



**CU/SO350g GERMAN POPULAR CULTURE**  
IES Abroad Berlin

**DESCRIPTION:**

This course provides fundamental insights into contemporary German popular culture: Who or what is currently trendy in the German context? By asking this our class focuses on pop-cultural phenomena from diverse media: music (e.g. Schlager, feminist pop), TV-series (e.g. "Babylon Berlin", "KLEO", "DARK"), Berlin theater (e.g. Theater Thikwa) and evening culture (e.g. techno clubs and cabarets). Thereby, the seminar follows a historical and psychosocial approach: it is based on the assumption that German popular culture has been influenced by U.S. American pop culture from its beginnings in the 20th century until the 1990s. As a cultural practice of "Self/Americanisation" specific German formats have emerged until today, both in the East, West, and in reunited Germany. Furthermore, this course investigates the emotional and philosophical subtexts of German pop cultural practices with special focus on gender and its interrelations with race, class, and ability. At the end of the seminar, students will be familiar with the latest trends, trendsetters and theoretical discourses of German pop culture. In field trips, workshops and guest lectures, students will also be invited to experience and participate in German pop culture.

**CREDITS:** 3 credits

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45 contact hours

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** German

**ADDITIONAL COST:** none

**PREREQUISITES:** none

**METHOD OF PRESENTATION:**

- Short lectures
- Discussions
- Student presentations and research reports on chosen topics
- Field trips
- Guest lectures and workshops
- Moodle will be used to enhance students' learning experiences.

**REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:**

- Course participation - 10%
- Presentation 20%
- Midterm Exam - 20%
- Research Paper/Project - 25%
- Final Exam – 25%

**Course Participation**

Course participation includes regular attendance, participation in class discussions and Moodle activities, familiarity with the reader texts and the topics covered in class. Students are expected to come prepared with personal thoughts or notes on the readings. The grading rubric for participation is available in the IES Berlin Academics Manual on Moodle.



### Midterm Exam

The midterm exam has the dual purpose of testing students' knowledge of facts and evaluating their ability to critically analyse and contextualise historical events and political trends in German popular culture. The exam will focus on material covered in the first half of the course.

### Research Paper

Students will write a research essay (ca. 2,000 words) which is to be presented in class in week 10-12. In their essay, students develop a coherent argument on a chosen topic with the support of academic sources to be cited according to MLA or Chicago standards. Students will be required to schedule a time to discuss their topic with the instructor of this class.

### Presentations

After the midterm exams, each session will be introduced by students with a 10-minute presentation on key concepts, central arguments and open questions of the readings assigned in the respective course session. These presentations will provide the possibility to focus on central aspects in German popular culture. In the first week, each student will be assigned for one presentation (to be held in session 14-23). Depending on the number of students in class, joint presentations will be possible. In this case, each student will need to identify their contribution to the presentation.

### Final Exam

The final exam focuses on material mainly covered in the second half of the semester. (90 minutes, session 24).

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- identify the unique aspects of contemporary German pop culture
- relate pop culture to German politics and history and emotions
- apply categories of cultural analysis to pop cultural formats
- understand the term "pop culture" and its forms and functions in the German context
- compare German pop culture with American pop culture
- to identify the subtexts of German pop cultural phenomena

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

For our up-to-date attendance and exam policy, see: <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. Poorly written and grammatically sloppy papers will be judged more severely. Work with a language tutor.

### CONTENT:

Week	Content	Readings, Material and Assignments
Week 1	Session 1: introduction	

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	<b>Session 2:</b> Roaring Twenties and the birth of German popular culture between wars	<b>film:</b> <i>Der blaue Engel</i> (1930, Josef von Sternberg)  <b>reading:</b> Slane, Andrea. <i>The Iconology of the Sexy Nazi Woman. Marlene Dietrich as Political Palimpsest</i> . Duke University Press, 2011.
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Session 3:</b> case study Marlene Dietrich - icon of German pop culture	<b>individual field trip</b> to the Museum of Film and Television at Potsdamer Platz  Information given in class
	<b>Session 4:</b> <i>Comedian Harmonists</i> - the first German boy band	<b>music:</b> Comedian Harmonists and its contemporary echos: Max Rabe Rammstein AnnenMayKantereit Von wegen Lisbeth  <b>film:</b> <i>Comedian Harmonists</i> (1997, Joseph Vilsmaier)  <b>reading:</b> Steiner Gertrud. "Comedian Harmonists. Ein Film über die Auswirkungen nationalsozialistischer Kulturpolitik." In: <i>Modern Austrian Literature</i> , Vol. 31, No. 3/4 (1998), S.221-222.
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Session 5:</b> Holocaust and Nazi Germany as a paradigmatic shift in the history of German popular culture	<b>lecture:</b> Holocaust and Horror in German Pop Culture  <b>TV series:</b> DARK (2017)
	<b>Session 6:</b> Self-Americanization in West Germany in the 50s	<b>film:</b> <i>Die Halbstarken</i> (1956, Urs Egger)  <b>reading:</b> Fluck, Winfried. "California Blue: Americanization as Self-Americanization." In: <i>Americanization and Anti-Americanism: The German Encounter with American Culture after 1945</i> , edited by Alexander Stephan, Berghahn Books (2008), pp. 221–237.

