

Berlin Theater Syllabus

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Rutgers: German 391; Duke: German 133S

Course Description

Berlin is the center of a dynamic theater culture in Europe. In this course we will be reading several plays, including classics of the German theater tradition such as an adaptation of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Frank Wedekind's *Lulu*, Heinrich von Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*, George Tabori's *Mein Kampf*, as well as one German opera (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), and German movies (TBA). But even as we focus on these texts, we will also be paying attention to their staging ("Inszenierung"), and the ways in which directors, actors and their colleagues address contemporary audiences and their social, political and economic concerns.

We will focus our preparation and discussion on four to five plays, but may additionally attend one to three additional performances together to help us investigate aspects of the German dramatic tradition and its contemporary stage practice. Our outings may also include a backstage tour of one of the Berlin theaters. Our schedule of theater visits and other excursions appears at the course's Sakai site and will be updated as necessary.

Note: This course will be conducted entirely in German, and presumes that you have reached an advanced level in the language. That said, if you have never been to German-speaking Europe before, you should expect to struggle, initially, in understanding much of what people say, whether on the street or at the theater productions we will be attending. You may even feel, at first, as though you didn't know any German at all. *Don't be discouraged: you do, and you'll be fine.* It takes some time and effort getting used to the speed of conversational (and theatrical) German, but your comprehension will quickly improve, as will your ability to interact with native speakers.

Course Requirements

Students are required to read and attend all plays as assigned. In addition, typical assignments (to be specified when we meet) include:

1. energetic discussion, during our meetings, of the assigned texts and the productions we are seeing;
2. written reviews (1-2 pp. in German, hand-written or printed) that focus on specific aspects of a production;
3. the performance of a scene or monologue from an assigned play (Theater Workshop led by actress and singer Sissi Zängerle)¹;
4. Midterm Exam;
5. a final paper (5 pp. in German) that examines one of the plays and/or

¹ Do not be intimidated by this requirement. Nobody's expecting professional-quality acting, nor is the emphasis on perfect word-for-word memorization. Rather, you will be getting to understand certain scenes and situations better by representing their basic dynamic in concentrated form. These skits can also be quite entertaining, though, both for the performers and for the rest who watch.

productions or a particular issue relevant to two plays and/or productions. The final paper is due Thursday, June 30th.

Grade

Short written assignments, attendance, and class participation 40%; Midterm exam 30%; Final paper 30%

Grading scales

Rutgers: A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64-0
Duke: A: 93- 100%, A-: 92- 90%, B+: 89- 88%, B: 87- 83%, B-: 82-80%, C+: 79-78%, C: 77-73%, C-: 72-70%, D+: 69-68%, D: 67-63%, D-: 62-60%, F: 59-0

Class participation

The success of each class discussion depends on your active participation. Students who receive an "A" for class participation will do so by coming to each class ready with questions, and by actively engaging in discussion of the assigned readings.

Attendance

The summer in Berlin program is an intense academic experience. Every class meeting is important. Failure to attend regularly and to appear punctually will adversely affect your grade. After a grace period of one missed session (which you should reserve for unexpected illness), your final course grade will be lowered one "step" for each additional absence, e.g. from a C+ to a C for the second absence, and so forth. Given the intense nature of the program, even absences for reasons of ill health or other emergencies may result in your having to withdraw from a course.

Plagiarism

This is an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to his or her program director for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Please discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues. (Rutgers University's policies on academic integrity appear at <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>; those for Duke University appear at <https://plagiarism.duke.edu>.)

Meeting Times and being flexible

Since our course is largely contingent on the productions currently taking place in Berlin; since schedules for these productions often only appear a few weeks in advance; and since ticket availability can sometimes be an issue, both our schedule and the structure of the syllabus might undergo changes during the program. I will assume that we all have web access, however – whether via a laptop with internet stick, a terminal at the Technical University, or an internet café, of which there are many around Berlin and near the student apartments) – and I'll be using Sakai and e-mail to help all of us coordinate our plans. If you receive a message from Sakai, do be sure to read it promptly. If you have trouble reading it, be sure to logon to Sakai and read the full message at the e-mail archive for the course. I'll always try to announce meeting times and locations well in advance; however, you should regularly consult the calendar at the course Sakai site so that you always have the most current information.

If for any reason you're unsure about what we're doing, contact another student or myself to find out. I can generally be reached quickly by e-mail; if it's more urgent, call

or text me at 0177-337-4414. Note that the time we spend together in the theater itself is generally considered homework, not class time.

Bringing Assigned Texts to Class

Some materials will be available at the course's Sakai website; you will receive others in hard copy from me in Berlin. In order for us to discuss the weekly readings (both those available in book version, and those available as pdf-files), each seminar participant will need to bring his or her copy of the assigned reading(s) to each class. Unless you can both reliably and quickly navigate to the relevant page on a laptop that you bring to class (and, preferably, have a mark-up feature as well to highlight specific passages or add marginal notes), you will need to print each pdf- file out in full and bring it in hard copy. In either case, be sure to download (and print) all available readings early on, when you still have time to resolve any technical issues that might otherwise prevent your arriving prepared for a particular class.

Course Sakai website

A website for this course is available to enrolled students at sakai.rutgers.edu (login and select the tab *Berlin Theater 2011*). A copy of the syllabus is available at the Berlin Theater website, as are pdf-copies of some readings (under *Resources*). You can e-mail one or more other participants by using the *Discussion & Private Messages* tab, and under *E-mail archive* you can see messages that I have sent to the whole group.

Special fee

Because of the expense involved in buying theater tickets, I will need to collect 50 Euros from each of you to defray this cost, and an additional 25 Euros to cover the cost of books and photocopies, for a total of 75 Euros. If this presents a particular burden to you, please see your program director (myself for Rutgers students, Prof. Donahue for Duke students) to apply for a subsidy from the program.

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What to Wear

I'd ask you to wear clothes that generally respect the fact that you're in a cultural institution that people take seriously. Generally avoid shorts or sports clothing, and any clothes that are badly worn and/or have obvious tears in them. Avoid clothing that's excessively revealing. Local audiences vary considerably in how

formally or informally they dress, but you might go for “business casual”; if you feel like dressing up more, you won’t be out of place.

Cell phones must be turned off during class – as well as during theater productions!