



## CU/SO 350 – GERMAN POPULAR CULTURE

IES Abroad Berlin

### DESCRIPTION:

This course provides fundamental insights into contemporary German popular culture: who or what is currently “hip” in the German context? How are German pop phenomena related to American culture? Which formats are original, which transcultural? This course focuses on various pop-cultural phenomena of the 21st century from diverse media: reality television (e.g., DSDS: Deutschland sucht den Superstar, Bauer sucht Frau), music (e.g., German Gangsta-Rap, feminist pop, “Schlager”), television series (e.g., Babylon Berlin), radical young theater (e.g., She She Pop), nightlife culture (e.g., techno club scene), literature (e.g., Helene Hegemann) and columns/essays (e.g., Margarete Stokowski). Thereby, the seminar follows a historical approach. It is based on the assumption that German pop culture has been influenced by American pop culture, from its beginnings in the 20th century to the 1990s. As a cultural practice of “Self/Americanization” (Fluck 2008) specifically German formats have emerged, both in the East, West and reunited Germany. Furthermore, the seminar investigates the political subtexts of German pop cultural practices. One focus of the seminar is on how popular culture always works with “the Abject” (i.e., the rejected and traumatic elements of a culture). At the end of the seminar, students will be familiar with the latest trends, the trendsetters and the historical-theoretical discourses of German pop culture. In excursions, workshops and guest lectures, students will also be encouraged to experience and participate in German pop culture.

**CREDITS:** 3

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

**PREREQUISITES:** None

**ADDITIONAL COST:** None

### METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures,
- In class discussions and cultural analyses,
- Student presentations and research reports on chosen topics,
- Excursions to pop culture sites,
- Guest lectures and workshops,
- Moodle will be employed to enhance students' learning experiences.

### REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation - 10%
- Presentation - 20%
- Midterm exam - 20%
- Research paper - 25%
- Final exam - 25%

### Course Participation

Students must complete the assigned readings and participate in class discussions and Moodle activities. Students are expected to come prepared with personal thoughts or notes on the readings. The IES grading rubric for participation is available on Moodle.

### Midterm Exam

The midterm exam (week 5) has the dual purpose of testing students' knowledge and evaluating their ability to critically analyze and contextualize historical events and political trends. It will focus on material covered in the first half of the course.

### Research Paper

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Students will write a research essay (ca. 2,000 words) which is due in session 14 (week 8). In their essay, students develop a coherent argument on a chosen topic with the support of textual sources to be cited according to MLA or Chicago/Turabian citation styles. Students will be required to schedule a time to discuss their topic with the instructor before session 6 (week 3).

**Presentation**

After the midterm exam, 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. In the first week, each student will be assigned one presentation (to be held in sessions 11-16). Depending on the number of students in class, joint presentations by two or more students will be possible. In this case, each student will need to identify their contribution to the presentation.

**Final Exam**

The final exam (week 10) focuses on material covered in the second half of the semester. Students should, however, also be able to integrate ideas discussed in the first half of the semester in their answers on the final.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- identify the unique aspects of contemporary German pop culture,
- relate pop culture to German politics and history,
- 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:**

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 Abroad Berlin academics manual on Moodle for additional details.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code. Assignments need to be properly and amply footnoted where appropriate, with all sources attributed, including images. This not only applies to written assignments but also presentations by means of PowerPoint, Prezi or posters. Contributions may be checked with plagiarism-detecting software.

**CONTENT:**

Films are to be watched outside class time and are available at the IES Abroad Berlin Center. All films have English subtitles.

