



LT 415 - CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE THROUGH A SOCIAL LENS

IES Abroad Freiburg

DESCRIPTION:

This seminar will examine how burning social issues are discussed in contemporary German literature. What differences and similarities can we identify and what possible explanations exist? Students will question assumptions about German and American culture by engaging with various literary texts, plays, lectures or films.

The course explores how fictional literature depicts people and societies from certain perspectives, focusing on the following themes: migration, gender equality and climate change. We will discuss whether and by what means literary inquiry into these issues can and should influence socio-political discourse and bring about new perspectives within society as a whole. Three course-related trips will provide a current outlook through visits to the theater or cinema. In addition to lectures and readings, panel discussions will also provide a dialogue on course-related topics. Students will discover the diversity of contemporary German literature and gain deeper insights into current social discourses. They will learn to reflect on the current handling of migration, climate change and gender equality within a German context, also in comparison to the USA, and connect them with their own experiences. They will develop a more comprehensive understanding of their own perceptions, beliefs and behaviors, which may serve as a guidepost in an ever-changing modern world.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: German

PREREQUISITES: one college level German area studies course or by digression of faculty

ADDITIONAL COST: Faßbender, Pauline: Liebes Patriarchat, paperback, 10 €.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, discussion of readings, and course-related trips.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation – 10 %
- Reflective Journals (3 entries) – 15 %
- Midterm Exam – 20 %
- Field Study Report – 15 %
- Oral Presentation – 20 %
- Final Exam – 20 %

Course Participation – ##%

Students are expected to participate in debates with questions related to the readings and Students are required to complete all reading assignments and will be expected to demonstrate this through regularly assigned homework, pop quizzes, and/or insightful and relevant contributions to in-class discussion. All these components will count toward the class participation grade. Participation also applies to course-related trips, outings and/or special events in and around Freiburg. A rubric for participation is available in the appendix and on Moodle.

Reflective Journals (3 entries) – 15 %

Self-reflection is essential to developing one's understanding of the use of language and acting within diverse settings. Entries are directed assignments that require students to reflect on their experience in class, readings, and films. Journal entries (600 words) are to be completed by the due date and sent via email.



Midterm Exam – 20 %

(90 minutes) The midterm will be held midway through the semester and will focus on the contents of the required readings and the classroom sessions up to that point in the course. Questions will include short essays, asking students to analyze, interpret and elaborate on texts and contexts, as discussed in class.

Field Study Report – 15 %

After each of the three field trips, students are required to write a short report (350 words) that encourages them to reflect, review what they have learned, and critically relate it to the course content. There are guiding questions.

Oral Presentation – 20 %

(10 minutes) Individual in-class presentation on a course-related topic, supported by visual aids in the form of PowerPoint slides or Prezi and followed by a brief question and answer session. It will assess students' capacity to arrange and present information in a clear, coherent, and effective way. A list of presentation topics will be distributed in advance and assigned to individual sessions. A draft of the presentation needs to be submitted two days prior to the presentation. Students may also find a course-related topic on their own, with approval from the instructor. A rubric for oral presentations is available on Moodle.

Final Exam – 20 %

The final exam will be a comprehensive assessment of all topics. Students will have 90 minutes to complete the exam in class, which will consist of essay questions dealing with topics from the entire course. Detailed instructions on the content of the final exam will be distributed in advance. Questions will include short essays, asking students to analyze, interpret and elaborate on texts and contexts, as discussed in class.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- define characteristics of German literature in regard to migration, gender equality and climate change.
- discuss and identify the complexities of migration, gender equality and climate change, both within a literary context as well as the broader German socio-political context.
- determine which text types and which literary devices are appropriate for these topics.
- evaluate the emotional impact of literary representations of complex social issues on readers.
- explain key challenges for the handling of current socio-political issues in prose, poetry and drama.
- analyze ways in which literary representations of migration, gender equality and climate change can impact social discourse.
- express their own perceptions, beliefs and behaviors related to these topics and how they can shape our modern world.
- critique the course readings in the light of the discussed themes: migration, gender equality and climate change.

