



## The multi-layered city. Contested memories in Berlin

Summer Semester 2024: 15 April – 19 July 2024

### CATEGORY

History and Heritage

### COURSE STRUCTURE

5 block sessions

### SCHEDULE

Introductory and welcome session

Monday, 22.4., 16-18h

Session on theoretical backgrounds

Monday, 29.4., 14-18h

Block session weekend with field visits

Saturday – Sunday, 4.-5.5. 10h-18h

Writing session and guest lecture (tbc)

Monday, 3.6., 14-18h

Exhibition and module book presentation

Monday, 17.6., 14h-18h

### Place

All sessions:

CARMAH (Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage)

Institut für Europäische Ethnologie

M\*straße 40/41

10117 Berlin, Room 408 (4th floor)

## **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 is required. Some basic German (A2) is recommended for understanding some of the site visits we will undertake.

**Language requirements** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

English B2

## **TARGET GROUP**

International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

## **CREDITS = 5 ECTS**

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes. All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Berlin is a city layered with history: a palimpsest of ruins, rebuildings, and marks of the past, even of futuristic imaginations that are now history. These layers can seem romantic and invited the modern flaneur to imagine Berlin alongside other cosmopolitan and urban projection screens. But the multi-layered city also implies a casting aside, a covering up, digging up, and hiding. The ruins of Berlin tell a story of an injured city, whose wounds are variously exposed to lay the finger on the wound of historical reckoning, or plastered in a vain attempt to heal, or return to a state prior to injury, as artist Kader Attia put it about the city of Berlin. The city as a multi-layered palimpsest thus reveals psycho-affective and political strategies of future-making and heritage-mobilisation. In this seminar, we trace and dig into the difficult, awkward, eerie, uncomfortable heritage of the city and speak to stakeholders involved in its transition: curators, activists, artists, citizens. The seminar will produce a modular book-case, which can be unpacked into a mini-exhibition, featuring students' own profiled "difficult heritage" sites of the city with a brief problematisation. These loose pages will be put together in a box to create a mobile, modular book-exhibition. Among the sites that may be visited are: Zionskirche, Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, Stasi Archive and headquarters, Humboldt Forum, Holocaust Memorial and the Sinti Roma Memorial, exhibition "looking back" at Museen Treptow-Köpenick.

This seminar will be offered as an interdisciplinary course through the Berlin Perspectives programme for international students. The seminar focuses on field visits with methodological exercises, which introduce students to diverse ways of doing research that they will build on to articulate their own research outcomes in a multimodal portfolio.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to familiarise students with Berlin, to allow them to explore the difficult questions that archives and archiving pose, and to get to know ethnographic methods.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

### Knowledge

- Provide an overview of Berlin history through the different archives we encounter
- Compare and theorise concepts and histories of archives in general
- Understand the core theories and questions that archives and archiving pose
- Grasp elementary aspects of organisational and institutional fieldwork

### Methods

- Employ basic ethnographic fieldwork methods
- Have a grasp of experimental and multimodal research designs

### Academic/Transferable Skills

- Reflect critically on their own knowledge production
- Understand archiving and collecting practices and strategies
- Curate a small exhibition
- Learn how to edit and publish an artist-book

## **READINGS**

The points of departure for the readings will be our own modular curriculum publication, *Awkward Archives. Ethnographic Drafts for a Modular Curriculum* (Archive books, 2023) which gathers introductions to the archives, a conversation with a practitioner who is responsible for the archive, a visual constellation of the archive, and exercises related to a particular ethnographic methods. Particular readings in relation to all of these different aspects are part of our curriculum as well (including factual texts on the archives themselves, introductory texts to theorising archives, texts on ethnographic methods). Further readings include foundational texts on difficult heritage (e.g. by Sharon Macdonald, Dan Hicks, and Wayne Modest), as well as particular critical introductions to the layered history of Berlin (e.g. Beate Binder, Andrew Webber, John Borneman) and the particular sites involved.

