



GS/HS/SO335: GENDER DISCOURSES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION:

Gender is, and always has been, a topic of debate. This course examines key concepts, theories, and developments of gender as played out in German history from the late 18th to the 21st centuries. Viewed through a constructionist lens, analyzing “gender debates” will help us understand the ways in which gender and sexual identities are socially and discursively constructed rather than being essential or biological. The course will focus on Berlin, which has always been a laboratory of political, social, and cultural trends. It was the “birthplace of homosexuality”, as the central concepts were developed and fought against here. In the 19th century it mirrored the ambivalences of modernity by hosting several emancipation movements and counter movements. The fight for suffrage and women’s emancipation was surrounded by decades of debate and political fights. Berlin became the site of the world’s first institute of sexual science, where a. o. transsexual identities were recognized for the first time in history. The 1960s brought the fight for sexual and gender liberation to Berlin’s streets. In the 1920s and again today, Berlin has become Europe’s queer capital, hosting Europe’s first queer museum and numerous queer festivals. At the same time, a political backlash seems to bring back “völkische” gender ideologies and diversity is again being questioned.

The course combines both a longitudinal and a cross-sectional perspective: along a historic axis, it looks at important discourses of the intertwined history and politics of gender during successive periods – Prussia, the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, NS-Germany and WWII, the post-WW II period with West Germany and the GDR, unified Germany and contemporary Berlin. A central question here is: what do the respective gender politics of a society tell us about its norms and values? In the cross-sectional perspective we will analyze gender representations in the arts, media, film and marketing- and we will talk to representatives of different (religious) communities and activists.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Discussions, Presentations, Field trips, Film screenings.

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English

ADDITIONAL COST: None

PREREQUISITES: None

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will have knowledge of major concepts and topics of the politics of gender. Researching German history from a comparative perspective they will develop an understanding of the historical context and construction of gender norms. In addition, students will learn important gender studies methodologies that are also relevant for their major (and minor) fields of research, e.g. breaking down dichotomies, going beyond preconceived notions and addressing topics in an open and innovative manner.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Participation (10 %)
- Presentations (15%)
- Reflection Paper (20 %)
- Midterm exam (25%)
- Final paper (30%)

Participation

Reading of the required literature/ watching of required films is mandatory, reading questions will guide you (on moodle available for each session). Participate actively in classroom discussion and working groups. Participation grade is based on your reading of

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the literature and your questions. Students will be asked to work with specific material, including preparing questions that lead into discussion. The grading rubric for participation is available on Moodle.

Presentations

There are 2 short presentations in this course: Each student will present (approx. 7-10 minutes) a Gender concept/term and a biography that is linked to Berlin and German Gender History. Terms are presented in the Gender Theory Salon, biographies throughout the semester fitting to session topic. Students choose their presentations within the first 2 weeks. Presentations include visual material and your own theses. Students also prepare a paper hand-out for the other students for the salon. (1 page).

Reflection Paper

A short reflection paper (appr. 1.500 words) on one of the academic field trips, films or book we discussed in class. Please note: The reflection paper is working with fresh memory and your gender expertise: The paper is due one week after the respective field trip, film, or event. The short paper reflects your learning experience, it connects the Gender terms we discussed and your personal viewpoint with analysis of your chosen material and should take the form of a review.

Midterm Exam

Written take home exam. Connected to the readings and the topics discussed in class, 50 % of the grade are based on your knowledge of the material, 50 % on essay questions related to your experience and your engagement with the topic.

Final Paper

The term paper is meant to be a research project on students' interests. It can take different formats, it can be an academic essay or journal, or a (group) presentation, discussing a topic of choice connected to Berlin and/or Germany's Gender History: e.g. first wave feminism in Berlin, or the LGBTI movement in the GDR, queer nightlife 2022 in Berlin and Barcelona... with correct referencing. Length of paper approx. 3.000 words. Students are expected to discuss their topic with the instructor beforehand and hand in an expose of appr. ½ page. The expose makes 25 % of the final grade and is due the session following midterm. Group work welcome.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Please refer to IES Abroad Berlin's "Attendance and Exam Policy": <https://moodle.iesabroad.org/mod/page/view.php?id=1004317>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code. Assigned papers need to be properly and amply footnoted where appropriate, with all sources attributed, including images. Suspicious papers may be checked with plagiarism-detecting software.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments (Reading, homework, project due dates, exams)
1: GENDER MATTERS...	Gender Scandals and Norms Making and discussing alternative timelines Introduction, explanation of syllabus and assignments, expectations of participants	No reading required Iconic gender pictures analyzed in class. <i>Bring an open mind and your questions!</i>

