

**THEA 492 (Topics in Drama and Theatre):
“The ‘New’ Berlin and Its Places of Memory—as Represented
in Film, Drama, Museums, and Urban Sites” (3 credits)**

(Study Abroad Program Berlin in 2008)

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1. Purpose

The course provides a historical, political and cultural introduction to one of the most multi-faceted cities of recent times. Like very few other metropolises, Berlin has witnessed some of the major upheavals of the last century: the short-lived attempt at democracy during the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, the fascist Third Reich in the 1930s and 1940s, the division of Berlin into (capitalist) “West” and (socialist) “East” from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, and the reunification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Since the end of the Iron Curtain various campaigns have proclaimed “das neue Berlin”—the new Berlin. At the same time, the public discussion about how to commemorate the history of Berlin—and of Germany at large—has not stopped. The Memorial Museum of German Resistance, the Gedächtniskirche, the Topography of Terror exhibition and the Museum at Checkpoint Charlie, for example, all predate the fall of the Wall, but the Jewish Museum, the Holocaust memorial, and the National Historical Museum were only built after 1989. Also, some historic districts of Berlin—such as Hackesche Höfe in Berlin-Mitte—were rediscovered and cautiously remodeled in the 1990s, while a desolate areas such as Potsdamer Platz was turned into an architectural showcase of Berlin’s new corporate power. This course will examine some of the major public controversies and arguments that accompanied the planning and construction of some of the mentioned memorials, museums, and sites. As the public debate regarding the design of the planned “Freedom Tower” on the former site of the World Trade Center in New York City has amply demonstrated (and a similar discussion is still going on about the efforts of rebuilding New Orleans in the wake of hurricane Katrina), the relationship between place and memory is also a major issue in contemporary American political culture. What better place than Berlin to investigate the complex interconnections between politics, history, personal memory, public remembrance, the commemoration of the past and the celebration of the present?

2. Course alpha, number, title and the number of credits

THEA 492 (Topics in Drama and Theatre): “The ‘New’ Berlin and Its Places of Memory—as Represented in Film, Drama, Museums, and Urban Sites” (3 credits)

3. Course Description

This course will investigate how the “new Berlin” relates to the history of the “old Berlin.” Each week of the summer session will be dedicated to a different era in Berlin’s recent history: Weimar Republic, Third Reich, West Berlin, East Berlin, and the Berlin Republic. The syllabus for each week follows the same pattern: an introduction to each week’s historical period, a discussion of literary texts from that era, and the screening and discussion of a film (on video/DVD) relating to that period on Monday, followed by a discussion of significant “places of memory” from that period and a half-day excursion to the discussed places of memory on Thursday.

4. Required Texts

- Brian Ladd. *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. The University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- David Clay Large. *Berlin*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- 1 Course Reader for THEA 492 (assigned readings included in the Reader are marked *).

5. Detailed Syllabus

The times for all class sessions may still change, depending on the scheduling of the program at the Free University of Berlin.

- 5/31** 12:00pm arrival/formal first day of session: orientation
- 6/1** 10:00am settling in—possible brief visits of shops, sites, afternoon culture

I. Berlin from Its Beginnings to the Weimar Republic

- 6/2** 9:00am-10:30am historical introduction
assigned reading: LADD, “Introduction,” “Old Berlin”
- 11:00am-12:30pm historical introduction (cont.)
assigned reading: LADD, “Metropolis;” TILL, “Haunting, Memory, Place;”* TAYLOR, *Berlin and Its Culture* (pp. 233-254)*
- 2:00pm-3:30pm screening and discussion of Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin. Symphony*
- 6/5** 9:00am-10:30am places of memory: Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, Alexanderplatz
assigned reading: DÖBLIN, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (excerpts)*
- 11:00am-3:30pm excursion to the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, Unter den Linden, Alexanderplatz and Nikolai Quarter

II. Berlin during the Third Reich

- 6/9** 9:00am-10:30am historical introduction
assigned reading: LADD, “Nazi Berlin;” LARGE, “Hitler’s Berlin”
- 11:00am-12:30pm screening and discussion of Max Färberböck’s *Aimee and Jaguar*
- 2:00pm-3:30pm discussion of assigned reading:
BRECHT, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich**; TAYLOR, *Berlin and Its Culture* (pp. 262-272)*
- 6/12** 9:00am-10:30am places of memory: the Topography of Terror exhibition, the Jewish Museum and the Holocaust Memorial

assigned reading: TILL, “The Gestapo Terrain: Landscape, Digging, Open Wounds”* and “Aestheticizing the Rupture: Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial”*

