GRMN/LACS 259

**The Postwar German Film**

Tuesday, Thursday 9:25 – 10:40

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**Senior Lecturer Jason Doerre**

**Office Hours**: Wednesday 10:00–11:00; Thursday 3:00–4:00

**Office**: Seabury Hall 006

**Email**: [jason.doerre@trincoll.edu](mailto:jason.doerre@trincoll.edu)

**Course Description:**

This course will explore the social and political landscape of postwar Germany from 1945 to the present by looking at a broad range of films from East and West Germany that encompass a wide variety of genres, filmmakers, and movements. The themes examined will include, but not be limited to, the creation of a new cinema after World War II, filmmaking during the Cold War, avant-garde cinema, German history through film, socially critical cinema, and German film today.

**Course Goals and Objectives:**

The goals of this course encompass acquiring knowledge of this period of cultural history from the end of World War II, through the Cold War up until the twenty-first century. This seminar’s focus is to enhance reading, writing, and research skills, as well as to attain a deeper knowledge of German history from 1945 until the present and to provide an introduction to the practice of film studies.

**Required Texts:**

For your convenience and financial wellbeing, the readings will be available as PDFs on Moodle.

The films will be available for streaming through the platform *Kaltura* on Moodle.

You are responsible for doing all the reading and bringing the assigned texts to class.

**Grading:**

Attendance and Participation 25%

Weekly film analyses 15%

Discussion Lead 15%

Midterm Writing Assignment 20%

Final Paper 25%

**Attendance/Participation:**

A significant portion of your grade will be determined by your regular attendance, preparedness, and participation in class meetings. Two unexcused absences will lower your grade, as well as all subsequent absences. Please refer to the student handbook concerning absence policy. If you know that you will be absent, please get in touch with me in advance.

It is expected that you will have watched the assigned films and read the assigned material before class discussion. I will generally begin the course each session with a brief presentation of themes to be addressed that day, but it is expected that the rest of the class discussion remain student-centered. Be prepared to contribute and listen to your fellow classmates. The best way to ensure your success in this course is to be an active participant and always come prepared to critically discuss the material at hand.

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**Work Load and Expectations**

This course will entail weekly viewings of films that will be done on your time, reading, collaborating with classmates, academic writing, and other preparation. There is no prerequisite in terms of prior knowledge about Germany, film studies etc., but it is expected that you are willing to engage with the materials in an intellectual fashion fitting for a college seminar.

According to the college’s guidelines, you should expect to spend about 9 hours of work outside of class for a one-credit course at Trinity per week. Please plan accordingly.

**Weekly Film Analyses:**

You will each write a total of twelve 300-word film analyses (about a double-spaced page) with regard to various aspects of film studies. These will be submitted to me at the end of class as hardcopies. I will return them to you with a marking of √+, √, √–, or REDO. You will save these and hand them in as a packet at the end of the semester for a final grade. These should not be plot descriptions, but rather show critical thinking and analysis.

**Presentation/Discussion Lead:**

Each of you will be responsible for preparing a discussion lead for a reading in a particular week. Your duty will be to walk the class through the reading, introducing the text, giving commentary and insight into the authors’ arguments, and facilitating discussion through thoughtful discussion questions.

**Midterm Response Papers:**

You will write a midterm response paper of four to five pages (double-spaced, 12pt, 1-inch margins, times new roman). This paper will demonstrate your ability to critically write about the material discussed in class.

**Final Paper:**

Your final analytical paper of 6–8 pages (double-spaced, font size 12) will be a topic of your choice that considers an outside film that relates to the course topics. These should be submitted electronically via email, and the final submission date will be determined according to final exam schedules.

**Other House Rules:**

Since the readings will be available to you as electronic documents, you are allowed to use devices such as laptops and tablets in class to access the readings. **However, if I find that students are using laptops or tablets for purposes other than taking notes and accessing the readings, I will ban the use of them and everyone will have to print the materials**. Just don’t do it!

**Academic Standards:**

In accordance with the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract, students are expected to abide by the highest standards of intellectual honesty in all academic exercises. Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that he or she is fully aware of what constitutes intellectually honest work in every examination, quiz, paper, laboratory report, homework assignment, or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation in a course at Trinity College.

