

How Berlin Remembers and Forgets Its Past

May 5 – 30, 2019

Indiana University Program in Berlin

OVST A497 / German E371 (3 credits)

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This course aims to think of the city not merely as a cluster of streets and buildings, but as a historical text, something that can be *read*. Like every city, Berlin does not live in the present alone. It consists of many historical layers that exist together and often react to one another in unpredictable ways.

But Berlin is unusual in two respects that will interest us. One is the sheer number and crispness of historical layers that one encounters here. Starting in 1871, when Berlin came into its own as the capital of Germany, every major development in German and European history has left its marks on the city, some conspicuous, some subtle. Scratch the surface of virtually any spot, and significant events of the last 150 years come into view. Part of our task will be to identify some of these marks left by history and try to understand their significance.

The second feature that will concern us is the way Berlin, in confronting its past, memorializes not only triumphs but also failures. This is unusual for most cities outside Germany and opens up entirely new ways of understanding both the past and the present.

Course structure and expectations:

Our class meets at IES (Johannisstr. 6, Room 2.06) on MWF 2:30 – 4, unless otherwise noted. You are expected to take part in all outings, to keep up with readings and film screening, and to take an active part in shaping class discussion. If a text or film is listed for discussion during a class session, you are expected to have read or watched it before that session.

During the first three weeks, you will have short weekly assignments (max. 1 page) with reflections about readings and excursions. These entries may be brief, but they should be thoughtful, well written, and analytic. Here you have the opportunity to connect your own thoughts and impressions with those gleaned in our readings. Short papers are due Fridays, at the beginning of class; please bring a printout to class with you on Fridays.

The most important part of your work, and of your life in the city, will be your independent project. You have wide latitude in what you do and how you do it, but the project should be your way of reflecting on our topic: how Berlin deals with its past. (I offer some ideas for topics below.) You may approach this by *making* something (a video, a series of photographs, a short play, a story, the design for a building, etc.) or by analyzing and describing something, or a combination. Whatever you do, do it with heart and soul. Throw yourself into it completely. Talk to the other students, to IES staff, to people you meet here, to me. Use the resources at your disposal, which above all means: Berlin.

By the end of the first week, each of you, in consultation with me, will have started thinking about a topic to research, visit, document, think, and write about. By the second week, you will have settled on your topic, which you will briefly present to your peers. I will be available to meet with each of you. By the third week, you will be deep in your project. Week 4 is devoted to presentations: every student has a 30-minute time-slot for a presentation; the presentation itself should take about half that time, and the remainder is devoted to questions and answers. Depending on your project, you may also write a final paper or work on other ways of documenting your work.

If you need to miss any class session, screening, or excursion, please let me know *before* the event is to take place. Also, though it takes place in Berlin, this is an IU class and thus subject to all the rules governing ordinary IU classes, including those concerning academic integrity.

Course goals:

- Examine the complexity of human experience over time, interrogate the range of human thought and emotion, interpret varieties of aesthetic expression, and grapple with moral issues.
- Analyze written texts and works in literature, the visual arts, architecture and urban design, and intellectual and cultural traditions from both contemporary and historical perspectives.
- Develop the abilities to think rationally and to construct and assess opinions, ideas, and arguments.
- Develop these skills in a presentation or paper, which may be analytic or mainly creative.

Grading:

- Participation, 25 percent
- Short papers, 15 percent
- Final project, 60 percent

Reading list:

Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City*. (Picador, ISBN: 978-0312426118)
 Anna Funder, *Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall*. (Harper, ISBN: 978-0062077325).
 Joseph Roth, *What I Saw* (Norton, ISBN: 978-0393325829)
 Marie Jalowicz Simon, *Underground in Berlin* (Back Bay Books, ISBN: 978-0316382106).

Berlin Films (mostly) (we'll discuss the starred movies in class):

Wolfgang Becker, *Good-bye Lenin* (2003).
 Frank Beyer, *Trace of Stones* (1966).
 Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, *The Lives of Others* (2006).*
 Bob Fosse, *Cabaret* (1972).
 Paul Greengrass, *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004).
 Oliver Hirschbiegel, *Downfall* (2004).
 Frank Pierson, *Conspiracy* (2001).
 Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (1935).*

_____, *Olympia* (1938).

Martin Ritt, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965).

(<https://archive.org/details/The.Spy.Who.Came.in.from.the.Cold>)

Walther Ruttmann, *Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis* (1927).*

Bryan Singer, *Valkyrie* (2008).

Curt and Robert Siodmak, *People on Sunday* (1930).

Tom Tykwer, *Run Lola Run* (1998).

Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire* (1987).

Billy Wilder, *A Foreign Affair* (1948).

_____, *One, Two, Three* (1961).

Tentative Schedule (some class meetings and excursions may need to be rescheduled):

Su, May 5: Arrival. At 6:45 pm, meet Britta Tonak of IES and me in the lobby of the Kastanienhof Hotel to go out for a meal.