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Week 4	<b>Session 7:</b> subcultures in East Germany in the 80s	<p><b>film:</b> <i>Coming Out</i> (1989, Heiner Carow)</p> <p><b>movements:</b> punks, gothics, skaters</p> <p><b>reading:</b> Dennis, David Brandon, "Coming Out into Socialism: Heiner Carow's Third Way," from <i>A Companion to German Cinema</i>, S. 55-81</p>
	<b>Session 8:</b> the silent revolution and the reunification in German pop culture	<p><b>music:</b> "Wind of Change" (Skorpions) "Hinterm Horizont" (Udo Lindenberg) "Als ich fortging" (Karussell) "Die verlorenen Kinder" (Silly) "Freiheit" (Westernhagen)</p> <p><b>film:</b> <i>Good bye, Lenin!</i> (Wolfgang Becker 2008)</p> <p><b>reading material</b> handed out in class</p>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Session 9:</b> techno as the sound of reunification in the 90s	<p><b>lecture:</b> German Techno and its abject forces</p> <p><b>discussion in class:</b> queuing culture, the motive of "Doppelleben", the promise of the never ending party</p> <p><b>reading material:</b> handed out in class</p>
	<b>Session 10:</b> Berlin's club culture	<p><b>film:</b> <i>Berlin Calling</i> (2008)</p> <p><b>reading:</b> Nye, Sean. "Run Lola Run and Berlin Calling". In: <i>Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture</i> (2010), pp. 121-126.</p>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Midterm exam</b>	take home exam

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	<b>session 16</b>	discussion field trip Theater Thikwa  <b>reading material</b> handed out in class
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Sessioninal presentations</b>	<b>final presentations on student's research topics, e.g.:</b>  - eating culture in Berlin - popular TV series - German influencers - Turkish Schlager - German horror movies
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>final discussion</b>	

#### FIELD TRIPS:

Field trips will encourage students to participate and experience German popular culture firsthand.

#### FILMS:

- *Der blaue Engel* (1930, Josef von Sternberg)
- *Die Halbstarken* (1956, Urs Egger)
- *Coming out* (1989, Heiner Carow)
- *Berlin Calling* (2008, Hannes Stöhr)
- *Als wir träumten* (2015, Andreas Dresen)
- *Babylon Berlin* (2017, Tom Tykwer)
- *KLEO* (2022, Vivian Andereggen)

#### MUSIC:

- Bushido: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (2011)
- Romano: *Jenseits von Köpenick* (2015)
- Dietrich, Marlene: "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt." Aus: *Der blaue Engel* (1930)
- Schöbel, Frank: "Heißer Sommer." Aus: *Heißer Sommer* (1967)
- Puhdys: "Geh zu ihr und lass deinen Drachen steigen." in: *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (1974)
- Skorpions: "Wind of Change" (1989)
- Kalkbrenner, Paul: *Berlin calling* (2008)
- Filmmusik: *Als wir träumten* (2015)
- Killa Hakan: *Kreuzberg City* (2007)
- Helene Fischer: *Farbenspiel* (2013)
- Jens Friebe: *Fuck Penetration* (2018)
- Rammstein: *Ich hasse Kinder* (2021)

