BERLIN PERSPECTIVES

Berlin childhood(s): The social history of the city in the 20th century

Semester: winter semester 2020/21
Course instructor: Dr. Olga Gnydiuk, olga.gnydiuk@alumni.eui.eu
Subject area: History and Literature
Credits: 5 ECTS
Time: Tuesday 12-14 c.t. (12:15-13:45)
Room: Zoom (Please note: This semester, all classes take place online. If however the general conditions allow it, the seminar room 0323-26 (3rd floor) at Hausvogteiplatz 5-7 can be used by the courses.)

Course description:

Imagine yourself as a child or a teenager, who lives in Berlin during the First or the Second World War, under the Nazi regime, or when the city was divided between the East and the West. What would you do, where would you spend most of your time, what could you learn at school? What would be your dreams and aspirations? This course equips you with knowledge and skills that help you to reflect on the questions about Berlin history and culture, the life of its inhabitants, and socio-political developments in Germany and Europe in the 20th century. By looking at the children's perspective, the course raises the topics of war, racism, eugenics, humanitarianism, victim/perpetrator dichotomy, displacement, child welfare politics. In the class, we will discover a variety of the children’s experiences, read personal stories and testimonies, analyze historical documents, watch movies, contrast and compare child policies and politics during war and peacetime. We will analyze how different events of this turbulent century shaped the present-day Berlin and Germany. The course builds a bridge between the past and the present and uses historical knowledge and critical analysis in discussions on the current socio-political problems and events. I also invite you to reflect on our own experience in the dynamic cityscape of Berlin.

Learning objectives:

During this course, students will acquire knowledge and skills that will help them to understand and reflect on the present-day cityscape of Berlin, its social life, and more broadly the German society. They will acquire training in fundamental skills, which are necessary for presenting, contrasting, comparing and discussing ideas in an academic and professional setting.

On the completion of this course students will be able to:

- Outline and critically reflect on the main events of the Berlin's and German history in the 20th century, identify the key figures, ideas, concepts and problems of the time;
- Identify, understand and explain the main historical and cultural sites in Berlin;
• Explain, contrast, compare and discuss the concepts of childhood, youth, orphanhood, welfare, age, racism, eugenics, ethnicity, humanitarianism, displacement, childhood politics, victimhood;
• develop, express and present arguments using effective language and supporting arguments with examples;
• read texts critically, reflect on and analyze written and visual texts in the field of German and European history;
• contrast, compare and summarize ideas;
• critically analyze oral testimonies and memories;
• confidently use collaborative digital tools;
• independently apply relevant theories and methods to analyze primary sources, new problems, policies and developments in the related fields.

Examples for assessment portfolio:

- Completion of the assignments outlined in Moodle - 30%. For each seminar you will have to complete a task, such as: critically analyze and reflect on readings (1 to 3 articles or book chapters), video lectures, visual materials or movies; explore the web resources and engage in the follow-up discussion; submit of short written assignments, review or discuss questions, work collaboratively via whiteboards; complete quizzes.

- Active participation in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, e.g. reaction to the entries of your colleagues in forum discussions, questions posed to each other - 10%.

- Write a review/response paper - 25% of the final grade, (2200-2500 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman ft.12). In this paper you will reflect on a chosen film, a book, a memory narrative, or a diary related to one of the course's topics. The list of the possible sources will be provided. Also you may write a review of the source of your own choice upon agreement with the teacher. To be submitted by 2 January 2021.

- The final group research project "Mapping childhood(s)" - 35%. Throughout the semester, students in small groups will collect textual, audio and visual information about a particular topic or site in Berlin, Germany, or in their home country, related to the seminar themes. Then, each group will create a digital presentation using the collected materials to show their findings. In the last session, we will discuss the groups' presentations as well as the question of children's presence and activities in the city during the 20th century. To be submitted by 18 February 2021.

Language requirements:

This course requires at least a B2 level knowledge of academic spoken and written English. The reading list consists of articles and book chapters written in English. If students find it difficult to read some articles or chapters in English, they may read them in another language but have to be prepared to a discussion in English. We will discuss key terms and concepts in the classroom. In the online discussion, you can use chat if you find it more convenient.

The films that we will watch in the course are in German with English subtitles, but you may watch them in other languages. Some short video-chronicles are available only in German so the knowledge of the basic German (A-level) will be useful but is not required to successfully complete the course. The sources used for the review/response paper may
be in a language other than English, but this should be agreed with the teacher. All discussions and presentations will be held in English. The writing assignments also have to be delivered in English. I will send you the guidelines for writing the papers and making presentations.