**Academic Accommodations:**

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access.

If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days’ notice is required. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing [SARC@trincoll.edu](mailto:SARC@trincoll.edu).

**Use of AI Programs:**

You have certainly heard by now about increasingly popular publicly-available artificial intelligence (A.I.) tools that produce writing when given human input/prompts. There have been many concerns raised by teachers across grade levels and institutions about the prospect of students using such technologies to cheat by having an A.I. write their essays or other writing assignments for them. We will doubtless have ongoing conversations in this course about the role of A.I. writing in our own processes, and even the ways that A.I. can be helpful to us as writers. However, a word of caution: any attempt to pass off A.I. writing as your own in this class constitutes a violation of Trinity College's intellectual honesty policy. As the Student Handbook explains, “Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw” (28-37; 28). Failure to abide by the policy may result in censure, suspension, or even expulsion. The use of A.I. writing tools for the purposes of cheating is also practically unwise for the following reasons:

* -  As with any other kind of cheating, **the main person you’re cheating is yourself** – if you don’t actually put in the work of developing your writing skills organically, you’ve just paid a bunch of money to learn nothing, and that lack of organic skill development will catch up with you eventually.
* -  In a word, **A.I. writing is not consistently good, and it’s risky to use**. A.I. writing software – in its best current iteration – produces writing that is mostly formulaic and generic, lacks the ability to meaningfully integrate critical contextual detail, and cannot properly cite / synthesize sources (in fact, it often fabricates them, which is a major academic integrity violation if caught).
* -  **For the assignments we will be completing, it is simply much easier to write your own work in this class**. A.I. writing tools are notoriously context-blind, and in a class where written work draws on localized concepts and points of discussion from our class (including written reflections on your own personal writing process), you’re likely going to get frustrated if you try to ask an A.I. to perform these tasks for you. I’ve tested the writing prompts & assignments I’ve developed this semester with some of the best A.I. writing tools out there, and none of them can consistently produce writing that meets the standard required for this course.
* -  As a human reader and your teacher, I don’t care what you can get an A.I. program to write. **I want to hear your unique voice** and help you develop it into something you can use and be proud of throughout your life, in a wide array of contexts. So please be genuine in your writing for this class – I promise that will make things far more enjoyable for all of us.