Week 1: Imperial and Weimar Berlin (1871 – 1933)

Mo, May 6: 10 am: Orientation at IES. (You will be met at the hotel at 9:30 am.)
2:30 pm: First class session: Introduction.

Tu, May 7: Treasure hunt.

We, May 8: 2:30 pm: Class. Reports about treasure hunts.
7:30 pm: Visit to Reichstag. Meet by the group visitor entrance (arrive with your passport).

Th, May 9: Film screening: Ruttmann, *Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis* (available on [Youtube](#)). Also worth watching: *Cabaret*; *The Blue Angel*.

Fr, May 10: 2:30 pm: Class. Short paper due. Texts under discussion:

- Joseph Roth, *What I Saw*, chapters 1, 3, 12, 23.
- Ruttmann, *Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis*.

Assignments for your first short paper: choose one of the sites that Joseph Roth describes in his articles about Berlin from the 1920s collected in *What I Saw*. A site can be a building, café, store, or street, or it can be an institution like the S-Bahn (the commuter train). (Besides the chapters I am asking everyone to read, you may also wish to look at chapters 2, 5, 6 [around the corner from IES], 15, 18, 27, and 32 [about the Reichstag].) Visit the site and write a page that shows you have read Roth (you need not mention him or his text). Show what has changed, what has not, which parts of the past live on and which have been erased. Bring a copy to class.

After class: Visit the former seat of the GDR President, now the European School of Management & Technology.

Sat, May 11: 10:30 am: City bus tour

Week 2: Nazi Berlin (1933 – 1945)

Mo, May 13: 2:30 pm: Class. Meeting with Hermann Simon, son of Marie Jalowicz Simon and editor of her memoirs. Text under discussion:

- Marie Jalowicz Simon, *Underground in Berlin*, pages 11 – 21 (Part 1: Section 1), 69 – 75 (2: 5), 85 – 110 (3: 3), 139 – 183 (4: 1 -5), 301 – 324 (6: 1 -2).

Tu, May 14: Recommended movie: Stefan Ruzowitzky, *The Counterfeiters* (2007).

We, May 15: Day trip to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Meet at 10 am in the hotel lobby.

Th, May 16: Screening of *Triumph of the Will* ([here](#) in full length, with English subtitles; at least through 51:34)

2:30 pm: Class. Short paper due. Texts under discussion:

- Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City: A Diary*.

Assignment: Choose one object that you came across in Sachsenhausen concentration camp and provide a description of it. Try to avoid language

that evaluates or judges. Focus on the object and let its historical, moral, emotional, ... significance emerge through your description of it. Bring a copy to class.

After class: Tour of Holocaust Memorial, including underground information site.

Week 3: Post-War Berlin (1945 – 1989)

Mo, May 20: **4:30 pm (note later start time):** Class. Texts under discussion:

- Funder, *Stasiland*, chapters 1 – 11.

6:30 pm: Guided tour of Karl-Marx-Allee.

Tu, May 21: Screening of *Lives of Others*.

We, May 22: 2:30 pm: Class. Text under discussion:

- Von Donnersmarck, *Lives of Others*.

After class: Wall Memorial Bernauer Straße

Fr, May 24: 2:30 pm: Class. Short paper due. Texts under discussion:

- “Let the People Out: The Night the Wall Fell,” *Der Spiegel magazine*, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,660190,00.html>
- “The Fall of the Berlin Wall,” Part 2, *BBC*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX6yz91FfX0> (45 minutes).
- “The Fall of the Berlin Wall: Twenty Years Later,” *BBC*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVTleQ5RvnY> (30 minutes).

Assignment: In the BBC documentary on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall, an East Berlin couple says they wished the wall had not opened. This seems like an extraordinary statement. Given what you have learned from films, books, articles, talking to people, and your own experience in the city, what could prompt people to express such a judgment? What positive work could the wall have accomplished in people’s lives?

Week 4: Post-Wall Berlin (1989 – present)

Mo, May 27: 2:30 pm: Class. Student presentations.

After class: visit to Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque, Alt-Moabit 25, 10559 Berlin.

Tu, May 28: Morning: Visit Turkish Market at Maybachufer (optional).

11 am (note early start time): Student presentations.

We, May 29: **11 am (note early start time):** Student presentations.

1 pm: Farewell lunch.

Th, May 30: Departure.

Some ideas for your independent projects:

Gleis 17, S-Bahn Grunewald

House of the Wannsee Conference

Berlin City Palace (*Stadtschloss*)

Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock’s installation around Bayerischer Platz

Stolpersteine (stumbling blocks)

The subway (*U-Bahn*)

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial)
Memorial Church (*Gedächtnis-Kirche*)
Jewish Museum
Christian Boltanski's *Missing House*
The New Synagogue
Memorial for Persecuted Homosexuals under National Socialism
Soviet War Memorial (Treptower Park)
German Resistance Memorial (Bendler-Block)
Topography of Terror
Palace of the Republic (former seat of the GDR parliament)
The Döner Kebab / Currywurst
Turkish Market at Maybachufer
Refugee registration (Lageso)