11:00am-3:30pm excursion to the Topography of Terror exhibition, the Jewish Museum, and the Holocaust Memorial

III. The Divided City—East Berlin

6/16 9:00am-10:30am historical introduction
assigned reading: LADD, “Berlin Walls;” LARGE, “Coming into the Cold” and “The Divided City”

11:00am-12:30pm screening and discussion of Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck’s *The Lives of Others*

2:00pm-3:30pm discussion of assigned reading:
MÜLLER, *Germania Death in Berlin**; TAYLOR, *Berlin and Its Culture* (pp. 322-345, 347-351)*

6/19 9:00am-10:30am places of memory: Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse, (former) Stalinallee and the Soviet War Memorial in Treptow
assigned reading: LADD, “Divided Berlin”

11:00am-3:30pm excursion to Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse, (former) Stalinallee and the Soviet War Memorial in Treptow

IV. The Divided City—West Berlin

6/23 9:00am-10:30am historical introduction
assigned reading: LARGE, “The Divided City” and “From Bonn to Berlin;” TAYLOR, *Berlin and Its Culture* (pp. 302-321, 345-347)*

11:00am-12:30pm screening and discussion of Wim Wenders’s *Wings of Desire*

2:00pm-3:30pm discussion of assigned reading:
song lyrics of West-Berlin Punk/New Wave songs from the late 1970s/early 1980s (Nina Hagen, Ideal, Einstürzende Neubauten, etc.)*

6/26 9:00am-10:30am places of memory: Bahnhof Zoo, Kurfürstendamm, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and Checkpoint Charlie
assigned reading: *Christiane F: Autobiography of a Girl of the Streets and Heroin Addict* (excerpts)*

11:00am-3:30pm excursion to Bahnhof Zoo, Kurfürstendamm, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and Checkpoint Charlie

V. Berlin after the Wall

- 6/30** 9:00am-10:30am historical introduction
assigned reading: LADD, “Capital of the New Germany;”
LARGE, “The Berlin Republic”
- 11:00am-12:30pm screening and discussion of Wolfgang Becker’s *Good Bye, Lenin*
- 2:00pm-3:30pm discussion of assigned reading:
GRÜNBEIN, *Ashes for Breakfast: Selected Poems* (excerpts)*
- 7/3** 9:00am-10:30am places of memory: Chaussee Strasse, Oranienburger Strasse and
Potsdamer Platz
assigned reading: WHYBROW, “Chaussee Strasse: the Last
Place”*
- 11:00am-3:30pm excursion to Chaussee Strasse, Brecht House, Dorotheenstädtischer
Friedhof, Oranienburger Strasse and Potsdamer Platz

VI. Course Conclusion

- 7/7** 9:00am-10:30am screening and discussion of Tom Tykwer’s *Run Lola Run*
- 11:00am-12:30pm discussion of assigned reading:
GANEVA, “No History, Just Stories: Revisiting Tradition in
Berlin Films of the 1990s”*
- 2:00pm-3:30pm presentation of final student projects
- 7/10** 9:00am-10:30am presentation of final student projects
- 11:00am-12:30pm presentation of final student projects
- 2:00pm-3:30pm wrapping up
- 7/12** return to Honolulu

6. Contact Hours

3 credit hours. Equivalent contact hours = 3 x 15 = 45. Over a 5-week period, this implies about 2 contact hours per day.

7. Prerequisites

Any lower division course dealing with 20th-century history, theatre, architecture, urban studies, art or literature.

8. Appropriateness of course in relation to overseas setting

This course focuses on public ways of commemorating history. There are very few other cities—particularly in the United States—that could rival Berlin as a major site of “historical remembrance” and monuments. This course is particularly appropriate for the Berlin setting since it reflects the historical, political, cultural and topographical complexity of Berlin in the variety of the course offerings (site and museum excursions, film screenings, discussion of historical, topical, and literary texts).

9. Criteria for student evaluation

The students are expected to work on a final project that they will present during the last three days of class. The project should document the student’s independent and original academic and/or creative research on one of the topics, sites and/or texts discussed in class, but it could be produced in different formats: as a research paper, as a literary text, as a video documentation, as a visual essay combining text and photography, as a performance piece, etc.

The students are also required to give three 10-minute presentations introducing the assigned readings or films to be discussed in the respective course session. They are expected to hand in a 2-3 page, hand-written version of each presentation.

The journals should document the students’ reflections on discussed readings and films, visited sites and, particularly, their experiences in Berlin outside of the course context.

Grading:

Final projects:.....	30%
Presentations:.....	30%
Journal:.....	20%
Class participation:.....	20%