Sessions	Content	Readings & Other Materials
Week 1	Session 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Bushido and Romano: German Gangsta Rap and metanarratives in German popular culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mueller, Agnes C. <i>German Pop Culture: How American is it?</i>. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004, pp. 3-17.</li> <li>• Layne, Priscilla. <i>White Rebels in Black. German Appropriation of Black Popular Culture</i>. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018, pp. 6-19.</li> </ul>
	Session 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Roaring Twenties: Case Study Marlene Dietrich</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Film] <i>Der blaue Engel</i> (Germany 1930, Regie: Josef von Sternberg)</li> <li>• Ross, Corey. “Cinema, Radio, and Mass Culture”. In: <i>Weimar Culture Revisited</i> (2011), pp. 23-48.</li> </ul>

		<p><i>Optional:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slane, Andrea. <i>The Iconology of the Sexy Nazi Woman. Marlene Dietrich as Political Palimpsest</i>. Duke University Press, 2011.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<p>Session 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swing: popular culture as a form of resistance in Nazi Germany</li> <li><b>Guest Lecturer</b> Dr. Simon Strick: Nazi Pop: From Böhse Onkelz to Frei.Wild</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beck, Earl R. "The Anti-Nazi Swing Youth, 1942-1945." In: <i>Journal of Popular Culture</i>. Vol. 19, 3 (1985), pp. 45-53.</li> <li>[Music] Böhse Onkelz, Frei.Wild, Xavier Naidoo</li> </ul>
	<p>Session 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Holocaust as a paradigmatic shift and traumatic subtext in German popular culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul> <p><i>Optional:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brenner, David A. "Working through the Holocaust Blockbuster: <i>Schindler's list</i> and 'Hitler's willing Executioners.'" In: <i>Germanic Review</i> 75, 4 (2000), pp. 296-311.</li> <li>Giesen, Bernhard. "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." <i>Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity</i>. University of California Press (2004), pp. 112-155.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<p>Session 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rebels without a cause in the 1950s, West Germany</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Die Halbstarken</i> (Germany 1956, Regie: Urs Egger)</li> <li>Russel, Hannah. "Horst Buchholz – The James Dean of German Cinema." On: Ohio State University Homepage 2015.</li> <li>Heiduschke, Sebastian. "Authority, Mobility, and Teenage Rebellion in <i>The Wild One</i> (USA 1953), <i>Die Halbstarken</i> (West Germany, 1956), and <i>Berlin</i> – Ecke Schönhauser (East Germany, 1957)." In: <i>ProjectMuse</i> 49, 3 (2013), pp. 281-299.</li> </ul>
	<p>Session 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hot summers in the 1960s, East Germany</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Heißer Sommer</i> (DDR 1968, Regie: Joachim Hasler)</li> <li>[Music] "Heißer Sommer" (Frank Schöbel 1968)</li> <li>Raundalen, Jon. "A Communist Takeover in the Dream Factory – Appropriation of Popular Genres by the East German Film Industry." In: <i>Slavonica</i> 11, 1 (2005), pp. 69-86.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	<p>Session 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Guest Lecturer</b> Dr. Dorothea Löbbermann: The "Jukebox" as an apparatus of desire and consumerism in the 70s, FDR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Alice in den Städten</i> (West Germany 1974, Regie: Wim Wenders)</li> </ul> <p><i>Optional:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Huber, Nicole / Stern, Rapoh. "From the American West to West Berlin: Wim Wenders, Border Crossings, and the Transnational Imaginary." In: <i>Transnationalism and the German City</i>, pp. 187-206.</li> </ul>
	<p>Session 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The "Merry-Go-Round" as an apparatus of desire and escape in the 70s, GDR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Die Legende von Paul und Paula</i> (DDR 1974, Regie: Heiner Carow)</li> <li>[Music] "Geh zu ihr" (Puhdys 1974)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	Midterm exam	