2: Between Ideology, Gender-War, and everyday life: setting the discourse arena 2025	Recent gender debates in Germany and the US and their framework	Judith Butler: Introduction: Gender Ideology and the Fear of Disctruction: in dies: Who is afraid of Gender? 2024 Video: Who is afraid of Gender Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam in Conversation (2024), at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChLv2wK0Eqs Video: German Identity Law passes Parliament 2024: https://www.dw.com/en/gender-identity-law-passes-in-german-parliament/a-68800054 Dominic Schmitz et al : Linguistic intersections of language and gender, of gender bias and gender fairness (2025), Berlin/Boston, excerpts
3: Gender and Queer Representations in Art	Visit to recent art exhibition /f.e. Fotografiska, International Art Museum , Berlin Branch with a focus on queer art	
4: Gender Representations in Berlin in Film in 2025	Visit to Berlin Queer Festival (Fall) or Berlinale Film Festival (Spring)	
5: The “Invention of Homosexuality” and the Eulenburg Scandal	The History of § 175; Definitions of Masculinities and Homosexuality in 19th century (imperial) Germany and Berlin	Domeier, Norman (2014): “The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics before World War I.” In: Central European History, 47, 737-759. Beachy, Robert (2015): “Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity”, Intro and Chapter 1, New York, Vintage Books.
6: SEX: JEWISH POSITIONS	Jewish Perspectives and Debates on Gender Roles and Sexual Identities Guided Tour the Jewish Museum Berlin, Debate	Prepare with the Feature online and the Jewish LGBTI Glossary: the Interview with Talli Rosenbaum: Sex is a Force (Berlin 2024): https://www.jmberlin.de/en/interview-talli-rosenbaum Debora Antman: LGBTQI an anecdotal glossary (2024), at: https://www.jmberlin.de/en/anecdotal-glossary-lgbtqi https://www.jmberlin.de/en/feature-sex Bring questions for our guide!
7: From PRUSSIA’S PINK BRAINS to Neurosexims Historical discourse on “Frauenstudium”, femininity and the female vote 1860-1918!	First wave of feminism Women’s access to academia and scientific knowledge, the fight for equal opportunities and suffrage	https://www.dw.com/en/how-german-women-obtained-the-right-to-vote-100-years-ago/a-46256939 Mazón, Patricia M (2003) "'Our Universities are Men's Universities'. The Debate Over Women's Admission 1865-1900". In: Mazón: Gender and the Modern Research University.

		The Admission of Women to German Higher Education, 1865-1914, Stanford, 85-95, 106-114. Hedwig Dohm (1876): Excerpts from: Der Frauen Natur und Recht. Women's Nature and Rights. Concerning the Women's Question, Two Treatises on the Character and Suffrage of Women]. Berlin, 1876. Optional: Leia Jekel: Understanding Neurosexism (2022), at: https://www.thewomens.network/blog/understanding-neurosexism-where-are-we-today
8: THE "NEW WOMAN: Gender and Politics after the "Golden Twenties" in Germany and internationally Discourses on Women in the public sphere	Continuities and change between 1918 and 1933 The Female Flaneur then and now Pop up Exhibit in class: bring an iconic image of "The New Woman"!	Watch: Symphony of a Great City (1929) (clips, on Moodle) Carol Schmid: The 'New Woman' Gender Roles and Urban Modernism in Interwar Berlin and Shanghai. Journal of International Women's Studies, 2014, 15(1), 1-16. Gleber, Anke. "Female Flanerie and the Symphonie of the City." In Women in the metropolis: gender and modernity in Weimar culture, edited by Katharina von Ankum, 67-88 New Woman, New World, Exploring the Vision of femininity in Weimar Republic. https://retrospectjournal.com/2021/11/21/new-woman-new-world-exploring-the-vision-of-femininity-in-weimar-republic/ https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jul/29/female-flaneur-women-reclaim-streets OPTIONAL: Lybeck, Marti M. (2014): Desiring Emancipation. New Women and Homosexuality in Germany, 1890-1933, SUNY PRESS, New York, 151-88
9: "Das Dritte Geschlecht": Magnus Hirschfeld, The Berlin "Institute for Sexual Science" and the fight for a "Third Gender"	History of Sexual Science and Transgender Politics in Berlin 19th-21st century	Beachy, Robert (2015): "Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity". New York, Vintage Books. pp. 160-186 Adrian Muphy: Pioneering sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (June 24, 2022) at: https://www.europeana.eu/de/blog/pioneering-sexologist-magnus-hirschfeld Intersex. Redefining Gender (2019), DW-Doku, at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0k31FURJPg Hirschfeld, Magnus [1868-1935] (2006). "Selections from The transvestites: the erotic drive to cross-dress." In The Transgender studies reader, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, Taylor&Francis 2006, S. 28-30, 35-39

