

Cultural Crossroads: Mapping Identity in Germany

18 January – 29 January

CATEGORY Cultural Studies & Religion

COURSE STRUCTURE

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

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

HUWISU courses are grouped into different time sessions. Your course will take place in the **MORNING SESSION**.

Monday-Friday: 9:30 pm – 1:30 pm (except on the first Monday: 12:00pm - 2:15pm)

COURSE LANGUAGE

This course is taught in **English**, including the readings. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class, a language-level of B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.

TARGET GROUP

Undergraduate students of all subjects with an interest in interreligious and intercultural issues.

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

In addition to the academic program, you are invited to **join our cultural and social programs**. 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
- Ice Skating
- Farewell Party

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.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course follows the complex trajectories linking interreligious and intercultural narratives in Germany today. How does the culture of memory in Germany, with its Christian frame and Jewish focus converge and diverge with more recent narratives of migration that have made Islam a visible presence in Germany? This is the main question this course seeks to address. Students will interrogate this topic through dedicated lectures, workshops, and site visits to museums and other venues.

This course is anthropologically inflected and treats the sites as field sites to be explored empirically and analyzed critically. It is well-suited to students who are interested in religious studies, history, the social sciences, and/or more specific fields such as urban studies, ethics or museum studies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The aim of this course is to explore the tensions between Germany's culture of memory and present-day issues surrounding belonging and exclusion. In order to facilitate this, students will explore key sites of memory, post WWII migration to Germany, and the ongoing challenges of racism today.

A key learning outcome is to build critical thinking skills in order to read the sites and materials in a way that is conscious of power asymmetries. This involves interrogating how memory is represented: by whom, with whom, and for whom? This careful and conscious interpretation also serves to develop an awareness of the students' own positionalities: Where do they fit in these discussions? What knowledge and experience do they bring to the topic? This self-reflexive approach is particularly fruitful in international contexts where students come from a variety of national and academic backgrounds. The aim is to create a learning environment where students can gain knowledge and insight not only from the instructor and the material, but also via comparisons with and from each other.

READINGS

Reading materials will be available via Moodle during the course. Additional current events readings will be made available via Moodle closer to the time.

Required:

1. Costoiu, Andrada. (2008). "Thematic Articles – Migrants' Integration in Host Societies. Modes of Minorities' Integration: Explaining Historical, Economic and Political Factors." *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* 2(2): 2-17
2. Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz. (2011). "Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany." *Parallax (Special Issue on Transcultural Memory)* 17.4, 32-48.
3. Partridge, Damani J. (2010). "Holocaust Mahnmal (Memorial): Monumental Memory amidst Contemporary Race." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52(4):820-850.
4. Shooman, Yasemin. (2016). "Between Everyday Racism and Conspiracy Theories. Islamophobia on the German-Language Internet." *Media and Minorities*:136-155

ASSIGNMENT INFO

1. Preparing the readings in advance, as assigned and submitting discussion questions in advance of the class in question.
2. A presentation, which should be on a topic related to the course. It can be about an actual site or a more abstract topic. Do clear this in advance with the instructor. You are to introduce the site/topic and using the methods we have practiced in class, present your assessment of the site/topic and the potential further research interests and discussion questions that arise from your exploration of the topic.
3. Each student must hand in an individually written research report (5-7: 1250-1750 words) pages, double-spaced, 12 font, Times New Roman), which can be based on the presentation. Due date will be set closer to the time, but is usually fourteen days after the end of the course. The content should reflect the interests of the students as well as what will be explored together throughout the course. Specific guidelines for the report will be available on Moodle at the beginning of the course.

Note: Although this course is aimed at undergraduate students, Master's students are welcome. The requirements can be adjusted as follows: i: two additional readings (details tba), ii. one further independent site visit and reflection paper, and iii. The research report should be 8-10 pages (2000-2500 words) in length. Extra requirements can also be negotiated in cooperation with the student and their home institution.

In addition, alternative site visits can be arranged for any students who will have also taken the Museums course in session 1, to avoid too much overlap.

The final grade will be composed in equal measure (25%) of I.) participation grades, this is for attendance in class discussions; II.) preparation of the readings; III.) the presentation; IV.) the individual research report.

Failure to fulfill one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Victoria Bishop Kendzia's teaching method, although anthropologically inflected, is interdisciplinary in nature and is, therefore, not limited to the social sciences.

It appeals to students from a wide variety of academic backgrounds from history to art, through to geography, theology, and politics. The focus of her work is on the urban landscape, especially, but not only, museums and memorials in and around Berlin.

In this context, locations are approached as field sites that can be read, explored, and critically analyzed as dynamic sites that project and reframe key aspects of history and culture. The urban laboratory that is Berlin is particularly well-suited to this endeavor, given the historical and cultural upheavals it has witnessed during the 20th century.

She defended her dissertation entitled: The Jewish Museum Berlin: Visitor Experience in the Context of Political Education in 2013 at the Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt University Berlin under the supervision of Prof. Wolfgang Kaschuba and Prof. Sharon Macdonald.

Her doctoral work was based on ethnography of young Berlin-based high school students in and around the Jewish Museum Berlin.

She has a background in Museum Studies, having completed her master's degree in this field from the University of Toronto, Canada in 2001 and her Bachelor of Arts Honours at the same university in 1999. She has been publishing scholarly articles in her field since 2009 and teaching at the university level since 2008. Her most recent publication is the monograph, (December) 2017 *Visitors to the House of Memory. Political Education and Identity at the Jewish Museum Berlin*. London and New York: Berghahn Books. A paperback edition of this monograph was published in 2020.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Narratives of belonging Part 1 – focus on historical narratives

- **Mon. 18 Jan:** Introduction to the course. Lecture on the Jewish topic in Germany. Introduction to key ethnographic methods (perception walk, narrative interview).
- **Tue. 19 Jan:** Site visit to a large national institution. Likely the Jewish Museum Berlin. Details to be announced (tba).
- **Wed. 20 Jan:** Site Visit and Lecture (details tba)
- **Thurs. 21 Jan.** In-class discussion of site visits and readings 1-2 (Costoiu 2008; Rothberg/Yildiz 2011) Lecture on Post-WWII Migration in Germany.
- **Fri. 22 Jan.** Visit to a msueum that highlights migration, likely the Schöneberg Youth Museum. (Further details tba)

WEEK 2: Narratives of Belonging Part 2 – focus on contemporary issues

- **Mon. 25 Jan:** In-class discussion of visits so far and readings 3-4 (Partridge 2010; Shooman 2016)
- **Tue. 26 Jan:** Walking tour of further key sites.
- **Wed. 27 Jan:** Current Events workshop and visit to smaller museum that also highlights migration and anti-racism struggles (details tba).
- **Thurs. 28 Jan:** In-class discussion of visits in comparison using ethnographic methods.
- **Fri 29 Jan:** This final class is dedicated to student presentations, based on their own chosen topics/sites, summary discussion, and feedback.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: August, 2026