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16:470:672  
172 College Avenue

### German Film from 1945 to the Present

Sessions: Tuesdays 4:30-7:00, German House Seminar Room  
Office hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 or by appointment, German House 303A

#### Description:

We will look at a variety of feature films in German after 1945 to focus on issues of guilt, remembrance (and its counterpart: amnesia), gender, *Heimat* or “homeland,” national self-fashioning, and trauma. How does the Second World War inflect these films? What other socio-political and economic factors influence the private and collective identities that these films articulate? How do the predominant concerns shift with the passage of time? How is the category of “nation” constructed and how is it contested within the narratives themselves? Close attention will be paid to aesthetic issues and the concept of “authorship.”

We will also look beyond German-language borders and focus in particular on the role of Austrian directors in the US. A grant from the Botstiber Foundation for Austrian-American Studies makes possible a series of guest lectures on émigrés such as Fritz Lang, Edgar Ulmer, Peter Lorre, and Billy Wilder.

Readings and discussions will be in English. Readers of German and French are encouraged to read the texts in the original where possible. The assigned readings are all on reserve (Sakai). The films will be available at the Media Library on Douglass Campus for viewing. Many films are available via Netflix. The suggested further readings point students toward additional relevant criticism, but are not expected for class; the same holds true for the suggested films.

#### Requirements:

Active class participation/attendance  
Weekly papers (1-2 pp.)  
Short outline of proposed final project (1-2 pp. double-spaced) and bibliography (1-2 pp.)  
Final paper (15-20 pp.)

#### September

1<sup>st</sup> class (4.9): Introduction to German film before 1939

clips: Robert Wiene, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)  
Fritz Lang, Metropolis (1927)  
Fritz Lang, Fury (1936)  
Leni Riefenstahl, Olympia (1938)

2<sup>nd</sup> class (11.9): The *Stunde Null* (“Zero Hour”)

view: Wolfgang Staudte, Die Mörder sind unter uns (The Murderers Are Among Us, 1946)  
read: Karl Jaspers, The Question of German Guilt  
Hannah Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility”  
clips: Roberto Rossellini, Germany Year Zero (Germania Anno Zero, 1947); Rainer Werner Fassbinder, The Marriage of Maria Braun (Die Ehe der Maria Braun, 1978)

suggested further reading: Robert Shandley, “Coming Home through Rubble Canyons” (Ch. 2) in Rubble Films  
Daniela Berghahn, “The East German Film Industry and the State” and “Coming to Terms with the Nazi Legacy: DEFA’s Anti-Fascist Films” (ch. 1 and 2) in Hollywood Behind the Wall

3<sup>rd</sup> class (18.9): The Oberhausen Manifesto (1962): A Departure?

view: Alexander Kluge, Yesterday Girl (Abschied von gestern, 1966)

view: Ferry Radax, Sonne, halt! (1962)

read: Christian Metz, “Story/Discourse (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism)”

Rod Stoneman, “Alexander Kluge: Utopian Cinema” in Processes of Transposition

suggested viewing: Volker Schlöndorff, The Young Törless (Der junge Törleß, 1966)

suggested further reading: Eric Rentschler, “Specularity and spectacle in Schlöndorff’s Young Törless”

Timothy Corrigan, New German Film: The Displaced Image (chapter on Kluge’s Strongman Ferdinand)

Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, “The Federal Republic 1968 to 1990” in New German Cultural Studies

4<sup>th</sup> class (25.9): Mythologizing Fascism: The Charismatic Leader

view: Werner Herzog, Aguirre, the Wrath of God (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes, 1972)

read: Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism”

Roland Barthes, “Myth Today”

clips: Werner Herzog, Fitzcarraldo (1982); Leni Riefenstahl, Triumph of the Will (1935); Werner Schroeter, This Night (2008)

suggested further reading: Brad Prager, The Cinema of Werner Herzog

## October

5<sup>th</sup> class (2.10): The Radicalization of Public Life

view: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven (Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel, 1975)

read: Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (excerpt)  
Thomas Elsaesser, New German Cinema, ch. 1

clips: Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta, The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum (Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, 1975)

suggested further reading: Thomas Elsaesser, Fassbinder’s Germany

6<sup>th</sup> class (9.10): Visit by Joe McElhaney, Hunter College

view: Fritz Lang, Clash by Night (1952)

read: Raymond Bellour, “On Fritz Lang”

suggested further reading: Anton Kaes, “A Stranger in the House: Fritz Lang’s *Fury* and the Cinema of Exile”

suggested further viewing: Fritz Lang, Fury (1936)

