

Counter-Memoriescapes: Remembrance and Activism in Berlin Public Spaces

Winter Semester 2023/24: 16 October 2023 – 17 February 2024

CATEGORY

Urban Culture and Society

COURSE STRUCTURE

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

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Day: Thursdays, 10 – 12 c.t. (10:15 – 11:45 am)

Place

Room 0323-26, Hausvogteiplatz 5-7

COURSE LANGUAGE

The 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 some of the readings in class.

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

English B1

German A1

TARGET GROUP

The course "Counter-Memoriescapes: Remembrance and Activism in Berlin Public Spaces (1989-now)" is open to international exchange students and domestic students from various academic backgrounds. It explores Berlin's remembrance culture through a trans- and cross-disciplinary approach. The course examines the interplay between activism, art, and public remembrance, delving into the complexities of collective memory and its contested nature in the city. The course fosters an inclusive and collaborative learning environment, welcoming

students with or without prior knowledge in relevant disciplines (geography, art, architecture, urban studies, sociology, history, political theory). By exploring the dynamics of remembrance culture and examining activist and artistic interventions, students gain a deeper understanding of Berlin's history and its divergent narratives, accessing moments of conflict in the city's history. Participants will acquire basic skills to research remembrance processes and understand which actors fought for which kinds of histories to be remembered, and why. Therefore, students would be able to apply the methodology developed in class in any other urban context.

The course requires active participation in each session during the semester, including multiple on-site visits in Berlin. International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic are invited to apply. 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

In a city so deeply marked by its history, the institutionalized processes of collective memory have faced continuous challenges from anti-, non-, and para-institutional forces. Who and how decides what needs to be publicly remembered? How do these decisions shape our understanding of Berlin's past and present?

This course explores the dynamic interplay between activism, art, and public remembrance in Berlin from 1989 to nowadays. Through mixed methods and practice-based research, the course delves into the spatial politics that shape the social significance of public spaces in relation to our collective past, and analyzes the current strategies employed by different organizations to contest official memory practices up until today. The course includes planning site visits, engaging with present organizations and initiatives and producing a critical reflection on our role as active participants in shaping public memory.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The objective of this Bachelor- and Master-level course is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of processes of collective remembrance, taking advantage of the course location in Berlin. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Engage into discussions related with public remembrance and urban spatial politics.
- Understand the backdrop stories of selected monuments and memory-sites of Berlin through site visits
- Apply mixed methods to their learning processes and engage with non-academic actors.

Academic/Transferable Skills

- Analysis and critical reflection skills and methods with regards to historization, collective memorialization, cultures and contingencies of remembrance and urban space

- Experience navigating through different levels of institutionalization and become self-aware of their position within academia.
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- Competencies
- Read the most current theoretical and empirical research on the topic of cultural memory and memorialization
- Apply relevant theories and concepts in independent work to analyze new problems and policy proposals
- Research through mixed methods and work with qualitative research
- Learn with, through and from activist organizations and civic society initiatives, developing a para-academic experience of the city

READINGS

- Aguirre, A. A. (2010). Memory And Spatial Practices: An Introduction. *Cultural Geographies*, 17(2), 151-156.
- Barthel, Martin (2017). Artistic Interventions And Pockets Of Memory On The Former Wall Strip In Berlin. In: *The Impact Of Artists On Contemporary Urban Development In Europe*, Edited By Monika Murzyn-Kupisz And Jarosław Działek, 123:281–97.
- Berger, S., & Olick, J. K. (2021). A Cultural History Of Memory.
- Burchardt, M. (2016). The Right To The City And The Role Of Activist Art In Post-Wall Berlin. *Interartive*, 81.
- Stumbling upon history: collective memory and the urban landscape Author(s): Mary Rachel Gould and Rachel E. Silverman Source: *GeoJournal* , 2013, Vol. 78, No. 5 (2013), pp. 791-801 Published by: Springer Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42002548>
- Marchart, O. (2019). *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism And The Public Sphere*. Sternberg Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Memory, History, Forgetting*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Viol, M. (2016). *Collective Memory And Identity Narratives At The 20th And 25th Anniversary Events Of The Fall Of The Berlin Wall* [Napier University].
- Zebracki, M., & Leitner, R. (2022). Queer Monuments: Visibility, (Counter)Actions, Legacy. *Journal Of Homosexuality*, 69(8), 1342–1371.

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, including reading the mandatory texts for each session.