## REQUIRED READINGS

- Dietrich, Marc / Seliger, Martin (Hg). *Deutscher Gangsta Rap II. Popkultur als Kampf um Anerkennung und Integration*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2017, S. 3-17.
- Dölling, Irene. "Wir alle lieben Paula, aber uns liegt an Paul." In: *Potsdamer Studien zu Frauen und Geschlechterforschung* 1,2 (1997), S. 73-109.
- Grotum, Thomas. *Zur Geschichte einer Jugendkultur der 50er Jahre*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1994, S.5-25.
- Hegemann, Helene. *Axolotl Roadkill*. Ullstein: 2010.
- Johnson, Jarred. "Die Darstellung von schwulen Männern im deutschen Film anhand von Taxi zum Clo, Coming Out und Freier Fall." In: *Undergraduate German Research Conference* 2015. Vortragsversion im online Stabikatalog.
- Kleiner, Marcus S.: „Flüchtlinge und deutsche Popmusik.“ In: *POP. Kultur und Kritik* 9 (2016), S. 40-44.
- Lange, Nadine. "Neues Album Jens Friebe. Deine Eifersucht hat nichts mit Liebe zu tun. Indie Pop Sänger und sein wunderbares sechstes Album." In: *Tagesspiegel*, 1.11.2018.
- Menzel, Julia. "36 Grad und es wird immer heißer oder: Klimawandel in der DDR: ein 'heißer' Sommer mit Chris Doerk und Frank Schoebel." In: *Deutsche Lieder: Bamberger Anthologie* 2015. Online Text im Stabikatalog.
- Takeshi, Ebine. "Zum Amerikadiskurs der 20er Jahre in der Weimarer Republik." In: *Neue Beiträge zur Germanistik* 129 (2006), S. 190-204.
- Stokowski, Margarete. *Die letzten Tage des Patriarchats*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2018.
- Würmann, Carsten / Warner, Ansgar. *Im Pausenraum des 'dritten Reiches': zur Populärkultur im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*. Bern: Lang, 2008.

## RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL READINGS:

- Beck, Earl R. "The Anti-Nazi Swing Youth, 1942-1945." In: *Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol. 19,3 (1985), pp. 45-53.
- David Brandon Dennis. "Coming out into Socialism: Heiner Carow's Third Way," from: *A Companion to German Cinema* 2012, pp. 55-81.
- Currid, Brian. "'A Song goes round the world' – German Schlager as an organ of experience." In: *Popular Music* 19,2 (2000), pp.147-180.
- Dowling, Siobhan. "Ahead of the Third Reich: a dizzying Metropolis". In: *The New York Times*, Nov 10, 2017.
- Dowling, Siobhan. "Sex, Drugs, and Crime in the Gritty Drama". In: *The New York Times*. 2017.
- Fluck, Winfried. "California Blue: Americanization as Self-Americanization." In: *Americanization and Anti-Americanism: The German Encounter with American Culture after 1945*, edited by Alexander Stephan, Berghahn Books (2008), pp. 221–237.
- Giesen, Bernhard. "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." In: *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. University of California Press (2004), pp. 112-155.
- Heiduschke, Sebastian. "Authority, Mobility, and Teenage Rebellion in The Wild One (USA 1953), Die Halbstarken (West Germany, 1956), and Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser (East Germany, 1957)." In: *ProjectMUSE* 49,3 (2013), pp. 281-299.
- Hockenos, Paul. *Berlin Calling: a Story of Anarchy, Music, and the Wall, and the Birth of new Berlin*. New York: The New Press, 2017.
- Huber, Nicole/Stern, Rapoh. "From the American West to West Berlin: Wim Wenders, Border Crossings, and the transnational Imaginary." In: *Transnationalism and the German City*, pp. 187-206.
- Jeremiah, Emily. "The Case of Helene Hegemann: Queerness, Failure, and the German Girl." In: *A Journal of Germanic Studies* 49,4 (2013), pp. 400-413.
- Mueller, Agnes C. *German Pop Culture: How American is it*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- Poiger, UtaG. *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a divided Germany*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000.
- Raundalen, Jon. "A communist takeover in the dream factory – Appropriation of popular genres by the east German Film Industry." In: *Slavonica* 11,1 (2005), pp. 69-86.
- Russel, Hannah. "Horst Buchholz – The James Dean of German Cinema." *Ohio State University Homepage* 2015.
- Seán Allan, "Ostalgie, Fantasy, and the Normalization of East-West Relations in Post Unification Comedy", in David Clarke (ed.), *German Cinema since Unification*, London 2006, pp. 105-126.
- Slane, Andrea. *The Iconology of the Sexy Nazi Woman. Marlene Dietrich as Political Palimpsest*. Duke University Press, 2011.