Always feel free to contact me when you have any difficulties with delivering any of the tasks in English or struggle with the reading or writing assignments. Together we will find a suitable solution.

Timetable:

The course will consist of synchronous videoconferencing in Zoom and asynchronous session formats in Moodle and with the help of other digital tools. You will be able to complete all tasks and assignments at a time convenient for them during the week. Synchronous videoconferencing will typically hold in the format of a general discussion, small group discussions, and collaborative work via whiteboard, at the time assigned for the seminar sessions and last 90 min max.

I hope that it also will be possible for us to meet in person at least from time to time and in small groups. If the quarantine regulation allows, we will visit The House of the Wannsee Conference Museum and the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) in Berlin. The excursion to the DHM will focus on an overview of the main dates, names and historical changes in German and Berlin during the 20th century and build a background for the topics of the course. In the House of the Wannsee Conference Museum, we will learn about the history of the Holocaust and reflect on how the function of this historical site has changed since the 1900s. I will inform you about the date and time of the excursions in advance.

Do not worry, if you are not present in Berlin during the semester and therefore cannot attend these "offline" meetings or excursions. This will not prevent you to successfully complete the course.

Session 1. Introduction to the Course. The Frontiers of Childhood. - 3.11.2020
On the first meeting we will meet via Zoom. We will get to know each other, provide an overview of the course and assignments. Then, we discuss the theoretical considerations of the children's roles and experiences in the 20th century. How such categories as gender, ethnicity and social background can change the meanings of childhood and youth?

To prepare for this session, write a post in the Moodle forum in which you introduce yourself and answer the questions: Why have you decide to take this class?

Session 2. Growing up at the Turn of the 20th Century. - 10.11.2020
In this asynchronous session, we will discuss in Moodle forum the life of children in the 20th century by analyzing the photos of children in pre-war Berlin and reading Walter Benjamin's "Berlin Childhood circa 1900".

Readings:
Session 3. The Great War in Berlin - 17.11.2020
The war had a significant impact on minors and their lives. In this session, we discuss how the absence of fathers and food shortages in Berlin, caused by the blockade of Germany, had changed the lives of women and children in the city.

Readings:

Session 4. Schooling During the War - 24.11.2020
In this asynchronous session, we will discuss in Moodle forum how the schooling reforms and wartime literature impacted on the children and youth. Does the analysis of wartime education and schooling help for a better understanding of the social and political changes, and right-wing radicalization of Germany? We will discuss the German National Youth League, war pedagogy, the war penny dreadfuls, and Teenagers' revolution.

Readings:

Additional readings:

Session 5. The Great War, the Children's Body and Humanitarian Relief - 01.12.2020
For this Zoom session, Dr. habil. Friederike Kind-Kovács (Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung (HAIT), will be our guest speaker. Her habilitation project was "Hunger in the City: the Great War, Famine and Budapest's starving children" and she will share with us her experience in researching the history of the post-WWI international humanitarian relief for children. To be confirmed.

Session 6, Interwar Childhood and Ideological Propaganda - 08.12.2020
During the Zoom meeting, we will work in small groups to explore, compare and discuss interwar political, humanitarian and ideological posters that depict children. We analyze how a child figure is used in political and humanitarian debates.

Readings:

2. To prepare for this session, post in Moodle a visual example in which child figure is used to convey a message.

Additional literature:

**Session 7. Being a Child under the Nazi Regime - 15.12.2020**

In this asynchronous session, we are going to listen to oral testimonies of people who were children in the 1930s and lived in Berlin after Adolf Hitler came to power. I invite you to note the main topics, analyze the narratives, and compare the children’s experiences. In Moodle we exchange our opinions and reflections on the narrators' way of telling about Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls, *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi racial laws, and *Kindertrasport*.

**Readings:**
2. Interview with Sibylle Sarah Niemöller (née von Sell), born in 1923 in Berlin, Germany. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
3. Interview with Irene Schmied (née Katzenstein), born in Berlin, Germany. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
5. Interview with Dieter Protsch. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Additional literature:**
- Video. Old Berlin, stroll through the city, "Reich capital Berlin 1936". The recordings are from the years 1941/42, shot by the professional cameraman Frederick Fuglsang.

