

## *BERLIN PERSPECTIVES*

### **Urban Activism in Berlin**

<b>Semester:</b>	Winter Semester 2020/21
<b>Course instructor:</b>	Banu Çiçek Tülü (urbanactivismberlin@gmail.com)
<b>Subject area:</b>	Culture and Society
<b>Credits:</b>	5 ECTS
<b>Time:</b>	Wednesday 14 -16 c.t. (14:15-16:45) + moodle throughout the week
<b>Room:</b>	Zoom (Please note: This semester, all classes take place online. If however the general conditions allow it, the seminar room 0323-26 (3 <sup>rd</sup> floor) at Hausvogteiplatz 5-7 can be used by the courses.)

#### **Moodle Info:**

Please find the course in moodle search, the name of the course: Urban Activism in Berlin (WiSe 2020/21). The course key (password) for self-enrollment will be sent to registered students before the beginning of the semester. If you have trouble finding the course or cannot get the password on time, please write an e-mail to urbanactivismberlin@gmail.com and I will provide you the password.

#### **Online Sessions:**

Because of the current situation, I am offering this course online. First two weeks, there will be introduction to the course. This semester we will use moodle extensively; forum will serve us asynchronous discussion platform. From the beginning of the course (04.11.2020) there will be several exercises; i.e responding reading questions, writing exercises using the visual elements, etc. All the students are responsible to respond, react and participate in discussion. Please keep in mind, you need to actively participate in moodle forum. There will be also Zoom meetings on the day and the time of the course. However, your participation in moodle related activities are the most important part for grading. From the third week on, depending on the number of participants, I will decide how we continue with Zoom, maybe all together or small groups. There might be excursions but we will decide together adapting to new limitations of being in a group. All information will be provided via moodle. If you have any problem with any technical details please write to urbanactivismberlin@gmail.com. The exercises and assignments will be mostly using the virtual space that can be done individually, as well as outside of Berlin. Except integrating the virtual space, the syllabus remain same. Please get ready for reading, writing and learning! A detailed syllabus will be online in moodle.

#### **Course description:**

Berlin is considered as multi-layered urban lab with contradictory landscape; luxury housing, big urban development projects next to squats, small urban garden projects, urban parks and green areas, etc. Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s till today, over 50 percent of the city's public housing stock has been sold to private investors and the city has become a highly desirable destination for international property investment (Holm 2007). The lack of affordable housing and a rise in the speculative real-estate market spur new discussions about gentrification. Meanwhile, inhabitants and newcomers fight for their rights in the city. The focal point of this course is an examination of the

changes associated with urban development in Berlin and “counter actions” as urban social movements. This interdisciplinary course explores Berlin through urban activism in with several lenses, including: housing, urban environmental activism, community gardening and political power relations in the city. In addition to that this course offers an analysis of right to the city, participation, social justice, urban resistance, grassroots organizing, and urban development policy. Within the broad theme of “urban activism”, the course focuses on the ways in which neighborhood/inhabitant experiences and citizens’ collide to produce different forms of resistance within Berlin’s political sphere. The course offers to the participants to learn, discuss and use urban activist practices and tools in their everyday life.

### **Learning objectives:**

This interdisciplinary weekly seminar is open to students from across disciplines who have an interest in Berlin and its social, political, economic, and environmental analysis. The course will develop transferable skills, including the ability to argue effectively about intellectual issues on urban politics, both orally and in writing –in English and German–, and to work together with others. This course derives from the emergent and widely researched topic of “right to the city”, and aims to able the participants to understand the urban issues together with their political, cultural, social, local, global and interdisciplinary connections. Its interdisciplinarity can be explained by referring the content which is based on social science, geography, urban planning, urban studies, architecture, cultural studies and political science.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have:

- a strong theoretical and practical understanding of ‘right to the city’ movement, reclaiming urban space, contemporary urban activism against gentrification, alternative living options and environmental issues. This knowledge will come through the analysis of academic readings assigned every week in conjunction with class discussions and guided research.
- an understanding of what really “urban activism” mean through theories on local urban governance, participation, urban politics and decision making from an anti-racist, social, as well as feminist point of view.
- a comprehensive grasp of the cases for sustainable urban development as applied to social equity, urban social movements and activism, focusing on examples from Berlin.
- Throughout the course, different presentation tools will be introduced focusing on several presentation techniques in order to enhance student’s academic presentation skills (see: Final assignment).

