzberg Tour
- Museum Island (*Museumsinsel*)
- Berlin Cathedral (*Berliner Dom*)
- Daytrip to Potsdam
- Exhibitions

SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- Welcome Session
- Beach Volleyball
- Farewell Get2gether

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

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

Assignments: Complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment in class: Pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers').

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.

Attendance policy: No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must follow teachers' instructions to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office.

Please Note: The above rules on credits, cultural activities and policies apply to all students from all classes – they are *not* course-specific.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Die Stadt Berlin ist heute wie auch in den vergangenen Jahrhunderten ein besonderer Anziehungspunkt für kreative Künstler:innen und steht im Mittelpunkt vieler Romane.

Die Auseinandersetzung mit Diversität und Migration, den Folgen der Teilung des Landes und des Dritten Reiches, gesellschaftlicher Härte und dem anonymen Großstadtleben führt geradewegs zu Fragen nach Identität und der sinnvollen Gestaltung eines „Miteinander“ - eines selbstbestimmten sowie nachhaltigen Lebens.

Als Berlin-spezifisch wird in vielen Texten ein ganz eigener Rhythmus der Stadt im Spannungsfeld zwischen „Coolness“ und - manchmal gut versteckter - Warmherzigkeit und Solidarität empfunden. Bei der Analyse spüren wir den psychologischen Prozessen und der Entwicklung der letzten 10 – 15 Jahre nach, in denen auch der Wunsch nach gesellschaftlicher Umkehr deutlich wird. Dabei spielen biografische und geschichtliche Hintergründe sowie Bezüge auf klassische Werke der Literatur eine bedeutende Rolle.

Wir lesen Auszüge aus verschiedenen Erzählungen und Romanen sowie aus Zeitungstexten, Sachbüchern und Biografien. Kurze Filmsequenzen und Musik tragen zum Verständnis des Kontextes bei.

Im Zuge eines handlungsorientierten Ansatzes werden die Studierenden gebeten, während der vier Wochen neben der Lektüre ausgewählter Textauszüge einige Aufgaben zu bearbeiten (siehe: Assignments) sowie sich über ihre Eindrücke auszutauschen.

Auch die Teilnahme an zwei Exkursionen innerhalb der Unterrichtszeit ist verbindlich. Statt einer Abschlussarbeit/Prüfung werden im Verlauf des Kurses zwei schriftliche Arbeiten (1-2 Seiten mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand) sowie eine Kurz-Präsentation (ca. 5 min) verlangt.

Today, as in past centuries, the city of Berlin is a special attraction for creative artists and is also the focus of many novels.

Being in the centre of cultural diversity and migration, facing the consequences of the country's division and the Third Reich, social hardship and anonymous city life: all these factors lead straightaway to questions about identity and a meaningful shaping of "togetherness" - a self-determined as well as sustainable way of life.

A special rhythm is said to be a specific feature of life and writing in Berlin, between the poles of coolness and - sometimes thoroughly hidden - affection and solidarity. Our analysis traces the psychological processes and the development of the last 10 – 15 years including the desire for a turning point in our society. In doing so, biographical and historical backgrounds, the reception of newer books and references to classical works of literature play an important role.

We will read excerpts from various stories and novels as well as non-fiction, newspaper articles, and biographies. Short film clips and music will add to your contextual understanding.

Based on a task-oriented approach students will be asked not only to read the materials provided, but also to do some tasks throughout the course (see: assignments) and to be ready to share their opinions.

Being part of two excursions (during teaching time) is mandatory. Also required: two papers (1-2 pages double-spaced) and a short presentation (approx. 5 min), replacing a final paper/exam.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Am Ende des Kurses können sich die Studierenden in die verschiedenen Stimmungen einfühlen, die zu den teils sehr unterschiedlichen Texten angeregt haben. Sie kennen die Vielfalt der Stadt und auch den Kontrast zwischen Berlin und seinem Umland und können Rückschlüsse auf die heutige Situation für die dort lebenden Menschen und auch für kreative Künstler:innen ziehen.

Kreatives Schreiben: Einige der literarischen Techniken können sie, wenn sie möchten, nach dem Beispiel der behandelten Autor:innen selbst ausprobieren, um die Atmosphäre eines Ortes, gesellschaftliche Umstände und persönliche Konflikte in ihrem Schreiben zu reflektieren. (Siehe: Assignment Info, optional)

Gefördert werden dabei der aktive und kreative Umgang mit der Sprache und, neben der Lust am Lesen, auch die Lust, Eigenes zu produzieren.

