

Global Berlin: Toward the Contemporary Art of Postmigration

Winter Semester 2022/23: 17 October 2022 – 18 February 2023

CATEGORY

Migration and Identity

COURSE STRUCTURE

2 contact hours à 45 min per week (winter semester: 16 weeks)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Day: Mo, 12-14 c.t. (12:15 pm – 13.45 pm)

Place

Room 0323-26, Hausvogteiplatz 5-7

COURSE LANGUAGE

The course and class discussions will take place in English. Assigned readings for the class will be in English. Basic or intermediate German (A-/ B-level) is recommended for optional class readings.

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
English B2

German language is helpful for students who wish to do additional course readings.

TARGET GROUP

International exchange students from all disciplines with a strong interest in the course topic. Prior coursework in cultural studies, art history, or film studies can be helpful but is by no means imperative. 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

Exploring recent exhibitions and artworks in the mediums of film, video, photography, and sculpture, this course investigates how artists have produced works that reflect and construct Germany as a postmigrant society. Through a consideration of recent cultural studies and art historical approaches to migration, cultural memory, and postcolonialism, students examine how artists today navigate the history of German colonialism, questions of identity and identification, the themes of commemoration and care, and institutional and personal archives. The course studies artworks and films by artists including Kader Attia, Jean-Ulrick Désert, Candida Höfer, Natasha A. Kelly, and Hito Steyerl.

The course facilitates students' in-person study of artworks in Berlin museums and brings students in direct dialogue with local cultural producers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This undergraduate course introduces students to recent artistic production and exhibition practices in Berlin. Through their engagement with key artistic interventions and ongoing exhibitions, students will be able to reflect critically on recent theoretical debates on Germany as a postmigrant society and associated discourses of migration, cultural memory, and postcolonialism.

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify different approaches to analyzing an artwork, a film, and an art exhibition, and be able to hone these approaches in their writing.

READINGS

Core readings (refer also to individual weeks below):

1. Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
2. Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft*. Transcript, 2016.
3. Peter Chametzky, *Turks, Jews, and other Germans in Contemporary Art*. MIT Press, 2021.
4. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press, 2009.

All readings will be made available on Moodle.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

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

- attend and actively participate in all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)

- come prepared to discuss the week's readings (c. 30-60 pages) and watch the assigned film or video work, in selected weeks,
- complete the following **assignments**:

- i. Submit discussion questions on Moodle for at least three weeks' assigned readings, film, or artwork (of c. 1,500 characters including spaces). The questions must be submitted by 8pm on Sunday prior to the week's seminar meeting.
 - o ii. With prior consultation with the course instructor, submit a written paper of a topic of your choice (of approx. 25,000 characters including spaces) with a bibliography.
 - Or submit a portfolio of several multimodal work performances (eg. audio or video material, internet pages, exhibition or similar).
 - Or give one long presentation (of c. 40 min.) that engages the course material.

Note that the reading load for the course is distributed unevenly on the weeks that we visit the museums. Please plan on completing the assigned readings accordingly.

Non-completion of any of the aforementioned components will result in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

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

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Ying Sze Pek is an art historian who researches global modern and contemporary art. Specializing in the histories of photography and time-based media, her areas of interest include media theory, the history of global art exhibitions, and art in Europe since 1900. She completed her PhD dissertation, "Reality Expanded: The Work of Hito Steyerl, 1998-2015," at the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to Postmigration

The instructor will provide an overview of the course syllabus and requirements. We discuss Fatima El-Tayeb's understanding of postmigration in the context of post-1989 Germany. How do El-Tayeb and other scholars make the case that racism is an overlooked discourse during this period?

In-class viewing of Cana Bilir-Meier's video work *This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past* (2019), which explores the invisibility of structural racism.

Assigned readings:

Selection from Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Selection from Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Further reading:

Selection from Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft*. Transcript, 2016.