**Session 8. Children and Youth at World War II: Part 1 - 05.01.2021**

This synchronous session introduces the social face of WWII. We will discuss the Nazi policies and programs that had a considerable impact on the children's lives, such as, the eugenic, the *Lebensborn* and "children’s euthanasia" program, as well as Germanization projects.
Readings:
2. Watch the lecture of Nicholas Stargardt talks about "Children of Hitler's War".

**Session 9. Children and Youth at World War II: Part 2 - 12.01.2021**
Using the Moodle forum, we continue to analyze the children’s experience of war, the Holocaust and forced labor.

Readings:
3. Explore Bad Arolsen archive collection and children's individual files. Instructions will be provided before the session.

Additional literature:

**Session 10. Children in Post-War Berlin - 19.01.2021**
For this synchronous session, we will watch the movie *Germany. Zero Year* (Directed by Roberto Rossellini) and discuss the everyday life of German children and youths in Berlin and Germany. Also I invite you to share the stories on how the end of WWII is commemorated in your family or home country.

Readings:

**Session 11. Exiting the War - 26.01.2021**
On this session, we will work in small groups using a whiteboard (e.g. Padlet or Miro) to analyze the archival documents. We will reconstruct the lives of several children who stayed in postwar Berlin and Germany. Then, in Zoom each group will present their findings (5 min max) and we discuss how the occupation authorities planned to cope with the issues of displaced, lost, orphaned and refugee children, as well as examine the international relief and rehabilitation programs.

Readings:
1. Choose to read ONE of the case studies:
Case study 1 - Wysoczanska Olga/ Internationa Tracing Service Digital Archive, Paris
OR
Case study 2 - Pitschmarga Walla/ Internationa Tracing Service Digital Archive, Paris
OR
Case study 3 - Dmitri Kalinski / Internationa Tracing Service Archive, Bad Arolsen


**Session 12. East and West (Berlin) I: Schooling and Everyday Life - 02.02.2021**
Division of Berlin and Germany, as well as political developments in the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, constitutes a background for this and the next asynchronous sessions. How was it to be a child in the East and West Berlin? We will explore the "antifascist narrative" in the schools and youth organizations in East Berlin and Germany and reflect on the evolution of the West German childcare and education system and its consequences today.

**Readings:**

**Additional literature:**

**Session 13. East and West (Berlin) II: Welfare and Family - 09.02.2021**
In this asynchronous session, we will discuss in Moodle forum the family and child welfare provided by state and voluntary organizations before 1989 in East and West Germany. How did it shape the social security system in present-day Germany?

**Readings:**

**Additional literature:**
Session 14. The Fall of The Berlin Wall and its Aftermath - 16.02.2021
The topic of this session explores how the events of 1989 affected children, youth and their future lives. The discussion of this seminar will be built around the book written by Jana Hensel "After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life That Came Next" and the notion of "Ostalgie".

Readings:

2. Watch: Die Öffnung der Mauer in Berlin, Bornholmer Strasse, 1989 (with English subtitles)

Additional literature:
- "Good Bye, Lenin!" (Directed by Wolfgang Becker, 2003).
- "Sonnenallee" (Directed by Leander Haußmann, 1999).

Session 15. Coda: "Mapping childhood(s)" - 23.02.2021
For the last session, we will meet in the format of the webinar to present and discuss the final group projects. We will also summarize the course and discuss how the experience of childhood in the city has changed throughout the century and how children and youth could change Berlin’s cityscape.

Literature:
The readings for each seminar session (1 to 3 book chapters and/or articles) will be announced in advance. They all will be available at the HU library or will be sent via Moodle.


The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: https://collections.ushmm.org/search/


**Video:**


**Remarks:**

We learn not only from books, but also from each other. I encourage you to offer peer support in the group, share your knowledge and experience. When we discuss any topic, feel free to share, reflect and compare related examples, viewpoints and debates that you
know from other contexts, that exist in your home countries. In this way, we engage in the intercultural learning process and critically reflect on our own cultural experience.

In our virtual classroom, as well as beyond it, we all commit to maintain a friendly atmosphere, behave respectfully, promote diversity, and refrain from any actions or language that may offend others. Discrimination on the basis of a person's race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender, country of origin, language, or disability is unacceptable in the classroom as well as in everyday life.

Always feel free to contact me if any questions regarding coursework, language matters, or if you need support in or advice about the learning process.

**Plagiarism policy**

Please keep in mind that your writing assignments have to be written by you. Any ideas, sentences and passages from another source have to be cited appropriately. The penalty for plagiarism is failure of the course.