

Cultural Memory – Berlin a Museum

19 July – 13 August 2021

CATEGORY Cultural Studies & Religion

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course content is equivalent to an on-site course offering 45 contact hours. The study time includes:

- virtual classroom lessons with the lecturer and the fellow students (50%)
- group exercises (25%)
- assignments and self-study (25%)

TRACK B – WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF VIRTUAL CLASSROOM LESSONS

- Course days: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
- Time: 12.30 pm – 2.45 pm (Berlin time, UTC+2)
6.30 pm – 8.45 pm (Beijing time, UTC+8)
8.30 pm – 10.45 pm (Sydney time, UTC+10)
5.30 am – 7.45 am (Chicago time, UTC-5)

COURSE LANGUAGE

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

TARGET GROUP

Undergraduate students of all subjects with a strong interest in cultural studies, history, memory culture, and museums.

CREDITS = 5 ECTS

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)
- Recommended hardware: external headset for better sound quality

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Learning extends beyond your virtual course! As a participant in HUWISU, you are invited to join cultural, social, and academic programs. Cultural activities are designed to help students meet fellow international students, learn more about Berlin, and practice German language abilities. Apply what you learn in class, share your extracurricular interests, and expand your social network beyond your course through these programs!



VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES

With the support of the online format, HUWISU introduces new cultural and social activities. The cultural activities will be both synchronous and asynchronous.

Our scheduled live meetings might include games, cooking/baking together, or a trivia night. You still have the unique opportunity to build community across time zones and meet your fellow international students through synchronous programming. More information about the specifics is TBA.

Learn and read about Berlin history or German culture in between classes! No matter your field of study or interests, Berlin has artistic, political, and cultural significance. Take a look at the eBook "Perspectives on Berlin". It will include an extensive collection of digital resources about Berlin. Although you may be oceans away from Germany, connecting ourselves to Humboldt-Universität's culturally and historically rich location is still incredibly valuable.

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions in the virtual 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 online-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 contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Museums are keepers of our cultural memory. Collecting, preserving and exhibiting are their main tasks. But today this idea of a museum is not restricted to a building anymore. Instead of being limited to a closed space, the idea of a museum is everywhere and can be found in different forms of spaces and media.

Due to covid-19 and its different forms of closures we are forced to look at countries, cities and museums from a distance. The course will explore Berlin as a musealized space of cultural memory with museums. Alexander von Humboldt, Christopher Isherwood, David Bowie, Judith Schalansky and Jessica J. Lee will take us around various places in Berlin. Serving as magnifiers for a closer look at the idea of collecting, preserving and exhibiting we will follow these protagonists through different periods of time. We will translate our observations and knowledge in a *hands on!* project, a little digital 'exhibition' on Instagram, calling it *BERLIN FROM FAR*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Covid-19 forces us to social distancing and at the same time urges us to reflect this process. Distance as a phenomenon that negotiates questions of presence and absence, original and copy, will accompany us through the course as we visit Berlin and its cultural history. Through the named protagonists – Alexander von Humboldt to Jessica J. Lee – we are permitted access to places in the city, different time periods, historical events, objects and subjects they met. These narratives teach us, that not only museums collect, preserve and exhibit and form cultural memory. In fact, literature, films or the internet are also spaces that collect and save. They are collections and archives we deal with every day and that give us a profound insight into historical sceneries.

Following these narratives, we will see, how their sceneries add to each other, expand the picture and connect objects and subjects we meet. Doing this we will build up our own small collection of Berlin narratives and transform them into a presentation on Instagram, reflecting the experience of getting to know a city and its cultural memory from a distance and by different media. We will call the presentation *BERLIN FROM FAR* which exposes the experience of visiting and presenting something that is absent but nonetheless 'real'.

READINGS

Reading materials will be available via Moodle during the course.

Andrea Wulf: *The Invention of Nature. The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt – The Lost Hero of Sciences*. London 2015. (Excerpts).

Christopher Isherwood (1939): "Goodbye to Berlin". In: ---: *The Berlin Stories*. New York 2008, pp. 207–226.

Dylan Jones: *David Bowie. A Life*. London 2018. pp. 250–252/262–281.

Hana Wirth-Nesher: "Introduction". In: ---: *City Codes: Reading the modern urban novel*. Cambridge 1996. pp 1–21.

Jessica J. Lee: "under water" and "the swimmer's view". In: ---: *Turning. Lessons from Swimming Berlin's Lakes*. London 2017, pp. 3–20.

Judith Schalansky (2018): "Palace of the Republic". In: ---: *An Inventory of Losses*, translated by Jackie Smith. Berlin 2019, (Excerpts).

Walter Benjamin (1936): "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility". In Michael W. Jennings/Brigid Doherty/Thomas Y. Levin (eds.): *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*. Cambridge/London 2008, pp. 19–55.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to actively attend all sessions (you may not miss more than one synchronous session), read all texts as available in Moodle, hand in weekly assignments, participate in *hands on!* project *BERLIN FROM FAR* – research, reflection, pictures, videos, etc. The Instagram presentation is the equivalent to a written academic paper. Submission deadline: last course day.

The final grade will be composed of weekly assignments and active participation in class (50%) and the final academic paper (50%).

YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Dr. des. Anna Katharina Neufeld studied English und German at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. After working for the International Literature Festival Berlin, at the German Historical Museum Berlin, as well as in the Jewish Museum Berlin, she now works as a freelance curator.

As scholar of the Evangelisches Studienwerk e.V. she wrote her PhD at the department of German and cultural studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on Dying and Narrativity, at the intersection of Narrative Medicine. In this context she has published articles, organized conferences and has worked as lecturer for different universities concentrating on altering aspects of her academic field.

Her focus on the present debate on death and dying, as well as her experiences in museology opens her lectures for interdisciplinary approaches, which have accompanied her throughout her educational work. These are enriched by her interest in alternative forms of teaching and presentation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

19 July – Introduction

21 July – Humboldt in Berlin

Reading for 21.07.–26.07.2021:

- Andrea Wulf: *The Invention of Nature. The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt – The Lost Hero of Sciences*. London 2015, (Excerpts).
- Christina Ines Steingraber: *The Museum Island: Impressions of the Island of the Arts*. Staatliche Museen Berlin 2007, (Excerpts).

28 July – Isherwood's Berlin impressions

Reading for 28.07.–30.07.2021:

- Hana Wirth-Nesher: "Introduction". In: ---: *City Codes: Reading the modern urban novel*. Cambridge 1996. pp 1–21.

- Christopher Isherwood (1939): "Goodbye to Berlin". In: ---: *The Berlin Stories*. New York 2008, pp. 207–226.

02 August – Bowie, the collector

Reading for 02.08. – 04.08.2021:

- Dylan Jones: *David Bowie. A Life*. London 2018. pp. 250–252/262–281.
- Judith Schalansky (2018): "Palace of the Republic". In: ---: *An Inventory of Losses*, translated by Jackie Smith. Berlin 2019, (Excerpts).
- Walter Benjamin (1936): "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility". In Michael W. Jennings/Brigid Doherty/Thomas Y. Levin (eds.): *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*. Cambridge/London 2008, pp. 19–55.

06 August – Swimming through today's Berlin

Reading for 06.08.–11.08.2021:

- Jessica J. Lee: "under water" and "the swimmer's view". In: ---: *Turning. Lessons from Swimming Berlin's Lakes*. London 2017, pp. 3–20.

13 August – BERLIN FROM FAR

Launching *BERLIN FROM FAR* and goodbye from Berlin

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 03 May 2021