Attendance Policy

IES Abroad courses are designed to utilize the unique contribution of the instructor; the lecture/discussion format is regarded as the **primary mode of instruction**. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Any unexcused absence will incur a penalty on your final course grade. Deductions from grades due to absences are based on sessions (= 90 minutes). Any unexcused absence will incur a penalty on your final course grade (1 absence - 1%, 2nd absence -2%, 3rd absence – 3%).

Any student who has more than three (3) unexcused absences will receive an "F" as the final grade in the course. Any student who misses more than 25% of a course, whether the absences are excused or are unexcused, will receive an "F" as the final grade in the course. Students in the LAS program can excuse themselves once per course - to do so, they must notify the instructor and the Academic Dean in writing by e-mail before the start of the session. Any further excused absences must be excused by IES.

If you miss a class, it is **your responsibility** to make up on everything that was covered in class. Tests/presentations missed during unexcused absences **cannot be made up**.



Arriving late for class: Punctuality is important for the planned course schedule. If you are late for class, the late time will be recorded and added up at the end of the course. You will receive a grade reduction based on the accumulated amount of missing contact hours, according to the rule above (i.e., if you were late by 15 minutes for 6 sessions, your grade would be reduced by 1%).

LATE OR FAILURE SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS: Late submission of assignments or failure of submission of assignment results in the grade F of that particular assignment. This does not apply to late or non-submission due to illness with an excused absence.

Excused absence: Please call the IES Center before the start of your first class if you are ill and would like to be excused from your course, as outlined in the "Cell Phone and Attendance Policy" handed out during orientation. Student Affairs staff will decide whether your absence can be excused directly or whether a doctor's note is necessary. Absences due to religious observances and family emergencies may be excused at the discretion of the Center Director, with written approval. A petition for an excused absence due to a religious holiday needs to be submitted 2 weeks in advance. If permission is granted, the student needs to inform the Academic Dean, the Student Affairs Team and their instructors. Absences due to private travel or travel delays cannot be excused, even with advanced notice

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. The detailed IES Abroad academic integrity code can be accessed on Moodle.

All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Regardless of the quality of work, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and/or an academic review and possible expulsion from the program. Plagiarism may be broadly defined as "copying of materials from sources, without acknowledging having done so, claiming other's ideas as one's own without proper reference to them, buying materials such as essays/exams, and using AI-generated content without disclosure."

As AI tools continue to evolve, learning how to use them responsibly is an important emerging skill. Some of our courses allow students to explore the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools such as ChatGPT for some assignments and assessments. The instructor of each course will communicate whether GAI may be used in a course and provide specific guidelines and procedures for its appropriate use.

Updated information on your course and readings, including additional readings from journalistic articles, can be found on the Moodle platform at <https://moodle.iesabroad.org/login/index.php>

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments and Readings
Week 1	Session 1: Briefing • Presentation of the syllabus • Introductions and self-reflection • Discussion of personal experiences • Development of common rules for the culture of conversation in the seminar (community agreement) • Caution regarding possible triggers End of session 1: Brief introduction to Varatharajah, Senthuran: Von der Zunahme der Zeichen. Roman. Frankfurt am Main 2016.	Familiarize yourself with the personal identity wheel and bring it to the first day of class. https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/personal-identity-wheel/

	Expectations of pages to be read until session 2+3 and throughout semester.	
Part 1: Migration in literature		
	Session 2: Introduction to literary criticism: How to interpret literature as critical reader The connection between language and migration in Senthuran Varatharajah's novel "Von der Zunahme der Zeichen" - What do we learn about the protagonist's life, thoughts and feelings? - What aspects of interculturality do the text reveal? - What connection does the novel show between language and migration?	Varatharajah, <u>Von der Zunahme der Zeichen</u>, pp. 9-30 (22 pages).
Week 2	Session 3: Origin and arrival: the meaning of home and family in Senthuran Varatharajah's novel "Von der Zunahme der Zeichen" - What experiences of migration does the novel describe? - What meanings do the families have for the protagonist? - How can we define the term "home"? What does home mean for the protagonist and for us?	Varatharajah, <u>Von der Zunahme der Zeichen</u>, pp. 114-250 (138 pages).
	Session 4: "The Poetry Project": Poems of escape and arrival - What aspects of flight and migration are discussed in the poems? - How can these poems influence social discourse?	https://thepoetryproject.de, 6 poems

