German Film and Literature after 1990

Universität Stuttgart
Internationale Angelegenheiten

Winter University
Böblinger Str. 78 E, 4th floor  70199 Stuttgart

Syllabus:

**German Film and Literature after 1990**
ECTS credits: 4
Class meets Monday through Thursday, 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lecturer: Klaus Roehm, Ph.D.

**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 reality shapes 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 Herta Müller (Nobel Prize in Literature 2009) and director Fatih Akin.

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 also 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 on these works in English, 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.
German Film and Literature after 1990

List of the Works/Course Material:

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

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

Additional options:

In July or Soul Kitchen 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 Herta Müller’s novel before the course even begins – it is the most challenging work on our list and will require a second reading!

Wladimir Kaminer, Russian Disco,
Available as Kindle edition

Herta Müller, The Fox Was Ever the Hunter
Available as Kindle edition

“Nobel Prize Lecture”, 2009
# German Film and Literature after 1990

## Tentative Schedule:

| Week 1 | Introduction  
|---|---|
| Film: *Head-On* (Gegen die Wand) by Fatih Akin  
*Head-On* |

| Week 2 | *Head-On*  
|---|---|
| Oral presentations: *Germany as a multi-cultural society*  
*Excursion: Kunstmuseum Schlossplatz*  
Wladimir Kaminer, *Russian Disco*  
Oral presentations: *GDR; The Lives of Others* by Florian H. von Donnersmarck |

| Week 3 | *The Lives of Others*  
|---|---|
| Final discussion: *The Lives of Others*  
*Excursion: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart*  
Herta Müller, *The Fox Was Ever the Hunter* |

| Week 4 | Herta Müller, *The Fox Was Ever the Hunter*  
|---|---|
| Herta Müller, *Nobel Prize Lecture*  
Film: *Four Minutes* (Vier Minuten) by Chris Kraus  
Film: *Four Minutes* |

| Week 5 | Film: *Four Minutes*  
|---|---|
| Oral presentations: *Political Rebellion BRD; RAF*  
Film: *The Edukators* by Hans Weingartner  
*The Edukators*  
*The Edukators* |

| Week 6 | *In July or Soul Kitchen* by Fatih Akin  
*Papers due!!!*  
*In July or Soul Kitchen*  
Conclusion – final discussion  
Farewell Party Winter University 2017 |
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/Eastern Europe (Rumania) (*The Lives of Others*, *The Fox Was Ever the Hunter*):
  - political & economic history of the socialist (USSR satellite) states after WW 2
  - the dictatorship under Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania
  - mechanisms of suppression (*Stasi* - the secret police)
  - internal criticism - prominent dissenting intellectuals in the DDR

- 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
  - Herta Müller
  - Hans Weingartner
  - Chris Kraus