10: "I am my own wife": Transgender Existence under Three Different German Regimes	Visit to Home and Museum of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf	
11 & 12: Salon Gender Theory The discursive development on the ideology of the separate spheres and its aftermath	Theoretical concepts for analyzing gender in historical perspective The (Berlin) Salon as historical format for Gender Debate and Double Emancipation around 1800	Pick and prepare your concept from: Pilcher, Jane (2016 and 2004) and Imelda Whelehan. Key concepts in gender studies, SAGE key concepts. London: SAGE COMPARE with: UNESCO Glossary (2022): Understanding concepts around gender equality and inclusion in education, at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380971 And glossaries of your home universities! Student presentations in the salon
MIDTERMS		
13: NS BODY POLITICS Gendered rhetoric an Nazi Body concepts and its aftermath today	Body and Sexual Politics in NS Germany and their visual representations NS Propaganda, Eugenics Recent Far-Right Gender Politics in Germany and USA	Watch: Leni Riefenstahl: "Olympia"(Intro 20 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHN8Jwku1Nc Berg, Lynn (2019): Between Anti-Feminism and Ethnicized Sexism. Far-Right Gender Politics in Germany. In: Fielitz, Thurston: Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right. Bielefeld: 2009, 79–91. Bridenthal, Renate et al. (1984): "Introduction: women in Weimar and Nazi Germany." In: When biology became destiny: women in Weimar and Nazi Germany, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, 1- 32. New York 1984. Sontag, Susan (1974): Fascinating Fascism, in: New York Review of Books, February 6 (26 pages) Optional: Adelheid von Saldern (2009): Innovative Trends in Women's and Gender Studies of the National Socialist Era, in: German History 2009, vol. 27, p. 84-102
14: Gender, Race, Persecution, and Agency	Re/Evaluation of selected intersectional biographies: Regina Jonas and Gad Beck Walk of IES Diverse Neighborhood, Potential Visit to Otto Weidt Museum/Queer Holocaust Memorial	Hájková, Anna (2019): Queer History and the Holocaust, in LGBTQ, Modern Europe, Sexual Labour, Sexual Violence, January, 5 pages Janin Afken (2022): Myth of the Homosexual Subculture. In: Berlin, in: Queer Jewish Lives between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine, Berlin transcript 2021, 77-98 Optional: Sinclair, Stefanie (2013): Regina Jonas: forgetting and remembering the first female rabbi, in: Religion 43:4, 541-563 Watch, prepare:

