

Literaten in und um Berlin – Writers in and around Berlin

19 July – 13 August 2021

CATEGORY Language, Literature & Writing

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

Der Kurs wird in deutscher Sprache gehalten, die Lektüre der Texte erfolgt auf Deutsch. Zum Lesen der Texte und für Gruppendiskussionen ist mindestens das Deutsch-Sprachniveau B2 erforderlich.

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

TARGET GROUP

International undergraduate students of all subjects with an academic background and a strong interest in Berlin, literature and writing as well as the contrast between rural and city life.

Studierende aller Fachrichtungen (Bachelor, Master und Promotion) und andere Interessierte an Literatur, kreativem Schreiben (in deutscher Sprache), Kultur und Berlin sowie seiner Umgebung

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

Berlin ist am Puls der Zeit -und das nicht erst seit heute. Die Stadt und ihre Umgebung haben Künstler_innen schon immer angezogen und beeinflusst. Legendär sind die „goldenen“ zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, in denen nicht nur die Stadt selbst viel Stoff für Romane, Musik, Theater und die Bildende Kunst lieferte, sondern auch all die Zufluchtsorte, die aus der hektischen Spannung hinaus in die innere Einkehr führten.

Im Seminar befassen wir uns mit einigen Schriftsteller_innen, deren Leben und Werk besonders mit Berlin, aber auch mit dem Abtauchen in die beschaulichen Kleinstadtidyllen verbunden sind. Wie wirkt sich dieser Kontrast auf ihr Schreiben aus? Und welche Schlüsse lassen sich eventuell auf eigene kreative Prozesse und Tätigkeiten ziehen?

Dazu lesen wir Auszüge aus verschiedenartigen Texten und Genres (Romane, Geschichten, Gedichte, Berichte, Sekundärliteratur ...) und sehen uns die Orte an, die als Inspiration dienten. Autoren wie Brecht, Tucholsky, Fontane und andere werden vor dem Hintergrund ihrer gesellschaftlichen und politischen Umgebung betrachtet – wie auch einige Autor_innen des 21. Jahrhunderts.

Im Zuge eines handlungsorientierten Ansatzes werden die Studierenden gebeten, während der vier Wochen einige Aufgaben zu bearbeiten (weekly assignments), z. B. durch die schriftliche Beantwortung von Fragen, Stellungnahmen/den Austausch von Meinungen und Selbststudium. Sie werden auch einige Techniken und Stile der behandelten Autoren selbst ausprobieren.

Der Unterricht wird zum Teil über Zoom gehalten (siehe: Course Structure), einige Vorträge werden als PowerPoint-Präsentationen zur Verfügung stehen, einschließlich der Aufgaben zum Selbststudium und zur weiteren Bearbeitung bestimmter Aspekte der jeweiligen Themen. Schriftliche Arbeiten sind über die HU-Lernplattform Moodle einzureichen. Videos ermöglichen Einblicke in den jeweiligen kulturellen und biografischen Hintergrund sowie vor allem in Orte, die zurzeit nicht besucht werden können.

Bitte beachten Sie, dass es trotz des überwiegend virtuellen Unterrichts erforderlich ist, die Zeitabläufe einzuhalten und täglich (kurze) Aufgaben zu bearbeiten. Statt einer Abschlussarbeit/Prüfung werden im Verlauf des Kurses zudem drei längere schriftliche Arbeiten (1 – 2 Seiten mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand) pro Woche verlangt.

Berlin is a vibrant city – and has always been. The City and its surroundings have always attracted and influenced artists. The “Golden Twenties and Thirties” of the 20th century are legendary – not only the city provided inspiration and material for novels, music, theatre and fine arts, but also all the places of retreat that led from the external hectic pace to inner reflection.

The course is concerned with several writers whose lives and work are closely connected to Berlin - and also to the escape to the idylls of small towns. How did this contrast impact their writing process? And what can we learn from that for our own creative process?

We will read - excerpts from - texts of different genres/kinds (like novels, stories, poems, articles, reports, secondary literature ...) and take a look at places that have been an inspiration to writers. Various writers, like Brecht, Tucholsky, Fontane and others, will be studied against the background of their social and political environment, as well as some 21st century authors.