**Schedule: [preliminary and subject to change]**

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| **Week 1** | September 5, 7 |
| Tuesday | **Introduction to the Course and Film Studies** |
| Thursday | Reading: Tim Corrigan, “Film Terms and Topics for Analysis and Writing”  In Class: Film Clips and Film Studies Tutorials |
| **Week 2** | September 12, 14 |
| Tuesday | **I. Year Zero: The Immediate Postwar Period**  Film: *The Murderers Are among Us.* Dir. Wolfgang Staudte. 1947 (Soviet Zone). |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Robert Shandley, “Coming Home through Rubble Canyons.” * Hester Baer, “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Susanne?: The Female Gaze in Wolfgang Staudte’s *The Murderers Are among Us.*” |
| **Week 3** | September 19, 21 |
| Tuesday | **II. Screening the Recent Past**  Film: *Stars*. Dir. Konrad Wolf, 1959 (GDR). |
| Thursday | Film: *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), Dir. Bernhard Wicki, 1959 [FRG] |
| **Week 4** | September 26, 28  **III. New Voices: Young German Cinema, New German Cinema and the Rise of *Auteur* Cinema** |
| Tuesday | Film: *Der junge Törless* (Young Törless), Dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1966 [FRG] |
| Thursday | Film: *Abschied von gestern* (Yesterday Girl), Dir. Alexander Kluge, 1966 (FRG) |
| **Week 5** | October 3, 5 (No Class on Oct. 5) |
| Tuesday | Film: *Spur der Steine (*Traces of Stones), Dir. Frank Beyer, 1966 [GDR] |
| Thursday | Thursday, October 5, No Class, Prof. Doerre will be at a conference. |
| **Week 6** | October 10, 12 (No Class on Oct. 10, Trinity Days) |
| Tuesday | No Class Trinity Days. |
| Thursday | Film: *Der amerikanische Freund (The American Friend)*, Dir. Wim Wenders, 1977 [FRG]  \*\*\***Midterm Writing Assignment Due\*\*\*** |
| **Week 7** | October 17, 19 |
| Tuesday | Film: *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, Dir. Volker Schlöndorff/Margarete von Trotta, 1975 (FRG). |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Jack Zipes, “The Political Dimensions of *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*.” * Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis, "The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum" * Alexandra Seibel, “The Carnival of Repression: German Left-Wing Politics and the *Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*.”   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 8** | October 24, 26 |
| Tuesday | Film: *The Marriage of Maria Braun*. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979 (FRG). |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Thomas Elsaesser, “The BRD Trilogy, or: History, the Love Story?” * Anton Kaes, “The Presence of the Past: Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *The Marriage of Maria Braun*.” * Joyce Rheuban, “*Maria Braun*: History, Melodrama, Ideology.”   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 9** | October 31, Nov. 2 |
| Tuesday | Film: *Germany, Pale Mother*. Dir. Helma Sanders-Brahms, 1980 (FRG). |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Susan Linville, “The Mother-Daughter Plot in History: Sanders-Brahms *Germany, Pale Mother*.” * Barbara Kosta, “Recasting Autobiography” (excerpt) * Anton Kaes, “Our Childhoods, Ourselves: Helma Sanders-Brahms’ *Germany, Pale Mother*.”   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 10** | November 7, 9 |
| Tuesday | Film: *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (Aguirre the Wrath of God). Dir. Werner Herzog, 1972 (FRG). |
| Thursday | Film: *Fitzcarraldo*. Dir. Werner Herzog, 1982 (FRG) |
| **Week 11** | November 14, 16 (No Class on Nov. 14, Trinity Bicentennial) |
| Tuesday | No Class, Trinity Bicentennial |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Richard Leppert, “Opera, Aesthetic Violence, and the Imposition of Modernity.” * Werner Herzog, *Conquest of the Useless* (excerpt) * John Davidson, “Drums along the Amazon: the rhythm of the Iron System in Werner Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo*.”   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 12** | November 21, 23 (No Class on Nov. 23, Thanksgiving) |
| Tuesday | Film: *Jakob der Lügner* (Jacob the Liar). Dir. Frank Beyer, 1975. |
| Thursday | No Class, Thanksgiving |
| **Week 13** | November 28, 30 |
| Tuesday | Film: *Das Boot*. Dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 1981 (FRG) |
| Thursday | * Hester Baer, “*Das Boot* and the German Cinema of Neoliberalism.” * TBD   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 14** | December 5, 7  **IV. Twenty-First Century Blockbusters** |
| Tuesday | Film: *The Lives of Others*. Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006. (Germany) |
| Thursday | Reading:   * Gary Schmidt, “Between Authors and Agents: Gender and Affirmative Culture in *Das Leben der Anderen*.” * Manfred Wilke, “Fiction or Lived History? On the Question of the Credibility of *The Lives of Others*.” * Cheryl Dueck, “The Humanization of the Stasi in *Das Leben der Anderen*.”   **Discussion Lead:** |
| **Week 15** | December 12 |
| Tuesday | Film: *Good Bye, Lenin!* Dir. Wolfgang Becker, 203. (Germany) |
| **Final Paper** | December 19, by 12:00PM |

**Recommended Films:**

*I Was Nineteen*. Dir. Konrad Wolf.

*Traces of Stones*. Dir. Frank Beier.

*Jakob the Liar.* Dir. Frank Beier.

*Stroszek*. Dir. Werner Herzog.

*Aguirre*. Dir. Werner Herzog.

*Germany in Autumn*. Dir. R.W. Fassbinder et al.

*The Bitter Tears of Petra Kant*. Dir. R.W. Fassbinder.

*The Promise*. Dir. Margarete von Trotta.

*The Legend of Rita*. Dir. Volker Schlöndorff.

*Barbara*. Dir. Christian Petzold.

*Head on.* Dir. Fatih Akin.

*Nowhere in Africa.* Dir. Caroline Link.

*Nowhere to Go*. Dir. Oskar Roehler.

*The City below.* Dir. Christoph Hochhäusler.

*Good Bye, Lenin*! Dir. Wolfgang Becker.