

# German Film and Literature after 1990

Universität Stuttgart

Winter University 2020

Böblinger Str. 78 E, 4th floor 70199 Stuttgart

Tentative Syllabus:

**German Film and Literature after 1990**

ECTS credits: 4

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## **Approach:**

This course deals with literature and film in Germany since reunification in 1990. October 03, 1990 marks the end of a long post-war period, of national, ideological division and, for millions, the end of stifling political oppression. At the same time, it is the beginning of a new, unexpected 'normality' that involves a quest for identity and adjustment to the changing realities of globally expanding capitalism.

In another context, modern German society includes a large number of people from other countries and many of the successful new figures on the scene have a multi-cultural background with new stories to tell, or they tell their stories in a new, different way.

Historic realities shape biographies and will be reflected in artists' world views, their choice of topics, even their modes of expression. No surprise then that memory – the individual experience of history – is a frequent subject. Another subject is the experience of living in two worlds (the immigrant experience – a global phenomenon) raising issues of integration, identity, and how to adjust to a sometimes contradictory multi-cultural reality.

We will examine the topics, styles of expression and narrative techniques of selected literary and cinematic works. Another aspect of investigation deals with responses to the multi-cultural experience – including irony and satire as strategies to overcome seemingly incongruous contradictions.

Many of the works we will discuss were created in the last fifteen years. This course offers the opportunity to get acquainted with some very recent works and important figures on today's literary and cinematic scene, including director Fatih Akin and author Daniel Kehlmann.

This course is about Germany **NOW**.

## **Themes:**

- The multi-cultural experience; the emergence of new voices
- Subject matter and forms of expression
- The historical perspective – themes from the past; individual experience in a totalitarian state

# German Film and Literature after 1990

## Seminar format:

Typical for literature and film classes, this course will be conducted in seminar style. This means you will not be faced with ready-made interpretations. The course represents a process of investigation - there will be lectures and oral reports but, above all, we will rely on discussions comparing our observations and individual viewpoints. The counterpoint of our subjective views – which should be expressed through persuasive argumentation and analysis beyond mere emotional impressions – will provide the basis of your own perception of the works. To a large degree, the success of this course depends on your input and involvement.

## Requirements

You will be expected to write two critical papers based on two different works (2-3 pages, Word or Open Office, 12-font, 1.000 words, to be mailed to the e-mail address printed above), preferably on a topic of your choice. The first paper will be due by the end of week 3, the second by the end of week 5. If you're interested, comparative papers are encouraged. The goal of these two analytical papers is to arrive at a deeper level of understanding of the works discussed. (You should define your paper through a topic, a title.) You will also contribute a researched oral report to provide background information on one of the works on our schedule.

Papers: within academic convention, it is perfectly legitimate to refer to other writers' ideas but make sure to cite your sources! Since there is very little secondary literature in English on these works, we will rely on an intrinsic approach of interpretation. What counts is your perception and understanding of these works. Be sure to support your position with rational arguments.

I'll be available to discuss topics for critical papers after class.

Grade: based on your critical paper, your oral report, the work summary and in-class participation. The German grading system is a number system from 1 to 4 analogous to grades A to D in the U.S. A grade 5 means no pass.

## Attendance and Conduct:

This is a 4-credit class. You will be expected **to attend every single class**. If you are unable to attend due to medical reasons, you need to hand in a statement by your doctor or submit a written statement regarding the reasons for your absence.

Please make sure to come to class **on time**.

You need to read the assigned texts **before class!**

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## List of the Works/Course Material:

Please be aware that this course presents art films whose intentions are not mere entertainment. Even though fictional in character, these works deal with sometimes disturbing psychological realities and unsettling historical facts.

## Films:

*Head-On (Gegen die Wand)* by Fatih Akin, 116 min., 2004

*Four Minutes (Vier Minuten)* by Chris Kraus, 111 min., 2007

*The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)* by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 137 min., 2006

*Never Look Away (Werk ohne Autor)* by Florian von Donnersmarck, 188 min, 2018

*The Edukators (Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei)* by Hans Weingartner, 127 min., 2004

## Additional options:

*In July* by Fatih Akin

## Literary Works:

To be purchased in advance.

Please order these books as soon as possible – they're not easily obtained in English translation. I also urge you to read before the course even begins!

