Berlin, 1945-1990: Divided City

Course Outline: Berlin, 1945-1990: Divided City

History / BA level
ECTS 5

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Straddling the Cold War’s frontline, Berlin has stood at the forefront of not only German history but of European and global developments as well. The divided city symbolized and represented the global conflict between capitalism and socialism; the division of the world, Europe and Germany into East and West; and also the nature, structure and goals of their supporting, antagonistic world political systems. This course will prove insights into the key political developments in Berlin’s recent history from the fall of the Third Reich, through the decades of political and physical division, to the collapse of the Wall in 1989 and Germany’s subsequent reunification. What is more, the course will also explore post-war Berlin’s social and cultural history, paying special attention to common themes, experiences and concerns that transcended the city’s physical division, affecting Berliners on both sides of the Wall. Students are provided with suggested reading to prepare themselves for each session.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Students are required to maintain a regular attendance, participate actively in class, submit two written assignments, and participate in group presentations.

METHODOLOGY / SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH THIS COURSE

This course is open to students from all academic backgrounds who have an interest in Berlin and its history. The course will develop transferrable skills, including the ability to argue effectively about intellectual issues, both orally and in writing, and to work together with others in a small group setting.

DIDACTICS
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Participants will develop a close understanding of key political, social, and cultural developments in Berlin and of the connections between those developments and broader trends in post-war German and European history. They will be introduced to the latest relevant historiography and will learn to engage critically with a range of written and unwritten materials, including novels, films, photographs and public exhibitions. Documents will be circulated and discussed in class, providing students with an opportunity engage with historical sources.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING

The class meets Tuesdays, 4-6 pm at Hausvogteiplatz 5-7, room 323-26.

!!! Please note some classes and excursions may be subject to change. Any changes to the course schedule will be confirmed during the first session.  
!!! All mandatory reading will be made available on Moodle

Introductory Reading

• David Clay Large, Berlin (2000).

Week 1 (14 April): Introductory session
Getting to know each other. We will discuss the aims and expectations of the course. Tutor will provide an introduction to Berlin and its pre-war history.

Week 2 (21 April). The Legacy of War and Occupation
This session will look at a city in ruins and a people in trauma. We will ask whether 1945 represented a ‘Stunde Null’ for Berlin and Germany.
Reading:
• Roger Moorhouse, Berlin at War: Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-45 (2010).  
• David Clay Large, Berlin, Ch 7 & 8.

Week 3 (28 April). Cold War Flashpoints 1 – 1948: The Berlin blockade
The role of the Four Powers in Berlin and the coming of the Cold War will provide the context to this session. We will examine the strategic reasoning behind the Soviet blockade, and discuss the Allies motivations for defying this.
Reading:

Week 4 (5 May). Excursion Visit to the former Stalin Allee
The excursion will focus on themes such as reconstruction and the contribution of Berlin's Trümmerfrauen. It will involve a walk along the former Stalin---Allee, Germany’s ‘first socialist street’. We will also look at everyday objects and interiors of the GDR’s ‘workers’ palaces’ in the café Sibylle. Suggested reading:

• Brian Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban
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Landscape (1997).


Week 5 (12 May). The East German Uprising of 1953

1953 witnessed the only case of mass protest in East Germany prior to 1989. This session will look at the dynamics of the events and the ways in which they were interpreted and instrumented in the East and in the West.

Reading:

Week 6 (19 May). Cold War Flashpoints 2 - 1961: The construction of the Berlin Wall

The session will focus on the events leading to the construction of the Wall, assessing the role played by the East German leadership as well as the geo-political considerations of the two superpowers.

Reading:

Week 7 (26 May). The Wall and its Victims

136 people died at the site of the Berlin Wall during its 28 year existence. This session will examine the ways in which the deaths were politicised by the two German states in their Cold War struggle over legitimacy and power.

Reading:
- Pertti Ahonen, Death at the Berlin Wall (2011).

Week 8 (2 June). Excursion: Stasi Prison in Hohenschönhausen

A visit and organised tour of the Stasi prison

Week 9 (9 June). '1968', East and West

West Berlin was one of the centres of the West German student movement of the 1960s. This session will examine the radical politics of the sixties protests in the 'Island City', as well as looking at the experience of 1968 in the GDR and the Soviet bloc.

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Week 10 (16 June). Countercultures in both Berlins
With their publicity grabbing antics and their assault on bourgeois norms, the communards of West Berlin’s legendary Kommune 1 achieved worldwide notoriety and renown. Less well known is their experiment influenced East Germans, who established a Kommune 1-Ost in East Berlin. This session will explore the ways in which global ideas and cultural practices transcended the city’s physical division and were received and practiced in their specific local contexts.

Suggested reading:

Week 11 (23 June). Behind the Berlin Wall
The history of the GDR is more than simply a history of its security apparatus, however. This session will look at everyday life in East Berlin from 1961-89

Suggested reading
• Mary Fulbrook, The People’s State
• Paul Betts, Within Walls: Private Life in the GDR

Week 12 (30 June). Excursion: FFBIZ archive

• A visit to one of the city’s movement archives.

Week 13 (7 July). The ‘Peaceful Revolution’ of 1989 and the Fall of the Berlin Wall
This session will explore the events – domestic and international – that lead to the opening of the Berlin Wall on 8 November 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of Communist rule.

Suggested reading:
• Charles S. Maier, Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the end of East Germany (1997).
• Konrad Jarausch, The Rush to German Unity (1994).

Week 14 (July). Wrap-up and Evaluation
The last seminar will reflect on the legacy of Berlin’s complex post-war history and its continued relevance to Berlin today.