		https://sfi.usc.edu/video/gad-beck-rescuing-his-lover-manfred-lewin https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/collections-highlights/do-you-remember-when/cover
15: Gender/ed Agency and (Queer) Safe Spaces in Troubled Times	Visit to the Ibn Rushd-Goethe Moschee, first queer mosque in Europe	Prepare by reading up on this unique space: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/22/world/europe/germany-muslims-seyran-ates.html
16: Queer Ideas!	Office Hours (in nearby Café)	Talk about your final project (exposes due this week)
17: What is a Schwules* Museum?	Redefinitions of gay and queer identity in the 20 th and 21 st century Visit and Tour: The 1 st Queer Museum in Europe!	Prepare with recent material on Moodle and online quiz. Readings: • www.schwules-museum.de • Online Exhibition: QUEER as German Folk: https://www.goethe.de/ins/us/de/kul/wir/swl.html?t_sc=usa_queer
18: Gender in East and West I: West: The Sexual R/Evolution	The sexual and political revolutions in West German and their aftermath Emancipation Movements 2 nd wave feminisms in Berlin and internationally	Herzog, Dagmar (1998): "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together": Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany, in: Critical Inquiry 24, 393-444.
19: Gender in East and West II: East: "Models or Misfits"	Gender and Film; Gender Roles; Fe/Male Sexuality and Film in the GDR Film screening and debate	Rinke, Andreas (1999): "From Models to Misfits: Women in DEFA Films of the 1970s and 1980s." In: DEFA: East German cinema, 1946-1992, edited by Sean D. Allan and John Sandford. 183-203 Brandon Dennis, David: "Coming Out into Socialism, Heiner Carow's Third Way." In: Terry Ginsberg/Andrea Mensch: A Companion to German Cinema 2012, pp.55-65, 74-77 Film screening and discussion WATCH BEFORE CLASS EITHER Heiner Carow: "Paul & Paula"(1972) / OR: "Coming out" (1989) (DEFA-movies, with English subtitles)
20: Gender Politics Towards Tomorrow I Intersectionality and Pluralities	Gender, Ethnicity, Inclusion, Recent Gender Identity Discourses on the example of the Afro-German	Florvil, Tiffany N. (2020): Mobilizing Black Germany: Audre Lorde and German Women. In: Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement, Champaign, University of

	Women's movement.	Illionois Press 2020 Silvia Wijczewski: Racism and its intersection with class and gender, in dies: Afrodiasporic Identities in Germany Life-Stories of Millennial Women, Berlin: transcript 2024, p. 133-145
21: Gender Politics Towards Tomorrow II The international debate on feminist foreign politics Intersectionality and Pluralities	Feminist Politics, Fe/Male Roles and Gleichstellung EXCURSION AND TALK TO Political Gender Representative	Prepare Questions for the Meeting and send Questions to Instructor beforehand https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/feminist-development-policy (read about the ministry's new strategy 2023) https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/46514/a-socialist-handbook-for-intra-party-feminism Recent instagram posts of MP to be on Moodle
22: Queer Pop Queer Future? Discussing Gender Utopias		Bettina Papenburg und Kathrin Dreckmann: Introducing Queer Pop, in : 1-20.
FINALS (term paper and projects due at the end of the finals week)		

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an integral part of this class. These are envisaged:

- "Schwules Museum" (Gay Museum)
- Optional: "Gründerzeitmuseum" – home and museum of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf
- Memorial To The Persecuted Homosexuals Under Nationalsocialism
- Queer Representation: Recent Theatre Production /Queer Film Festival
- Gender and Feminism on Screen: Visit to Berlin Film Festival
- Recent queer art exhibit or cultural history exhibit (Fotografiska, c/o Berlin...)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Janin Afken (2022): Myth of the Homosexual Subculture. In: Berlin, in: Queer Jewish Lives between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine, Berlin transcript 2021, 77-98
- Ankum, Katharina von (1997): Introduction, in: Ankum, Katharina von (ed.): Women in the Metropolis, Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture, UC Press.
- Beachy, Robert (2015): "Gay Berlin. Birthplace of a Modern Identity". New York, Vintage Books, 3-41; 160-186.
- Berg, Lynn: Between Anti-Feminism and Ethnicized Sexism: Far-Right Gender Politics in Germany. In: Maik Fielitz, Nick Thurston (Hg.): Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US. Bielefeld: transcript 2019, S. 79–91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/12376>.
- Brandon Dennis, David: "Coming Out into Socialism, Heiner Carow's Third Way." In: Terry Ginsberg/Andrea Mensch: A Companion to German Cinema 2012, 55-65, 74-77.
- Bridenthal, Renate et al. (1984): "Introduction: women in Weimar and Nazi Germany." In: When biology became destiny: women in Weimar and Nazi Germany, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, 1-32. New York 1984.
- Buckley-Zistel/ Annika Björkdahl (2017): Memorials and Transitional Justice, in Olivera Simic (ed.): Understanding Transitional Justice. Routledge, 2017, pp. 249–268.
- Dohm, Hedwig (1876): Excerpts from: Der Frauen Natur und Recht. Women's Nature and Rights. Concerning the Women's Question, Two Treatises on the Character and Suffrage of Women]. Berlin, 1876.
- Domeier, Norman (2014): "The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics before World War I." In:

Central European History, 47, 737-759.