### **Requirements and assessment:**

This course has a two-fold mission:

**1)**To train students the theories about the “right to the city” and urban activism in Berlin with real city actors and organizations. a) Students will be given weekly readings ( approx. 2 articles) b) and reading questions that encourage students to explore the issues with an in-depth perspective. These readings are the main material of the class in order to cultivate academic writing skills. The reading questions are not expected to answer directly, rather they guide students to contextualize both the issue and the writing style. c) In every session, there will be a discussion about the readings and we will analyze the themes together. With a guidance of small presentation, the students will understand the significance of narrowing the problem space, the construction of logical arguments, the reporting and interpretation of data. d) At the end of the class, we will combine the results and thoughts. The ability to communicate effectively in writing is one

of the most important skills for educational and career success. Thus, this seminar focuses on the reading material and in-depth analysis.

As the seminar is open to all disciplines, I am aware that some students are not familiar with Urban and Social Studies terms. Therefore, the reading questions given for every session will guide students to understand these terms from different disciplines and they will become familiar with critical reading in academic context. Both the assigned articles and questions will be available through moodle.

**2)** To enable hands on learning through conducting at least one or two site visits either with neighborhood organizations or activist groups will be organized. The students will have the opportunity to listen the work of these groups which would be a useful way to translates the theory into practice. By the end of the course, students will have been introduced to multiple city actors from Berlin's civil organization scene. The students will develop their research questions independently with support from the site visits where they will be able to take part in theoretical discussions and witness the tactics used by urban activists to advance their goals.

**3)** Both theory and practical encounters will enable the participants to learn, discover and apply activist practices and tool. The final project is where students will merge the theoretical knowledge to practice. With the findings of their final projects, this course aims to train the participants to be active citizens in wherever they are coming from.

### **Integrated Language Learning:**

In this course, some core readings will be in English and German. In order to understand the terms in German law and regulations, A2 German level would be really helpful. Our working language will be English. Therefore, min B1 level English is required both writing and speaking. There will be terms in German and they will create our own urban dictionary with the words and terms which we use in our academic readings and daily life as well. Beside, students will be asked include this terms and words in the mini-project and final assignment.

### **Assessment:**

Most of the assignments will be completed using moodle. Every week, there will be reading questions that you need to respond on time via by moodle. There will be two mini-projects that students will prepare during the semester and one final project that will be due at the end of the semester. The mini projects will focus on visual research on urban participation and activism. Students will be able to use the data gathered during the mini projects for their final project.

### **Mini Project I:**

During the semester, students will be asked to photograph posters, stickers, banners in storefronts, windows or balconies, documenting current examples of urban participation, activism, housing issues, and/or counter actions to neoliberal real estate developments in Berlin. Students will include short commentaries this visual data in which they will be able to apply the theories that are covered throughout the course.

The aim of this mini-project is enhance the students' "selective perception" and introduce this term borrowed from urban psychology. After this, I expect the students to look to their environment more carefully and gain better understanding about the related topics and local voices in Berlin. This exercise will show the research effort and the learning progress of each student that they could share with their fellow students. At the same time students enhance their knowledge in German- as some of the banners, graffiti(s) or stickers are in German. This way will also support our integrated German learning process in the class.

Another mini-project will be about producing same kind of poster, sticker, banners for a selected activist group that they can use as visual material.

**Mini Project II:** It will be announced throughout the semester.

**Final project:**

Each student will prepare one final project. There are several options:

-An academic essay (1800 – 2000 words double spaced, Times New Roman, MLA-style citation) The final essay can be written in English, German, Spanish or Turkish. However, it must have an abstract (200 words) in English.

-An academic poster

-Any kind of creative idea i.e. blog posts, video, preparation of any social media, etc.

The final project will develop during the semester rather than at the end of the semester. For that, we will already start to discuss your final project in the middle of the semester. While the final project is developing the participants already have their findings and integrate that to the discussion. The participants present their final project and findings in class. Please be aware that in this course you need to learn the theory behind “urban activism”, and this way you can create a successful final project. I expect to see that you integrated the theories into your final project regardless your choice of presentation. You are welcome to use any kind of media in the presentations. Throughout the course, I will encourage students to focus on their presentations to develop their own style.