Week 2: "Deutsch werden"

We discuss Peter Chametzky's recent theorization of art in Germany as artistic production by "ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse German artists as representatives and representors of German identity" and Fatima El-Tayeb's queer of color understanding of community. With the questions of nationality, identity, and multiculturalism raised by Chametzky and El-Tayeb in mind, we consider artistic interventions in the medium of photography by Candida Höfer, Maziar Moradi, and Andreas Mühe.

Assigned readings:

Selection from Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Selection from Peter Chametzky, *Turks, Jews, and other Germans in Contemporary Art*. MIT Press, 2021.

Week 3: The City and Memory

Discussion of the essay film by Hito Steyerl, *The Empty Center* (1998), which documents the 1990s redevelopment of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz and Tiergarten neighborhoods. Examining how Steyerl excavates forgotten colonial histories and records contemporary racist violence and exclusion, we explore the trope of the city as palimpsest.

Reviewing Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory that reconciles the histories of the Holocaust and of postcolonialism, we probe the understandings of migration and memory that Steyerl evokes.

Assigned film: Hito Steyerl, *Die leere Mitte/The Empty Center* (1998)

Assigned reading:

Selection from Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford University Press, 2003.

Selection from Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press, 2009.

Week 4: The Archive I; Hearing Voices

Discussion of Philip Scheffner's film *The Halfmoon Files*, which draws on Sound Archives of the Humboldt-Universität recordings of colonial soldiers held in captivity in Germany between 1915 and 1918. We pay attention to themes such as the archive, aurality, and narration.

Assigned film: Philip Scheffner, *The Halfmoon Files* (2007).

Assigned reading:

Priyanka Basu, "Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*." *Third Text* 33, no. 6 (November 2019): 727–743.

Week 5: The Post/colonial Museum I; Excursion to the Humboldt Forum

The class meets at the Humboldt Forum, where we consider the politics of heritage, history, and memory intertwined with the Forum's contested site and reconstruction. Studying the Forum's institutional and exhibitionary practices, the class explores ongoing debates surrounding collection and restitution and the production of decolonial epistemologies.

Assigned readings:

Selection from Katrin Sieg, *Decolonizing German and European History at the Museum: Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany*. University of Michigan Press, 2021.

Jonathan Bach, "Brand of Brothers?: The Humboldt Forum and the Myths of Innocence." *German Politics and Society* 39, no. 1 (2021): 100–111.

Selection from *Humboldt Forum: The History of the Site*. Prestel, 2020.

Review the online video "Defund the Humboldt Forum" (2021) and statements (2020–2021) by Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum (<https://ccwah.info>); the online viewing rooms on the Barazani Berlin webpage (<https://barazani.berlin/enter>).

Week 6: The Post/colonial Museum II; Debrief and Conversation

We discuss our impressions of the exhibition and examine contemporary activist responses to the Humboldt Forum. Class discussion with a representative from Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum (TBC).

Assigned readings carry over from the previous week.

Week 7: Postcolonialism and Repair I; Excursion to Martin Gropius Bau

Meeting at the exhibition *On Caring, Repairing and Healing* at the Martin Gropius Bau, we discuss recent approaches to postcolonialism in the exhibited works with a focus on the artist Kader Attia's concept of repair.

Assigned readings:

Kader Attia, "Open Your Eyes: 'La Réparation' in Africa and in the Occident." *Third Text* 32, no. 1 (2018): 16–31.

Kader Attia, "Signs of Reappropriation, 2011." <http://kaderattia.de/signs-of-reappropriation/>

Kim West, "Repair as Redemption or Montage: Speculations on Kader Attia's Ladder of Light [2013]." <http://kaderattia.de/repair-as-redemption-or-montage-speculations-on-kader-attias-ladder-of-light/>.

Week 8: Postcolonialism and Repair II; Debrief

We discuss selected works from the exhibition and the assigned readings.

Assigned readings carry over from the previous week.