- European Parliament (2015): The Policy of Gender Equality in Germany, Brussels
- Florvil, Tiffany N. (2020): Mobilizing Black Germany: Audre Lorde and German Women. In: Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement, Champaign, University of Illinois Press 2020
- Giersdorf, Jens Richard (2006): "Why does Charlotte von Mahlsdorf curtsy? Representations of National Queerness in a Transvestite Hero." In: GLQ (Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies) 12:2, S. 171-196
- Gleber, Anke (1997): "Female Flanerie and the Symphonie of the City". In: Ankum, Katharina von (eds.): Women in the Metropolis, Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture, UC Press, 67-88
- Hájková, Anna (2019): Queer History and the Holocaust, in LGBTQ, Modern Europe, Sexual Labour, Sexual Violence, January, 5 pages (<http://notchesblog.com/2019/01/22/queer-history-and-the-holocaust/>)
- Herzog, Dagmar (1998): "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together": Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany, in: Critical Inquiry 24, 393-444.
- Hirschfeld, Magnus [1868-1935] (2006). "Selections from The transvestites: the erotic drive to cross-dress." In The Transgender studies reader, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, Taylor&Francis 2006, S. 28-30, 35-39
- Lower, Wendy (2013): Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields, HMH, Boston, 120-144.
- Lybeck, Marti M. (2014): Desiring Emancipation. New Women and Homosexuality in Germany, 1890-1933, SUNY PRESS, New York, 151-188
- Mazón, Patricia M (2003) "'Our Universities are Men's Universities'. The Debate Over Women's Admission 1865-1900". In: Mazón: Gender and the Modern Research University. The Admission of Women to German Higher Education, 1865-1914, Stanford, 85-95, 106-114.
- Pilcher, Jane (2004) and Imelda Whelehan. Fifty key concepts in gender studies, SAGE key concepts. London: SAGE
- Rinke, Andreas (1999): "From Models to Misfits: Women in DEFA Films of the 1970s and 1980s." In: DEFA: East German cinema, 1946-1992, edited by Sean D. Allan and John Sandford, New York, pp.183-203
- Roig, Emilia (2017): Uttering "race" in colorblind France and post-racial Germany. In: Karim Fereidooni und Meral El: Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen, Springer VS, 2017, doi:10.1007/978-3-658-14721-1_36, S. 613-627.
- Saldern, Adelheid von: Innovative Trends in Women's and Gender Studies of the National Socialist Era, in: German History 2009, vol. 27, p. 84-102
- Sinclair, Stefanie (2013): Regina Jonas: forgetting and remembering the first female rabbi, in: Religion 43:4, 541-563.
- Sontag, Susan (1974): Fascinating Fascism, in: New York Review of Books, February 6 (26 pages), <http://marcuse.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/classes/33d/33dTexts/SontagFascinFascism75.htm>
- UNESCO Glossary (2022): Understanding concepts around gender equality and inclusion in education, at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380971>

OPTIONAL READING:

- Ayim, May et.al (1992): Showing our Colours. Afro-German Women speak out, Amherst.
- Bryson, Valerie. (2016). "Marxist Feminism in Germany and Russia". In V. Bryson. *Feminist Political Theory. 3rd Edition*. London: Palgrave, 2016, pp.104-120.
- Hilberg, Raul (1992): Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945, Harper Perennial, 126-131.

FILM & THEATRE

- Jochen Hicks Queer Exile Berlin (2023)
- 2024 Ugly Ducklings (Bastian Kraft)
- Heiner Carow: Paul & Paula (1972)
- Heiner Carow: Coming out (1989)
- Leni Riefenstahl: Olympia (1936)
- Bob Fosse: Cabaret (1972)
- Walther Ruttmann: Symphony Of A Great City (1927), clips on moodle
- Anders als die Anderen (first gay movie ever, 1919)
- Doug Wright: I am my own wife (theater performance), e.g. <https://youtu.be/vq8JD6OfcQU> or <https://youtu.be/AWZzRVW9OcY>



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