Week 3	Session 5: Migration as a social and political challenge in Elfriede Jelinek's theater play "Die Schutzbefohlenen" • What types of text does the work consist of? • Which voices and statements does the text place in the foreground? • What aspects refugee treatment does the author criticize?	• Jelinek, <u>Die Schutzbefohlenen</u>, pp. 9-54 (46 pages).
	Session 6: The stage effect of Elfriede Jelinek's play "Die Schutzbefohlenen" • What effect does the text have on stage? • How can the theater text influence the audience's feelings and attitudes towards the topic of migration?	• Jelinek, <u>Die Schutzbefohlenen</u>, pp. 55-99 (46 pages). • Trailer: Elfriede Jelinek DIE SCHUTZBEFOHLENEN, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t39Yp6E_oANs (7:35 min) Reflective Journal 1 due.
Week 4	Session 7: First course-related trip (one current play, lecture or film that depicts or addresses migration)	• Write a short reflection (approx. 350 words): Summarize the content of the presentation. What questions do you have? What have you learned?
	Session 8: Reflection • What perspectives on migration do the texts we have read show? • Are certain forms of representation and types of text (novels, plays, poems) more appropriate to the topic of migration than others? • Can and should these forms of representation have a positive influence on social discourse? • Do the course subjects remind you of anything else you've learned or experienced?	
Week 5	Session 9: Midterm Exam	
Part 2: Gender equality in literature		

Week 6	Session 10: Wasteland - a novel without the generic masculine • How do the authors implement gender-equitable language in the novel? • Which role models does the novel highlight? • How does gender-equitable language affect us as readers?	• https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/gendergerechter-roman-aus-fuer-das-generische-maskulinum-100.html (1 page). • Vogt and Vogt, <u>Wasteland</u>, pp. 11-50 (40 pages).
	Session 11: Can poems be feminist? Poetry by Julia Mantel • What makes a poem a feminist poem? • What aspects of gender-specific structures do the poems depict? • Are certain forms of representation and types of text (novels, plays, poems) more appropriate to the topic of gender equality than others?	• Mantel, <u>Feministische Gedichte</u>, https://palais-fluux.de/julia-mantel-feministische-gedichte, 4 poems.
Week 7	Session 12: "Briefe an das Partiarchat": 18 different perspectives on gender-specific structures in our present day • Which of the 18 letters particularly appealed to you? Why? • What similarities and differences do the texts have? • What conclusions can be drawn about the different personal situations of the writers (gender, age, social environment)? • Do these personal situations influence the content of the texts?	• Faßbender, <u>Liebes Partiarchat</u>, pp. 11-89 (79 pages).
	Session 13: „Briefe an das Partiarchat“ as a way of expressing the personal and emotional effects of gender-specific structures • Are personal letters an appropriate medium to address gender-based discrimination? • Can these texts change readers' opinions and attitudes? • Can these texts have a positive influence on social discourse?	• Faßbender, <u>Liebes Partiarchat</u>, pp. 90-148 (59 pages).

Week 8	Session 14: Reflection: Write your own letter to the patriarchy. • What did you experience while writing your letter? • What meanings and connotations does the term patriarchy have for you? • How can gender-equitable thinking, feeling and acting succeed? • Do the course subjects remind you of anything else you've learned or experienced?	• Students are given the opportunity to write their own text or to think about the questions. • They can share their texts and thoughts with the whole group or with individual students or the teacher if they wish and how they wish (e.g. by reading out, showing, handing in). Reflective Journal 3 due.
	Session 15: Second course-related trip (one current play, lecture or film that addresses gender equality)	• Write a short report (approx. 350 words): Summarize the content of the presentation. What questions do you have? What have you learned?
Part 3: Climate change in literature		
Week 9	Session 16: „Alice im Klimawandel“ – A fantastic journey through scientific climate models by Margret Boysen • Is a novel inspired by a classic of nonsense literature able to explain mathematical climate models? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of this type of illustration?	• Boysen, <u>Alice, Klimawandel</u>, pp. 7-77 (71 pages).
	Session 17: Alice on her way out of the climate disaster • What literary means does the novel use to make scientific and mathematical facts understandable? • What possible solutions for the climate catastrophe does the novel present?	• Boysen, <u>Alice, Klimawandel</u>, pp. 189-268 (80 pages).

