DR 444 - THEATER IN BERLIN
IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION
This course will give students fundamental insights into post/modern theater in Berlin. It will provide students with historical, analytical, and performative knowledge about Bertolt Brecht’s theatre model, its realization and abjection in the theatre landscape of divided Berlin (1949-1989) and today’s postdramatic form(s) of Berlin theater. Students will be introduced to different analytical approaches to dramatic texts, both from the perspective of Literature and from the perspective of Drama. We will be dealing with various German theater plays and read them in their aesthetic and political contexts. Most of the plays read in class will be watched in famous Berlin theaters such as Berliner Ensemble or Gorki Theater as well as off-theatres. Thereby, we will be discussing theater directors, such as Heiner Müller, Yael Ronen or ‘free’ art collectives. In cooperation with Berlin theater practitioners, students will deepen their theoretical knowledge of the plays through performative research. This gives students not only a practical understanding of the process of theater making but also of performative practices as research instruments in academia. At the end of the class students will be familiar with current trends, schools, aesthetic, and sociopolitical discourses of Berlin theater and of Berlin as theater.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: German

ADDITIONAL COST: none

PREREQUISITES: 4 semester German studies completed.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
• short lectures
• four to six theater performances
• deep analysis of plays
• expert talks
• group discussions
• performative research units
• moodle will be used to enhance students’ learning experiences.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
• course participation - 10%
• deep analysis of the plays – 20%
• four short response papers - 40%
• final research paper or final performance - 30%

Course Participation (10%)
Attendance of the seminar and all theatre performances, as well as active participation in class discussions, is expected and required for full credit. The grading rubric for participation is available in the IES Berlin Academics Manual on Moodle.
Response Papers (40%)
You will write four response papers during the course (each 250-300 words) on a play we will watch and discuss in the seminar.

- Every response paper has the following goals:
  1) Identify, in your own opinion, the key scene or passage of the play in question. Justify your choice and describe the meaning of this particular scene or passage for the play in its entirety. Don’t forget to take into account the performative means of the scene (e.g. stage and costume design, music, speech acts, choreography).
  2) Formulate three questions for discussion in class that have resulted from your choice of the particular scene or passage.

Response papers are due on Monday of week 2, 4, 7, and 9.

Scene Analysis (20%)
Alongside one of your response papers, choose 2 to 3 technical elements (speech acts, music, stage and costume design, choreography) that contribute significantly to the play’s overall effect, and analyze in some detail the contributions of each. When examining the specific technical elements, ask yourself the questions:
  • What is the director’s purpose or primary aim in making the play?
  • Why did the director make the choices (s)he made?
  • What (emotional) effect do these choices have on the audience?

Your analysis should have 1,500-2,000 words and please don’t spend more than one short paragraph describing the plot of the play. The scene analysis is due on Monday of week 7.

Final (30%)
You will have two options taking your final:

A. Research Paper: You write a 2,500-3,000 word research paper.
   Topics: Any topic covered in class. You are welcome to use one of your scene analyses (theoretically or performatively) as a starting point, or to develop an individual topic relating to this course. Make sure you have my okay for it. Discuss your thesis/structure of argument with me well in advance.
   Research: Your paper should demonstrate two things: your ability to interpret a play and your ability to connect your interpretation to existing academic ideas/research. At least three secondary texts are required in your bibliography: they can relate directly to the text/play under consideration, or to its cultural and historical backgrounds, or to a theory that helps you interpret the text/play. The final research paper is due on Thursday of the last week of classes.

B. Final Performance: You do a final performance.
   Topics: Any topic covered in class. You are welcome to use one of the performative research methods developed in the two performative workshops of the class and create something new and individual. Please discuss the concept of your performance with me well in advance. You need to make sure that you get my okay for it.
   Performance: Your performance should demonstrate two things: your ability to perform a text (or: dramatic conflict) and your ability to connect your performance to existing aesthetic forms and practices of current Berlin theater. Your performance will be in the final course session and be graded on the above-mentioned criteria.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the course, students should:
- have a general overview of current Berlin theater
- be enabled to situate German plays within the history of German theater from the beginning of 20th century until today
- be introduced to concepts of theater lesser known in the US, such as “Regietheater”, “Docu-Theater” and “Postdramatic” and “Postmigrational” forms of theater
- understand general differences between theater in the US and Germany
- be able to analyze current Berlin plays according to methods and criteria of recent theater theory
- reflect critically on theatrical representations in Berlin and their socio-political, aesthetic and economic contexts
- be able to experience theatre aesthetics by performative research methods

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Attendance and punctuality in all courses and field studies are mandatory. Absences can only be excused for valid reasons. Unexcused absences can affect students’ grades. Students who miss 25% or more of all class sessions will fail the course. Missed exams cannot be taken at another time except in case of documented illness. Late submission of term papers and other work will result in grade reduction unless an extension due to illness or an emergency is approved. Please consult the IES Berlin Academics Manual on Moodle for additional details.