Wladimir Kaminer, **Russian Disco**,  
(Ebury Press, 2009, ISBN-13: 978-0091886691, 176 pages)  
Available as Kindle edition

Kehlmann, Daniel, **Measuring the World**  
(Available through amazon.de: riverrun; 2007,  
ISBN-13: 978-1847241146, 272 pages)  
Available as Kindle edition

# German Film and Literature after 1990

Syllabus: Winter Uni 2020 Preliminary Schedule

Week 1	Wed 1:30-3:45	Jan 15	Introduction Film: <i>Head-On</i> ( <i>Gegen die Wand</i> ) by Fatih Akin
	Th 1:30-3:45	Jan 16	<i>Head-On</i>
Week 2	Mon 1:30-3:00	Jan 20	Wladimir Kaminer, <b>Russian Disco</b> Oral presentations: <b>Germany as a multi-cultural society</b>
	Tue 1:30-3:00	Jan 21	<b>Excursion: Kunstmuseum Schlossplatz</b> We'll meet at 1:20 pm in the lobby of the <b>Kunstmuseum</b> (Schlossplatz)
	Wed 1:30-3:45	Jan 22	<i>The Lives of Others</i> by Florian von Donnersmarck Oral presentations: <b>GDR/Romania</b>
	Th 1:30-3:45	Jan 23	<i>The Lives of Others</i>
Week 3	Mon	Jan 27	No class
	Tue 1:30-3:45	Jan 28	Daniel Kehlmann, <b>Measuring the World</b>
	Wed 1:30-3:00	Jan 29	<b>Measuring the World</b>
	Th 1:30-3:00	Jan 30	<b>Excursion: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart</b> We'll meet at 1:20 pm in the lobby of <b>Neue Staatsgalerie</b> , Konrad-Adenauer-Str. 30-32 (U-Bahn Stop Staatsgalerie) <b>Paper #1 duel!</b>
Week 4	Mon 1:30-3:45	Feb 03	Film: <i>Four Minutes</i> ( <i>Vier Minuten</i> ) by Chris Kraus
	Tu 1:30-3:45	Feb 04	Film: <i>Four Minutes</i>
	Wed 1:30-3:45	Feb 05	Oral presentations: <b>Political Rebellion BRD; RAF</b> Film: <i>The Edukators</i> by Hans Weingartner
	Th 1:30-3:45	Feb 06	<i>The Edukators</i>
Week 5	Mon	Feb 10	No class
	Tu 1:30-3:45	Feb 11	<i>Never Look Away</i> by Florian von Donnersmarck
	Wed 1:30-3:45	Feb 12	<i>Never Look Away</i>
	Th	Feb 13	No class
	Fr.	Feb 14	<b>Paper #2 duel!</b>
Week 6	Mon	Feb 17	No class
	Tu 1:30-3:45	Feb 18	<i>In July</i> by Fatih Akin
	Wed 1:30-3:00	Feb 19	Conclusion – final discussion (Café?)
	Th	Feb 20	Farewell Party Winter University 2018

# German Film and Literature after 1990

## Presentation topics:

- **Germany as a multicultural society (*Head-on*, Russian Disco)**
  - history of post-war immigration
  - demographics of immigration (nationalities)
  - issues of integration
  
  - **GDR (*The Lives of Others*):**
    - political & economic history of the GDR
    - mechanisms of suppression (*Stasi* - the secret police)
    - internal criticism - prominent dissenting intellectuals in the DDR
  
  - **Biographical Information (Measuring The World):**
    - Alexander von Humboldt
    - Carl Friedrich Gauß
  
- **Political rebellion in the BRD (GFR) since the 1960s (*The Edukators*):**
  - student rebellion of the 1960s and early '70s
  - RAF (Baader Meinhof Group)
  - Peace movement and ecological protest since the 1970s – emergence of the Green Party
  
- **Authors' and directors' bios, history of the works**
  - Fatih Akin
  - Wladimir Kaminer
  - Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
  - Daniel Kehlmann
  - Hans Weingartner
  - Chris Kraus

## Advice on oral presentations:

Please do not read a pre-prepared text - you will lose your audience!  
A written text is a different type of language than a free, spontaneously formulated oral presentation. This is important because it determines the tempo of your speech and the syntactic style. If you speak freely based on a list of key words, you will speak slowly and in shorter sentences, which makes it much easier for your listeners to follow. And it allows you to keep eye contact! Besides, there is less danger of getting lost in too many insignificant details - the general line of your argument will be clearer.