## ASSIGNMENT INFO

### Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
  - a presentation and discussion of one the selected archives in written and visual auditive form as part of our modular book and exhibition presentation and an evaluative conversation with Margareta von Oswald and Jonas Tinius

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

### Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

**Margareta von Oswald** (Phd, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) is a socio-cultural anthropologist and curator, based at the Centre for Anthropological Research for Museums and Heritage, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research is concerned with how people engage with difficult pasts, particularly colonial, in the present. She is currently the Curatorial Research Fellow of Mindscapes, initiated and funded by the Wellcome Trust (UK), an international cultural programme which aims to support a transformation in how we understand, address and talk about mental health. In her first monograph, *Working Through Colonial Collections. An Ethnography of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin*, she discusses the possibilities and limits of engaging with colonialism in ethnological museums. Other publications include *Across Anthropology. Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial* (Leuven University Press, 2020, open-access, edited with Jonas Tinius) and *Engaging Anthropological Legacies* (special issue of *Museum Worlds*, 2018, edited with Henrietta Lidchi and Sharon Macdonald).

**Jonas Tinius** is a socio-cultural anthropologist, scientific coordinator and postdoctoral researcher in cultural anthropology in the ERC project *Minor Universality. Narrative World Production After Western Universalism* at Saarland University. He is an associated researcher at the Centre for Anthropological Research for Museums and Heritage, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he completed a postdoctoral research fellowship funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. His ethnographic research grapples with the tensions between art, migration, public institutions, and difficult heritage in Europe. He has conducted fieldwork in Germany, France, and Italy on institutionalised forms of cultural production (esp. theatres, museums, and art spaces), focusing on the

reflexive agency of artistic and curatorial work. He studied Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, where he also completed his PhD. His first monograph *State of the Arts. An Ethnography of German Theatre and Migration* was published with Cambridge University Press in 2023. Publications include: *Across Anthropology. Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial* (Leuven University Press, 2020, open-access, edited with Margareta von Oswald), *Der fremde Blick. Roberto Ciulli und das Theater an der Ruhr* (Alexander Verlag, 2020, 2 vols., edited with Alexander Wewerka), and *Minor Universality* (de Gruyter, 2023, open-access, edited with Markus Messling).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Meeting 1: Introduction and welcome session**

In this introductory session, we will get to know each other in this class, will give an introduction to the curriculum in the context of our joint fieldwork research on Berlin at CARMAH, and will begin discussing several of the possible sites of interest that students might already know about. For this class, we will provide copies of the publication *Awkward Archives* (2023) so that students can also familiarise themselves with the publication, which serves as a backdrop. The session also serves as a formal introduction to the requirements and course structure.

### **Meeting 2: Theoretical background, key concepts, and historical context**

This seminar will present foundational theoretical texts, key concepts, and historical context to the question of difficult and awkward heritage, heritage politics, archaeological readings of urban space, and the city of Berlin. It will include close reading sessions, text analysis, and group sessions to get a grounding of both theoretical frameworks and historical case studies. The second half of this seminar will also be used to develop a parkour of our field visit and the heritage sites and stakeholders.

### **Block Sessions (Meeting 3): Field visits**

For three intense days, we will visit different difficult heritage sites, meet those who are responsible for them, or work with and against them, and learn in discussion about the problems and frictions that these sites pose. In breakout sessions before, in-between, and after these archival field visits in the city, we will 1) prepare the meetings together with the students, 2) develop the research questions further, and 3) discuss how to take field notes and decide on what kinds of visual documentation will be appropriate for the publication and exhibition.

## Meeting 4: Workshop on field notes and publication

This seminar serves as a writing workshop in which we discuss different ideas for how to turn a field note into a vignette or a story. We will work on condensing material, exchange written drafts, and share examples of persuasive reading, bearing in mind the impact of different styles of writing. We will also plan the logistics of how to produce, design, print, and exhibit the modular book-exhibition.

## Meeting 5: Presentation of the mobile exhibition

Students will develop a panel presentation of different difficult heritage sites, introducing some of the “pages” and “chapters” of the mobile book exhibition.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU’s e-learning platform)

### in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

## EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

**Preparation for lively discussions:** 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:** pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

**Academic guidelines:** Comply with academic integrity policies. Plagiarism in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course.

**Attendance policy:** Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.