**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.

**CONTENT:**
Please note: the actual plays discussed in any given semester depend on the repertoire and playing schedule of theaters in Berlin and will be introduced in the first week of classes. The following syllabus is a sample, but may vary due to performance dates of the Berlin theaters.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Homework/Reading Material/Assignments</th>
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| Week 1     | Session 1-2:  
**Introduction** to terms and methods of the seminar  
**Discussion** of Brecht’s Epic Theatre, the “Verfremdungseffekt” and its cultural, political and aesthetic implications | **Homework: Reading**  
| Brecht Theater |                                                                                                                   | **Assignment (due Mon 6:00 pm)**  
First Response paper on theater evening (focus: directing style)                                      |
| Week 2     | Session 3-4:  
Close Reading & Analysis of Bertolt Brecht’s *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Aturo Ui*  
Theater evening *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Aturo Ui* (Berliner Ensemble, director: Heiner Müller, 1995) | **Homework: Reading**  
Heiner Müller: *Der Auftrag /The Mission* (1979)                                                     |
| Brecht in the GDR I |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                        |
| Week 3     | Session 5-6:  
**Discussion** of the theater performance *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Aturo Ui*  
**Close Reading & Analysis** of Heiner Müller *Der Auftrag / The Mission* (1979) | **Homework: Reading**  
| Brecht in the GDR II |                                                                                                                   | **Homework: Close Reading**                                                                               |
| Week 4 | Postdramatic Theater I | Session 7-8  
Workshop I – Performative research on Der Mann im Fahrstuhl with theater practitioners  
**Theater evening:** *Der Auftrag / The Mission* (Gorki Theater, director: Mirko Borscht, 2018) |  
**Assignment (due Mon 6:00 pm)**  
Second Response paper on theater evening (focus: stage design & costumes)  
|---|---|---|
| Week 5 | Postdramatic Theater II | Session 9-10:  
**Discussion** of the theatre performance *Der Auftrag / The Mission*  
**Homework: Reading**  
**Homework: Reading**  
Franz Schubert: *Winterreise* (1827) |
| Week 6 | Postmigrational Theater I | Session 11-12:  
**Close Reading & Analysis** of *Winterreise*  
**Theater evening** *Winterreise* (Maxim Gorki Theater, director: Yael Ronen, 2017) |  
**Homework: Reading**  
| Week 7 | Postmigrational Theater II | Session 13-14:  
**Discussion** of the theater performance *Winterreise*  
**Theater evening** *Atlas des Kommunismus* (Gorki Theater, director: Lola Arias, 2017) |  
**Assignment (due Mon 6:00 pm)**  
Third Response Paper on theater evening (focus: music & lightning)  
**Homework: Reading**  
Legal Documents, NSU-Files |
| Week 8 | Docu Theater | Session 15-16:  
**Discussion** of the theater performance *Atlas des Kommunismus* with the theater musician Jens Friebe |  
**Homework: Reading**

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## Week 9

**Disabled Theater**

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<th>Session 17-18:</th>
<th>Discussion of the theater evening <strong>NSU Monologe</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theater Evening</strong></td>
<td><strong>NSU Monologe</strong> (Heimathafen Neukoelln, director: Bühne für Menschenrechte)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theater Evening</strong></td>
<td>at Ramba Zamba (play according to the theater schedule)</td>
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**Assignment (due Sat 6:00 pm)**

Fourth Response paper on the theater evening (focus: body language & political action)

## Week 10

**Theater of / as Revolution I**

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<th>Session 19-20:</th>
<th>Discussion of the theater evening <strong>Lenin</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theater Evening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lenin</strong> (Schaubühne, director: Milo Rau 2018)</td>
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**Homework:** Screening

Revolution 11/4/89 on Berlin Alexanderplatz

## Week 11

**Theater of / as Revolution II**

**Dramatizing the revolution 11/4 1989**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session 21</th>
<th>Selected Screenings of the Revolution 11/4 1989</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workshop II</strong></td>
<td>– Staged &amp; Staging revolutionary speeches</td>
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**Homework:** Reading


## Week 12

**The ‘real drama’ of Berlin Theater & Finals**

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<th>Session 22-23</th>
<th>Expert Talk on the 'real Drama' of the East Berlin Volksbühne</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Round Up-Discussion &amp; Presenting</strong></td>
<td>the concept of your final paper or performance in two minutes</td>
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## Reading Material:

All texts will be available on moodle and in a reader handed out in class.

## Performative Studies:

- Performative research units with theater practitioners

## Required Readings (Theater Plays):

- *Brecht, Bertolt Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Aturo Ui* (1941)
- Marthaler, Christoph *Murks den Europäer* (2008)
- Müller, Heiner *Der Auftrag* (1979)
- Müller, Heiner *Der Mann im Fahrstuhl* (1979)
- NSU-Files, Legal Documents (2018)
- Schlingensief, Christoph *Atta Atta* (2003)
- Schubert, Franz *Die Winterreise* (1827)
OTHER REQUIRED READINGS:


RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Melchinger, Siegfried 1971: Geschichte des politischen Theaters. Velbert