<b>Week 6</b>	<p>Session 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The popularization of the silent revolution '89 and the reunification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Coming Out</i> (DDR 1989, Regie: Heiner Carow)</li> <li>[Music] "Wind of Change" (Skorpions)</li> <li>Dennis, David Brandon, "Coming Out into Socialism: Heiner Carow's Third Way," from <i>A Companion to German Cinema</i>, pp. 55-81.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student presentation(s)</u></p>
	<p>Session 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Techno: The sound of German reunification</li> <li><b>Excursion</b> DJ workshop in Berlin's Kreuzberg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Berlin Calling</i> (Germany 2008, Regie: Hannes Stöhr)</li> <li>[Film] <i>Als wir träumten</i> (Germany 2015, Regie: Andreas Dresen)</li> <li>Hockenos, Paul. <i>Berlin Calling: a Story of Anarchy, Music, and the Wall, and the Birth of New Berlin</i>. New York: The New Press, 2017.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student presentation(s)</u></p>
<b>Week 7</b>	<p>Session 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turkish-German Hip Hop &amp; Rap</li> <li>German "Schlager" and Indie Pop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Music] Islamic Force, Kool Savas</li> <li>Ickstadt, Hans. "Appropriating Difference: Turkish German Rap." In: <i>American Studies</i> 44, 4 (1999), pp. 571-578.</li> <li>[Music] Helene Fischer, Jens Friebe</li> <li>Currid, Brian. "'A song goes round the world' – German Schlager as an organ of experience." In: <i>Popular Music</i> 19, 2 (2000), pp.147-180.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student presentation(s)</u></p>
	<p>Session 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>German casting shows: DSDS and Bauer sucht Frau</li> <li>German television series: Babylon Berlin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Television] "DSDS – Deutschland sucht den Super Star"</li> <li>[Television] "Bauer sucht Frau"</li> <li>Rota, Genevieve. "Farmer wants a Fraeulein." In: <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> 10/31/2018, p. 18.</li> <li>[Television] <i>Babylon Berlin</i> (Germany 2017, Regie: Tom Tykwer)</li> <li>Dowling, Siobhan. "Sex, Drugs, and Crime in the Gritty Drama". In: <i>The New York Times</i>. 2017.</li> <li>Dowling, Siobhan. "Ahead of the Third Reich: a dizzying Metropolis". In: <i>The New York Times</i>, Nov 10, 2017.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student presentation(s)</u></p>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p>Session 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pop author Helene Hegemann</li> <li>Margarete Stokowski: Rrrriot girl, pop feminist or pop theoretican?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Novel] Hegemann, Helene. <i>Axolotl Roadkill</i> (Ullstein: 2010).</li> <li>Jeremiah, Emily. "The Case of Helene Hegemann: Queerness, Failure, and the German Girl". In: <i>Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift</i> 49, 4 (2013), pp. 400-413.</li> <li>Stokowski, Margarete. <i>Die letzten Tage des Patriarchats</i>. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2018.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student presentation(s)</u></p>
	<p>Session 14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Excursion</b> theater visit and workshop at Deutsches Theater</li> </ul>	<p><u>Research paper due</u></p>

<b>Week 9</b>	Session 15:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrosexual, Queer, and Trans: Appropriations in the Berlin Club Scene</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mishali, Yael. "(In)visibly Unsafe: Passing under the Radar and the Limits of Queer Space." In: <i>Borderlands</i> 17, 1 (2018), pp. 1-31.</li> </ul>
	Session 16:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Popularization of political traumas in the German-German context: RAF and GDR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Film] <i>Baader Meinhoff Komplex</i> (Germany 2008, Regie: Uli Edel)</li> <li>[Film] <i>Alles auf Zucker</i> (2008, Regie: Dani Levy)</li> <li>Passmore, Leith Ray Michael. <i>Performing Terrorism: a case study of Ulrike Meinhoff</i>. Dissertation University of Western Australia. School of Humanities 1/1/2009.</li> <li>Allan, Seán. "Ostalgie, Fantasy and the Normalization of East-West Relations in Post-Unification Comedy", in David Clarke (ed.), <i>German Cinema since Unification</i>, London 2006, pp. 105-126.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	Final exam		