7<sup>th</sup> class (16.10): Belated Mourning Work?

view: Kluge, Fassbinder, et al. Germany in Autumn (Deutschland im Herbst) (1977)

read: Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia”

Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, The Inability to Mourn (excerpt)

Theodor Adorno, "The Meaning of Working through the Past"  
slides: Gerhard Richter, [17. Oktober 1977](#)  
suggested further reading: Anton Kaes, "The Presence of the Past" in [From Hitler to Heimat](#)

8<sup>th</sup> class (23.10): The Homogenization of Experience

view: Wim Wenders, [The American Friend \(Der amerikanische Freund, 1977\)](#)  
read: Theodor Adorno, "On the Question: 'What is German?'"  
Timothy Corrigan, "Cinematic Snuff: German Friends and Narrative Murders"  
suggested further reading: Thomas Elsaesser, "Spectators of Life: Time, Place, and Self in the Films of Wim Wenders"  
Alexander Graf, [The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Celluloid Highway](#)  
clips: Wim Wenders, [Wings of Desire \(Himmel über Berlin, 1991\)](#), [Paris, Texas \(1984\)](#)  
**Paper outline and bibliography due in class**

9<sup>th</sup> class (30.10): At Home in the New West

view: Andreas Dresen, [Grill Point \(Halbe Treppe\) \(2002\)](#)  
read: Eric Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to Postwall Cinema of Consensus"  
Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema,"  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=B-Qh9oZT6ggC&lp=PA52&ots=dmQN-r7i\\_J&dq=higson%20concept%20of%20national%20cinema&lr&pg=PA57#v=onepage&q=higson%20concept%20of%20national%20cinema&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=B-Qh9oZT6ggC&lp=PA52&ots=dmQN-r7i_J&dq=higson%20concept%20of%20national%20cinema&lr&pg=PA57#v=onepage&q=higson%20concept%20of%20national%20cinema&f=false)

## November

10<sup>th</sup> class (6.11): visit by Prof. Noah Isenberg (The New School), on Edgar Ulmer

view: Edgar Ulmer, [The Black Cat \(1934\)](#)  
read: Noah Isenberg, "Perennial Detour: The Cinema of Edgar G. Ulmer and the Experience of Exile"

11<sup>th</sup> class (13.11): visit by Prof. Tom Gunning (University of Chicago)  
film and reading tba

Thanksgiving (Thursday classes on 20.11)

12<sup>th</sup> class (27.11): visit by Gerd Gemünden (Dartmouth College)

view: Peter Lorre, [Der Verlorene](#)  
reading tba

## December

13<sup>th</sup> class (4.12): At Home in the New West

view: Ulrich Seidl, [Import/Export \(2007\)](#)  
read: Johannes von Moltke, [No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema](#) (excerpt)  
Deleuze and Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?" (excerpt)  
clip: Fatih Akin, [Head On \(Gegen die Wand\)](#)  
suggested further reading: Hamid Naficy, [An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking](#) (excerpt)

14<sup>th</sup> class (11.12): Traumatic Temporalities

view: Michael Haneke, [The White Ribbon \(Das weiße Band, 2009\)](#)  
read: Susannah Radstone, "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate"  
Roy Grundmann, "Haneke's Anachronism" in *A Companion to*

*Michael Haneke*

clips: Götz Spielmann, Revanche (2008), Christian Petzold, Yella (2007)

suggested further reading: James Williams, "Aberrations of Beauty: Violence and Cinematic Resistance in Haneke's *The White Ribbon*"

Marco Abel, "Intensifying Life: The Cinema of the 'Berlin School'"

**14.12 FINAL PAPER DUE**