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VISIONS OF EUROPE: THE FILMS OF THE BERLIN SCHOOL

Spring 2020

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INDEX: 06390

M 4:30pm - 7:10pm, Craig Seminar Room, AB West Wing 4050

Coined the “German Nouvelle Vague” by critics, the “Berlin School”—a loose association of German filmmakers—has gained popularity over the last two decades not just in Germany, but also amongst the European and American arthouse community. Films by this informal collective share an aesthetics deeply concerned with formal aspects of filmmaking, yet they also betray a candid political realism.

While the films of the “Berlin School” are largely understood as a portrayal of Germany lacking an identity after 1989, this course will read a selection of films by Harun Farocki, Christoph Hochhäusler, Valeska Grisebach, Christian Petzold, and Angela Schanelec as indicative of a subtle engagement with the European Union in crisis. A close reading of basic cinematic strategies as well as a critical investigation of both the history of the European Union as well as the history of art house cinema, will allow us to reconsider recent developments in the European socio-political and cultural context. Readings include André Bazin, Miriam Hansen, Siegfried Kracauer, Anna Seghers, Yoko Tawada, and Jacques Rancière.

The seminar will be followed by a conference on the same topic at Rutgers in the fall of 2019, involving scholars, critics, and filmmakers. Students will have the opportunity to help conceptualize and actively participate in the conference.

Taught in English.

Texts to be purchased at the Rutgers Bookstore:

- **Anna Seghers: Transit**
ISBN 13: 978-1590176252
- **Saša Stanišić: *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone***
ISBN-13: 978-0802144225

Course Requirements:

Attendance, careful preparation of assigned readings, active class participation (20%); one 20-minute oral presentation (30%); one response to an oral presentation (10%); one final essay (20 pp., 40%).

LEARNING GOALS:

(1) Students will demonstrate familiarity with a variety of German film and literature as well as methods of studying film and culture across national and linguistic boundaries and evaluate the nature, function and value of film from a global perspective.

(2) Students will analyze a specific body of research and write a clear and well-developed paper about a topic related to more than one filmic and cultural tradition.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**January 27 INTRO: A EUROPEAN CINEMA?****READ:**

Thomas Elsaesser: "Film as Thought", "Film as Thought Experiment", "Europe. A Thought Experiment" (Canvas)

Yoko Tawada: "Where Europe begins" (Canvas)

February 3 IDENTITY: GERMANY**FILMS:**

Christian Petzold: *Phoenix* (available for rent on amazon, youtube)

Rainer Werner Fassbinder: *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (kanopy)

Recommended: Alfred Hitchcock: *Vertigo*, Wolfgang Staudte: *The Murderers are Among Us*

READ:

Jaimey Fisher: Petzold's *Phoenix*, Fassbinder's *Maria Braun* and the Melodramatic Archeology of the Rubble Past":

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2017/christian-petzold-a-dossier/petzold-fassbinder/>, Brad Prager: *Phoenix* (Canvas)

Recommended: Anton Kaes, "The Presence of the Past" (Canvas)

February 10 **FILMS:**

Harun Farocki: *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*

READ:

Nora Alter: "The Political Im/perceptible: *Images of the World...*", in: Elsaesser (ed.), *Harun Farocki. Working on the Sight-Lines* (eBook: <http://bit.ly/309swEd>),

Harun Farocki: "Reality would have to begin" (eBook: <http://bit.ly/309swEd>)

Jacques Rancière: "The Future of the Image" (Canvas)

Recommended: Christa Blümlinger: "Slowly Forming a Thought while working on Images" (eBook: <http://bit.ly/309swEd>), Timothy Corrigan: "Montaigne to Marker," in: *The Essay Film*, 13-50. (ebook: <http://bit.ly/2t6Xr7X>)

February 17 FILMS:

Christian Petzold: *Barbara* (kanopy)

Christoph Hochhäusler: *The City Below*

READ:

Marco Abel: *Intro to The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*

Interview with Petzold: <https://www.cineaste.com/summer2008/the-cinema-of-identification-gets-on-my-nerve>

Thomas Elsaesser: "Anatomy Lesson of a Vanished Country" (Canvas)

Abel: "Unter dir die Stadt" (Canvas)

Recommended: Brad Prager: „No time like the Present“:

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2017/christian-petzold-a-dossier/christian-petzolds-barbara/>, Abel: "Christian Petzold: *Heimat*-Building as Utopia," in: *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*, 69-110;

February 24 FILM:

Valeska Grisebach: *Longing*

READ:

Abel: "A Sharpening of our Regards", in: *New Directions of German Cinema* (ebook: <http://bit.ly/2ThBvI9>)

Rancière: "The Distribution of the Sensible" (Canvas)

March 2 TRANSIT: FRANCE

READ:

Anna Seghers: *Transit* (Rutgers book store)

Miriam Hansen: "With Skin and Hair": Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940" (<http://bit.ly/36V0JKI>)

Walter Benjamin: *The Arcades Project* (excerpts on Canvas)

FILM IN CLASS:

László Moholy-Nagy: *Pont Transbordeur, Marseille*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIS68oJClGI>

March 9

FILM:

Christian Petzold: *Transit* (viewable on Netflix, rent on youtube, amazon)

READ:

Miriam Hansen: "With Skin and Hair": Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940"

(<http://bit.ly/36V0JKI>)

Siegfried Kracauer: "Basic Concepts" (2-30), "Experience and its Material" (296-311), in: *Theory of Film*. (Canvas)

Guest session with Dr. Elisa Ronzheimer (AkadR, University of Bielefeld)

March 16

SPRING BREAK

March 23

FILM:

Angela Schanelec: *Marseille*

READ:

Abel: "Angela Schanelec: Narrative, Understanding, Language" (Canvas)

Gilles Deleuze: *The Time-Image* (excerpts, Canvas)

FINAL PAPER CONSULTATION: SEE ME IN MY OFFICE HOUR AND BRING ABSTRACT+RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL PAPER.

March 30

LACK: LANGUAGE

FILM:

Angela Schanelec: *Orly*

READ:

Walter Benjamin: "On some motifs in Baudelaire" (Canvas)

Marc Augé: *Non-Places. An Introduction to Supermodernity* (excerpts, Canvas)

April 6

FILM:

Valeska Grisebach: *Western* (for rent on youtube and amazon prime)

Maren Ade: *Toni Erdmann*

(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kypke2pkcot6b6w/Toni%20Erdmann.mp4?dl=0>)

READ:

Valeska Grisebach: „The view from here“ (Canvas)

André Bazin: “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism” (ebook: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1513947&ppg=35>)

Bazin: „The Ontology of the Photographic Image“ (ebook: [https://www-fulcrum-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/epubs/jd472x027?locale=en#/6/2\[xhtml0000001\]/4/1:0](https://www-fulcrum-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/epubs/jd472x027?locale=en#/6/2[xhtml0000001]/4/1:0))

Recommended:

Jacques Rancière: “Documentary Fiction: Marker and the Fiction of Memory ,” in: *Film Fables*.

April 13

FILM:

Christoph Hochhäusler: *This very moment/ Milchwald*

READ:

Saša Stanišić: *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* (Rutgers Bookstore)

Kristin Kopp: “Christoph Hochhäusler’s *This Very Moment*: The Berlin School and the Politics of Spatial Aesthetics in the German-Polish Borderlands” (ebook: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3416448&ppg=292>)

April 20

REALISM: GLOBAL WORLDS

FILM:

Ulrich Köhler: *Sleeping Sickness*

Ulrich Köhler: *In My Room* (for rent on youtube or amazon prime)

READ:

Ulrich Köhler: “Why I don’t make political films”

<https://newfilmkritik.de/archiv/2007-04/why-i-dont-make-political-films/>

Mark Peranson: “Not Political Cinema” <https://cinema-scope.com/festivals/festival-in-focus-berlin-2011-not-political-cinema-ulrich-kohlers-sleeping-sickness/>

Recommended:

Abel: “Ulrich Köhler: The Politics of Refusal,” in: *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*.

April 27 Styx // Schläfer

FILMS:

Benjamin Heisenberg: *Sleeper*
Wolfgang Fischer: *Styx* (kanopy)

READ:

Michel Foucault: "Panopticism" (Canvas)
Henrike Lehnguth: "Sleepers, Informants, and the Everyday. Theorizing Terror and Ambiguity in Benjamin Heisenberg's *Schläfer*" (Canvas)

Recommended:

Abel: "Benjamin Heisenberg. Filming Simply as Resistance," in: *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*, 202-214.

<https://www.zeit.de/2018/29/seenotrettung-fluechtlinge-privat-mittelmeer-pro-contra> (IN GERMAN!)

May 4 Final Paper Presentation

Student-Wellness Services:

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Crisis Intervention : <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/crisis-intervention/>

Report a Concern: <http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and

stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.