#### Films:

- *Alice in den Städten* (West Germany 1974, Regie: Wim Wenders)
- *Alles auf Zucker* (2008, Regie: Dani Levy)
- *Als wir träumten* (Germany 2015, Regie: Andreas Dresen)
- *Baader Meinhoff Komplex* (Germany 2008, Regie: Uli Edel)
- *Berlin Calling* (Germany 2008, Regie: Hannes Stöhr)
- *Coming Out* (DDR 1989, Regie: Heiner Carow)
- *Der blaue Engel* (Germany 1930, Regie: Josef von Sternberg)
- *Die Halbstarke* (Germany 1956, Regie: Urs Egger)
- *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (DDR 1974, Regie: Heiner Carow)
- *Heißer Sommer* (DDR 1968, Regie: Joachim Hasler)

#### Music:

- Böhse Onkelz
- Frei.Wild
- Helene Fischer: *Farbenspiel* (2013)
- Islamic Force
- Jens Friebe
- Kool Savas
- Puhdys: "Geh zu ihr." Aus: *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (1974)
- Schoebel, Frank: "Heißer Sommer." Aus: *Heißer Sommer* (1967)
- Scorpions: "Wind of Change" (1989)
- Xavier Naidoo

#### Novel:

- Hegemann, Helene. *Axolotl Roadkill* (Ullstein: 2010).

#### Television:

- *Babylon Berlin* (Germany 2017, Regie: Tom Tykwer)
- "Bauer sucht Frau"
- "DSDS – Deutschland sucht den Super Star"

#### Required Readings:

- Allan, Seán. “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.
- Beck, Earl R. “The Anti-Nazi Swing Youth, 1942-1945.” In: *Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol. 19, 3 (1985), pp. 45-53.
- Currid, Brian. “‘A song goes round the world’ – German Schlager as an organ of experience.” In: *Popular Music* 19, 2 (2000), pp.147-180.
- Dennis, David Brandon, “Coming Out into Socialism: Heiner Carow’s Third Way,” from *A Companion to German Cinema*, pp. 55-81.
- 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.
- 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.
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- Ickstadt, Hans. “Appropriating Difference: Turkish German Rap.” In: *American Studies* 44, 4 (1999), pp. 571-578.
- Jeremiah, Emily. “The Case of Helene Hegemann: Queerness, Failure, and the German Girl”. In: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 49, 4 (2013), pp. 400-413.
- Layne, Priscilla. *White Rebels in Black. German Appropriation of Black Popular Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018, pp. 6-19.
- Mishali, Yael. “(In)visibly Unsafe: Passing under the Radar and the Limits of Queer Space.” In: *Borderlands* 17, 1 (2018), pp. 1-31.
- Mueller, Agnes C. *German Pop Culture: How American is it?*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004, pp. 3-17.
- Passmore, Leith Ray Michael. *Performing Terrorism: a case study of Ulrike Meinhoff*. Dissertation University of Western Australia. School of Humanities 1/1/2009.
- 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.
- Ross, Corey. “Cinema, Radio, and Mass Culture”. In: *Weimar Culture Revisited* (2011), pp. 23-48.
- Rota, Genevieve. “Farmer wants a Fraulein.” In: *The Sydney Morning Herald* 10/31/2018, p. 18.
- Russel, Hannah. “Horst Buchholz – The James Dean of German Cinema.” On: Ohio State University Homepage 2015.
- Stokowski, Margarete. *Die letzten Tage des Patriarchats*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2018.

### Optional Readings

- Brenner, David A. “Working through the Holocaust Blockbuster: *Schindler’s list* and ‘Hitler’s willing Executioners.’” In: *Germanic Review* 75, 4 (2000), pp. 296-311.
- Giesen, Bernhard. “The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity.” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. University of California Press (2004), pp. 112-155.
- 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.
- Slane, Andrea. *The Iconology of the Sexy Nazi Woman. Marlene Dietrich as Political Palimpsest*. Duke University Press, 2011.