



Nature Writing from Goethe to the Present Looking at a – broken – tradition in German Language Literature

Fall Term 2024: 2 September – 13 December 2024
(break: 21-25 October 2024)

CATEGORY

Literature and Art

COURSE STRUCTURE

3 contact hours à 45 min per week (14 weeks)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Day: Thursday, 9:00 am – 11.30 am

Place

Schönhauser Allee 10, 10119 Berlin
Room 1.23

COURSE LANGUAGE

English

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. Humboldt Perspectives Study Abroad courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees.

CREDITS = 6 ECTS

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Germany is well-known for its discourses on nature if we look at philosophy or if we think of environmental politics. But is there also a significant tradition of Nature Writing in the literary field (like there is in English language literature)? For a long time, scholars would have denied this and would have argued about the reasons for this phenomenon. Not until recently there have been new academic and publishing endeavors to identify a – broken – tradition of Nature Writing in German language literature and also to acknowledge innovative contributions to the Genre in contemporary writing. In this course we will read and discuss different concepts and different examples of Nature Writing from the time of Romanticism until today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The objective of this course is to make students acquaintant with the questions and defintions of Nature Writing in general and with the literary traditions of writing about nature in German language specifically. At the end of the course students should have an overview of approaches and ways to write about nature and of the main changes in the relation between human and nature during the past 200 years. They will have deepened their knowledge concerning literary periods and genres, will have sharpened their skills in analyzing literature and discussing theoretical positions concerning the topic.

READINGS

See course schedule

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 6 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 80% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
 - an oral presentation of fifteen to twenty minutes
 - a written paper of 8 to 10 pages at the end of the course, an exposé before the break

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.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Marita Meyer studied Germanic Philology, Philosophy and History of Art in Heidelberg, where she obtained her doctor's degree in 2000 with a book on Peter Weiss and questions of representing the Holocaust. She worked as a lecturer at Yale University in 2000/01 and as a lecturer for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the University of Szczecin (Poland) from 2001 to 2006. Since 2007, she has been teaching German literature and culture at Freie Universität Berlin, where she was head of the Master's program „Deutsch als Fremdsprache: Kulturvermittlung“ from 2013 to 2015. Since 2018 she teaches as Guest Professor at Middlebury College, Vermont, and since Fall 2022 also in the International Program of Humboldt University. Her recent research and publications focus on the discourses of globalisation and ecology in art and literature.

COURSE SCHEDULE

3 hours à 45 min per week

Week 1: Introduction

Presentation of concept and expectations, readings, assignments, excursions

Week 2: Definitions and Traditions of Nature Writing

- Gabriele Dürbeck/Christine Kanz: "Is there a German language Nature Writing? Broken traditions and international connections" (2024)
- Goethe: "Wanderer's Night Song" (1780)

Week 3: Nature and Romanticism

- Novalis: "The Novices at Sais" (1802)

Week 4: Narrating Science

- Alexander v. Humboldt: "Views of Nature" (1807)

Week 5: Nature Paintings of Caspar David Friedrich

- Excursion: Alte Nationalgalerie

Week 6: Women and Nature in the 19th century

- Annette von Droste-Hülshoff: "By the tower" (1842)

Week 7: The Human-Animal Relations in Modernity

- Franz Kafka: "Report to an Academy" (1917)

BREAK: 21 – 25 October 2024

Week 8: Talking about Trees

- Bertolt Brecht: "To those born after" (1939)
- Sarah Kirsch: "Trees" (1965)

Week 9: Environmental Issues

- Christa Wolf: "Accident" (1987)

Week 10: Environmental Issues (2)

- H. M. Enzensberger: "Mediocrity and Delusion" (1988)

Week 11: Natural Science and Fiction

- Judith Schalansky: The Giraffe's Neck (2011)

Week 12: On Darwinism and on Socialdarwinism

- Judith Schalansky: The Giraffe's Neck (2)

Week 13: Urban Nature

- Excursion: Tiergarten and Gleisdreieckpark

Week 14: Conclusions

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, especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct. 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.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 20.12.2023