Nevertheless, I will introduce <https://prezi.com> to students as an alternative to PowerPoint, a creative tool for academic presentation techniques.

**Course Requirements:**

1- Active Participation in class discussion: Being present in Zoom meetings is not enough for an vibrant class discussion. We extensively work with writing via using moodle. The students expected to read the assigned article before the sessions. The reading material is not dense but requires a bit of time. Please do your part, follow the requirement via moodle and participate in the virtual environment. Your thoughts mean a lot!

3- Submitting your Mini-Projects 1: Up to 5 the pictures with some notes , i.e where, when, what about. Mini-Projet 2: details will be announced.

4- Final essay and presentation

**In Class Expectations:**

This is an invitation to students to create a non-hierarchical and equal classroom. Participation is a keyword but the engagement between lecturer and students is essential just like in a community. I am absolutely open to learn with and from you. Please be open-minded and refrain from engaging in or encouraging any type of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, transphobia, etc. As I support full diversity; you can contact me about any situation that I should be aware of, i.e. when you are not comfortable with: language, topic, my or another colleague’s behavior. I am an early-career academic who is from outside of Berlin and I am ready to share my knowledge and experiences with you regarding academic and social life, scholarships, how to survive in Berlin, etc.

Plagiarism is an act that I will not abide. Illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating will result in failure of the course. Please do

not forget you study with a scholar who value honest, open and intellectual inquiry. You

can contact me anytime if you need any support with your coursework.

### **Grading:**

#### **Participation 20%**

- Did the student completed the requirements; joining forum discussion in moodle, complete the assignments?

#### **Required reading and preparation 10%**

- Did students read the text and could respond the reading questions in a meaningful matter?
- Did students complete assignments on time?

#### **Mini Project 20%**

- Did the student prepare the project following the guidelines?

#### **Final project 50%**

- Did the student follow the guidelines, submit each step of the project on time, and create a meaningful final project?

### **Tools:**

**Moodle:** The password of the course for moodle will be provided before the first session, when you registered to the course, you will get the information. The complete reading list and detailed syllabus will be online in moodle. Readings for every week will be uploaded as PDF file which you can easily download from moodle.

**Zoom:** Every week, I will create the Zoom meeting and the invitation link will be available on moodle. However, only joining to Zoom meetings are not enough, you need to take part in the assignment in moodle. Zoom meetings are only to clarify the texts, the discussion will follow mostly via moodle.

### **Timetable:**

**Session 1:** Introduction I (04.11.2020)

**Session 2:** Introduction II (11.11.2020)

**Session 3:** Right to the City (18.11.2020)

**Session 4:** Different Forms of a City (25.11.2020)

**Session 5:** Housing Question – Gentrification (02.12.2020)

**Session 6:** Reclaiming Public Space (09.12.2020)

**Session 7:** Housing Question – Alternative Living Options (16.12.2020)

**Introduction for final projects**

**Session 8:** Mini project 1 Presentations (06.01.2021)

**Session 9:** Environmental Struggle and Green Activism (13.01.2021)

**Session 10:** City and Minorities (20.01.2021)

**Session 11:** Gendered City (27.01.2021)

**Session 12:** Urban Participation (03.02.2021)

**Session 13:** Urban Commons (10.02.2021)

**Session 14:** Final Presentations (17.02.2021)

**Session 15:** Final Review and Discussion on Findings (24.02.2021)

### **Selected Literature**

- Blokland, et. al. (2016) *Creating the Unequal City*, Routledge.
- Burdett, Ricky; Sudjic, Dejan (eds.) (2008) *The Endless City*, London: Phaidon.
- Frers, L.; Meier, L.(eds.) (2017) *Limits of Resistance*. Special Issue: *Space and Culture*, 20(2): 124-254. Sage.
- Helbrecht, I. (2016) *Gentrifizierung in Berlin: Verdrängungsprozesse und Bleibestrategien*. Transcript Urban Studies, Bielefeld.
- Harvey, David. (2012) *Rebel Cities: From the City to the Urban Revolution*. London, New York: Verso.
- Vasudevan, A. (2015) *Metropolitan Preoccupations: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin*. Wiley-Blackwell.