Week 10	Session 18: The lyrical ego in climate change: poems by Marion Poschmann • Can poems provide a visualization of climate change? • What impact does climate change have on nature poetry?	• Poschmann, <u>Nimbus</u>, pp. 44-45 and 107-110 (4 pages).
	Session 19: Climate change as a thriller: 42 degrees by Wolf Harlander • How does the novel make the effects of climate change tangible? • How does the author criticize the socio-political approach to climate change?	• Harlander, <u>42 Grad</u>, pp. 13-79 (67 pages).
Week 11	Session 20: A realistic dystopia - entertainment literature as a mirror of political issues • What solutions does the novel offer? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of presenting climate change as a thriller? • Can and should entertainment literature inspire changes in thought and behaviors related to current political issues and problems?	• Harlander, <u>42 Grad</u>, pp. 477-522 (46 pages).
	Session 21: Third course-related trip (one current play, lecture or film that depicts or addresses climate change)	• Write a short report (approx. 350 words): Summarize the content of the presentation. What questions do you have? What have you learned?
Week 12	Session 22: Final Exam	
	Session 23: Debriefing and Outlook • How did you feel during the course? • What were the most challenging moments during the course? • What have you learned?	

	What will you do with the new perspectives you have gained?	
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COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Three current plays or films that depict or address migration, gender equality or climate change.
- Lecture, panel discussion, or reading on the topic of migration, gender equality or climate change.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Boysen, Margret. Alice, der Klimawandel und die Katze Zeta. Berlin: Edition Rugerup, 2016.
- Faßbender, Pauline [Hrsg.]. Liebes Partiarchat. Freiburg: Hanseplatte, 2024.
- Harlander, Wolf. 42 Grad. Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2020.
- Jelinek, Elfriede. Die Schutzbefohlenen. Wut. Unseres. Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2018.
- Mantel, Julia. "Feministische Gedichte." Unvermittelbar. Wordpress, 2024. <https://unvermittelbar.de>
- Poschmann, Marion. Nimbus: Gedichte. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016.
- "Texte aus dem Deutschen." The Poetry Project. The Poetry Project, 2024. <https://thepoetryproject.de/poesie/aus-dem-deutschen>.
- Varatharajah, Senthuran. Von der Zunahme der Zeichen. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2016.
- Vogt, Judith C. and Christian Vogt. Wasteland. Munich: Knauer Taschenbuch, 2019.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Fleischhauer, Wolfram. Das Meer. Munich: Droemer Knauer, 2019.
- Giese, Linus. Ich bin Linus. Wie ich der Mann wurde, der ich schon immer war. Hamburg: Julius Beltz, 2020.
- Hierse, Lin. Wovon wir träumen. Munich: Piper, 2022.
- Özdamar, Emine Sevgi. Mutterzunge. Berlin: Coach House Press, 2022.
- Pehnt, Annette. Die schmutzige Frau. Munich: Piper, 2023.
- Pusch, Luise F. Gegen das Schweigen: Meine etwas andere Kindheit und Jugend. Berlin: Aviva, 2023.
- Tank, Gün. Die Optimistinnen. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2022.
- Trojanow, Ilja. EisTau. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2011.
- Zaimogli, Feridun. Die Geschichte der Frau. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2019.

Appendix:

Rubric for course participation:

A	Excellent participation The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that they have been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course and with their own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. They respectfully state their reactions about other classmates' opinions and can contribute to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
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B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time, the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student can construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. They are respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography but in a superficial way. They try to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provide comments that indicate a lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.