Week 9: The Archive II; Listening to Images

Exploration of vernacular photography and the medium of the family photo album in relation to the Afro-German experience under National Socialism (Tina M. Campt) and postwar migration and radicalism (Cana Bilir-Meier). In-class viewing of *Semra Ertan* (2013) by Bilir-Meier.

Assigned readings:

Selection from Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Cana Bilir-Meier, "Nachdenken Über Das Archiv – Notizen Zu Semra Ertan (2013)." *Frauen und Film* 67 (2016): 107–112.

Week 10: How Does the Subaltern Speak German?

Discussion of Candice Breitz's *Alien (Ten Songs from Beyond)* (2002) and Ming Wong's *Lerne deutsch mit Petra von Kant / Learn German with Petra von Kant* (2007). We consider how Breitz's and Wong's video installations address the ways in which language, speech, power, and identity intersect in Germany today.

Assigned readings:

Selection from Chametzky, *Turks, Jews, and Other Germans*.

Lilian Haberer, "Ming Wong's Restaging of Language and Identity," in *Fassbinder Now: Film and Video Art*. Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Filminstitut, 2013, 259-265.

Ming Wong, "Ming Wong on Fassbinder," in *Fassbinder Now*, 266-269.

Week 11: Black Germany I

We investigate the histories and futures of Black feminist cultural production in Germany, discussing Natasha Kelly's 2018 film that documents the work and experience of eight contemporary practitioners.

Assigned film: Natasha A. Kelly, *Milli's Awakening* (2018).

Assigned readings:

Selection from Kelly, *Milli's Awakening: Black Woman, Art and Resistance*. Orlando, 2019.

Selection from Chametzky, *Turks, Jews, and Other Germans*.

Selection from Panos Kompatsiaris, "On the Heroisms of Today." *Third Text* 33, no. 3 (May 2019): 415-430.

Week 12: Black Germany II

Visiting the recently unveiled W.E.B. Du Bois memorial marker at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, which is designed by Jean-Ulrick Désert, we reflect on recent struggles over monuments and notions of commemoration that have involved racial and cultural conflict. Which forms of spectatorship and memory does Désert's work evoke?

Assigned readings:

Selection from Leah Dickerman et al., "A Questionnaire on Monuments." *October* 165 (Summer 2018): 3-177.

Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Looking at One's Self through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition." *African American Review* 34, No. 4 (Winter 2000): 581-599.

Review "W.E.B. Du Bois Memorial Marker at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin" and associated webpages: <https://www.angl.hu-berlin.de/departement/duboismemorial>.

Week 13: Forensic Aesthetics

In-class viewing of Forensic Architecture's video triptych *77sqm_9:26min* (2017), an analysis of the murder of Halit Yozgat by neo-Nazi group National Socialist Underground (NSU) in Kassel. We explore how forensic aesthetics bring into play the modes of perception of events, the interpretation of evidence, and the use of reenactment.

Assigned reading:

Selection from Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. Zone Books, 2017.

Review Forensic Architecture webpage "The Murder of Halit Yozgat": <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-murder-of-halit-yozgat>.

Week 14: Video Time of Migration

We consider how the notion of migration is refracted through technological understandings of time, perception, and memory in Angela Melitopoulos' *Passing Drama* (1999).

Commencement of student presentations.

Assigned film:

Angela Melitopoulos, *Passing Drama* (1999).

Angela Melitopoulos, "Before the Representation." *Transversal*. European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, May 2003.
<https://transversal.at/transversal/1003/melitopoulos/en>.

Week 15: Student Presentations

Continuation of student presentations.

Week 16: Student Presentations

Final student presentations and course wrap-up.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

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

in the event 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 active discussions: be punctual, complete the required readings, and have points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the requirements specified on the course syllabus and submit in a timely manner.

Commitment: pay attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions during class discussions.

Academic guidelines: comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

Attendance policy: students must inform the lecturer in the instances of absence and catch up on missed work in consultation with the lecturer.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 18 August 2022