As the approach is an active and task-based one, students will be asked to fulfill several tasks during the four weeks course (weekly assignments), e. g. answering questions in written form, giving/exchanging opinions, and engaging in self-study work. Please be prepared to try out some of the techniques and styles used by the authors discussed.

Parts of the lessons will be held using Zoom (see course structure), some lectures will be available as PowerPoint Presentations, including tasks for self-study and further development of certain aspects of the topics. Written papers are to be handed in via the HU e-learning platform Moodle. Videos will be provided to enable insight into cultural and biographical backgrounds, and especially places that cannot be visited at the time being.

Please note that in spite of the strong virtual classroom component it is necessary to follow the timelines and work on (short) given assignments on a daily basis. One longer paper per week (1 – 2 pages double-spaced), all in all 3 papers during the course, are required, replacing a final paper/exam.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Zum Ende können die Studierenden sich in die verschiedenen Stimmungen einfühlen, die, im jeweiligen historischen Kontext, 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 kreative Künstler_innen ziehen.

Einige der literarischen Techniken können sie – nach dem Beispiel der behandelten Autor_innen – selbst anwenden, um die Atmosphäre eines Ortes, gesellschaftliche Umstände und persönliche Konflikte in ihrem Schreiben zu reflektieren.

Gefördert werden dabei die aktive Aneignung der Sprache und die Sicherheit im Umgang mit ihr und – hoffentlich – auch die Lust, Eigenes zu produzieren.

Am Ende des Kurses werden die Studierenden

- *wichtige literarische Entwicklungen und Autoren kennen, die mit Berlin verbunden sind, vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis heute.*
- *das heutige Berlin ein wenig genauer kennen, wie auch ein oder zwei kleine Orte in der Nähe der Stadt, wo Autoren 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 soziale Entwicklungen in Deutschland berücksichtigt werden.*
- *über literarische Aspekte in Zusammenhang mit deutscher Geschichte (vor allem im 20. Jahrhundert) zu sprechen und dabei ein erweitertes Vokabular zu nutzen.*
- *Texte in deutscher Sprache in verschiedenen Stilen zu schreiben.*

By the end of this course students will be able to feel the different moods that had initiated the different texts within the respective historical contexts. They will know the variety of the

city as well as the contrast of Berlin and its surroundings, so that they can understand and draw conclusions about the current situation for artists.

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 atmosphere, social circumstances, and individual conflicts by writing.

The active language acquisition process and feeling confident in using German will be supported by this course, and it might – hopefully – serve as an inspiration for producing your own texts.

By the end of the course, students will know

- some important literary developments and writers in connection with Berlin, from the end of the 19th century till today.
- Berlin today as well as one or two small towns and villages near the city where writers found motifs and quiet.

They will also be able to

- analyse 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 German history (mainly 20th century).
- write texts in German using different styles.

READINGS

Reading materials will be available via Moodle during the course.

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), and to do/hand in weekly assignments as well as 3 short papers (5 pages altogether) on the topics. Submission deadline: last day of the respective week (Sunday).

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

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 in various companies. 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 heute – aktuelle Situation und zeitgenössische Literatur*

Woche 2: *Theodor Fontane, Perspektiven des 19. Jahrhunderts, Ausgangspunkt für die Moderne*

Woche 3: *Die 20er und 30er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts – Autoren wie Kästner, Tucholsky, Fallada, konfrontiert mit gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen der Zeit*

Woche 4: *Bertolt Brecht – spannende Einblicke in sein Leben und Schaffen sowohl in Berlin als auch in Buckow, seinem Wohnsitz auf dem Land.*

Week 1: Berlin today – current situation and literature.

Week 2: Theodor Fontane, 19th century views- starting point for the modern age.

Week 3: The 20s and 30s of the 20th century – writers like Kästner, Tucholsky, Fallada facing the social and political developments of that time.

Week 4: Bertolt Brecht: Surprising insights into his life and work both in Berlin and Buckow, a near-by residence in the countryside.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 29 April 2021