Am Ende des Kurses werden die Studierenden

- zentrale Themen heutiger Autor:innen kennen, die mit Berlin verbunden sind, und wissen, wie sie in die aktuelle Situation sowie die Geschichte der Stadt einzubetten sind
- das heutige Berlin und einige Bezirke genauer kennen - wie auch, nach Absprache, einen Ort in der Nähe der Stadt, wo Autor:innen Motive und Ruhe gefunden haben

Außerdem werden die Studierenden in der Lage sein

- geschriebene Texte zu analysieren und hinsichtlich des Stils und Inhalts zu differenzieren, indem sowohl die persönliche Situation der Schreibenden als auch literarische und gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen in Deutschland berücksichtigt werden
- über literarische sowie gesellschaftliche Aspekte im Zusammenhang mit der deutschen Gegenwart und Geschichte zu sprechen und dabei ein erweitertes Vokabular zu nutzen
- Texte in deutscher Sprache in verschiedenen Stilen zu schreiben (optional)

By the end of this course students will be able to feel the different moods that had initiated the sometimes very different texts. They will know about the diversity of the city as well as the contrast between Berlin and its surroundings, so that they can understand and draw conclusions about the current situation for artists.

Creative writing: They will be able to make use of some of the literary techniques – following the discussed examples – for their own writing as tools for responding to and reflecting on atmosphere, social circumstances, and individual conflicts. (See: Assignment Info, optional)

The active and creative way of dealing with language will be supported by this course; it is not only meant to be a reading class, but to serve as an inspiration for producing your own texts.

By the end of the course, students will know

- *important topics of contemporary authors with respect to Berlin and know how to establish a connection between their writing and Berlin`s situation today and in the past.*
- *Berlin and some of its districts today as well as an example of a small place/village near the city where writers found motifs and quiet.*

They will also be able to

- *analyze and distinguish written texts with regard to style and topics according to the writers` situations in life as well as the developments of literature and society in Germany.*

- *talk about literary aspects in the framework of the current and historical situations in Germany and expand their vocabulary for this purpose.*
- *write texts in German using different styles (optional).*

READINGS

Die Texte werden in deutscher Sprache während des Kurses verteilt.

All the texts will be handed out during the course.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

- Lektüre von Texten der diskutierten Autor:innen sowie von Sekundärliteratur, biografischen Informationen usw.
 - Verfassen von zwei kurzen Texten im Laufe des Kurses (reflection paper *oder* Text in einem literarischen Stil von ca. 300 Wörtern), die in der Klasse oder Kleingruppe diskutiert werden können, wenn der Verfasser/die Verfasserin damit einverstanden ist
 - Präsentation (5 – 10 Minuten) eines ausgewählten Aspekts zu den behandelten Themen/Autor:innen in der Klasse
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- *Reading short texts and excerpts from discussed authors as well as secondary literature, biographical information etc.*
 - *Writing two short texts during the course (reflection paper or text in a literary style, each approximately 300 words) to be discussed in class or in small groups (if approved by the student).*
 - *Presentation (5-10 minutes) of a select aspect regarding the discussed topics/authors*

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Renate Graßtat, M. A., is currently teaching *German as a Foreign Language* and *Academic and Creative Writing* in several different programs at Humboldt University. She is also offering Creative Writing classes. For many years she worked as an auditor at Goethe Institute, focusing on the GDS exam (Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom, C2).

She was born in Berlin and has spent most of her life in the city, being able to compare the particular characteristics of Berlin and its inhabitants with other parts of Germany (North, West and South), all of them also having been her residence for several years. As a result, she has become a "defender" of the Berlin accent and communication style, often mocked, and always tries to involve some of the features and background stories into her lessons.

Building on her university degree in German Studies/Comparative Literature, her qualification as an Intercultural Trainer and her experience as a translator, reviewer, and author of radio programs on cultural issues, she is not only specialized in the field of literature, films and writing, but also particularly interested in the many possibilities of changing perspectives and the challenges implied when transferring words and meanings from one language to another. Her strong interest in psychological processes and relevant trainings add to her focusing on biographical, historical, and literary interactions and the role that writing can have in people's lives.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Woche 1: Berlin früher und heute – Charakteristik der Stadt

Woche 2: Aktuelle Themen in der Literatur und neue Bücher

Woche 3: Teilung und Wiedervereinigung – Warum sind sie heute noch ein Thema?

Woche 4: Im Fokus: Migration, Diversität, Identität

***Week 1:** Berlin, past and present – characteristics of the city*

***Week 2:** current topics in literature and new books*

***Week 3:** division and reunification – why do they still have an impact?*

***Week 4:** focus on migration, diversity, identity*

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 30 January 2024