- actively participate on the practice sessions (9.11, 30.11, 21.12)
- hand in the final **assignment**: Collective walk

Each student should organize a short presentation problematizing a specific topic on a related location in Berlin-Mitte. The presentations can be performed in groups (two or three students) or individually. Students will do the presentation to the rest of the group through a 10 minutes guided walk on the location selected, making use of the methodologies explained in class (storytelling, performance, intervention, documentation). The presentation should be complemented with an explanatory text approx. 2,500 characters with references and bibliography. Alternatively, students not having the capacity to participate on the walk have the option to expose their presentation through a written paper of approx. 25,000 characters, including spaces (bibliography not included for characters account.)

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

Assessment Components

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

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Pablo Santacana López is a visual artist, researcher and architectural designer co-founder of Spanish art collective Vendedores de Humo and member of Berlin-based platform decolonizeM21 and Contextual Research. He is a current PhD candidate at the GraduiertenKolleg "Identity and Heritage" at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar.

Zoë Ritts is an architect and artist, working between design, research, and community-engaged projects. She is a founding member of the Architektur-In-Residency Verein and a lecturer at the Technische Universität München in the Department of Architecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE

2 hours à 45 min per week (16 weeks)

Christmas Break from 25 December 2023 and 5 January 2024

Module 1: Introduction

- Understanding memoryscapes and their significance in urban spaces
- Introduction to counter-memoryscape concept and theoretical foundations

Session 1: Introduction to the course and overview

Module 2: Collective Memory and Commemorative Practices

- Historical overview of Berlin's memoryscape and its transformations

- The role of collective memory in constructing public remembrance
- Analysis of official commemorative practices and their impact on memory politics

Session 2: Introduction to spatial politics and the right to the city

- Theoretical contextualization and discussion of content and methodologies

Session 3: Spatial politics of public memory and collective remembrance

Theoretical contextualization and discussion of content and methodologies

Session 4: Short presentations and discussion on Concepts

Student presentations

Assignment:

- Prepare a short presentation on one of the introduced conceptual terms from the previous week's cited examples and assigned readings.

Module 2: Activist Interventions in Public Remembrance

- Analyzing different art forms, including street art, installations, and performance art
- Case studies of alternative and marginalized forms of memory and commemoration
- Exploring activist strategies and tactics in contesting dominant narratives
- Investigating the relationship between memory, space, and place
- Ethical considerations and challenges in activist engagements with memory

Session 5: Towards a queer-feminist counter-memorial practice

Guest lecture at a memorial site in Berlin

Session 6: Towards a decolonial counter-memorial practice

Guest lecture at a memorial site in Berlin

Session 7: Short presentations and discussion on Methods

Student presentations

Assignment:

- Prepare a short presentation on one of the introduced counter-memorial methods from the previous week's cited examples and assigned readings.

Session 8: Berlin Memory Sites and counter-memorial practices I

Presentation and discussion of concrete case studies

Session 9: Berlin Memory Sites and counter-memorial practices II

Presentation and discussion of concrete case studies

Session 10: Short presentations and discussion on Topics

Student presentations

- Prepare a short presentation on one of the introduced topics from the previous week's cited examples and assigned readings.

Module 3: Student Research

- Exploring the significance of specific urban sites and memorials in Berlin
- Considering the impact of gentrification and urban development on memoryscapes
- Guided research on a chosen case study of a counter-memoryscape in Berlin
- Independent analysis and synthesis of theoretical and empirical materials
- Oral presentations of research findings and critical reflections

Session 11: Oranienplatz as counter-memoryscape (presentation)

Theoretical approach to the research topic

Session 12: Oranienplatz as counter-memoryscape (site visit)

Empirical approach to the research topic

Session 13: Final project preparation and guidance

Assignment: Present proposals for the final collective walk.

Session 14: Final presentations of collective walk projects (option A) or paper presentations (option B)

Assignment: Present final projects to the group.

Session 15: Final presentations of collective walk projects (option A) or paper presentations (option B)

Assignment: Present final projects to the group.

Module 5: Conclusions

Session 16: Wrap-up and course reflection. Critical analysis of remembrance culture beyond Berlin

Resume from final presentations and reflection on a global perspective.

Assignment: Discussion and reflection about final presentations between participants.

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. See **ZSP-HU** (Fächerübergreifende Satzung zur Regelung von Zulassung, Studium und Prüfung der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **§ 111** (Täuschung).

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

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 23 August 2023