

# Traces and Memory of German colonialism in Africa in Berlin's urban and cultural landscapes

<b>Semester:</b>	Summer semester 2018
<b>Course instructor:</b>	Yann Le Gall – <a href="mailto:ylegall@uni-potsdam.de">ylegall@uni-potsdam.de</a>
<b>Subject area:</b>	Cultural Studies
<b>Credits:</b>	5 ECTS
<b>Time:</b>	Every second Monday: 14-18 c.t. / starts 23 April 2018
<b>Room:</b>	0323-26

## Course description:

This course will introduce international students to visible traces of German colonialism in the Berlin urban landscape, departing from streets in the so-called “African quarter” in Wedding and the experience of local initiatives who have all been committed for an earnest remembrance of the genocides of the Herero and Nama, the Maji Maji War in former German East-Africa, or the entanglements between colonialism and present-day racism. Through discussion and a guided excursion in the city, we will address some important concepts of memory studies while engaging in a search for traces of the German colonial past in Berlin and connected histories of colonial violence remembered in memorials, exhibitions, performances and literature. On this basis, the course will introduce contemporary cultural projects which have anchored German colonial imperialism in contemporary debates on racism, discrimination and geopolitics.

The following questions will be addressed among others: how are we connected to colonialism and the persistence of colonial thinking in Berlin, Europe, Africa, in diasporic communities, or elsewhere? How might memory of the Holocaust help in a growing acknowledgement of other instances of genocide and violence? What have activist, academic and artistic voices in Berlin brought with regard to the importance of working through this history?

--> **This course on Moodle:** <https://moodle.hu-berlin.de/course/view.php?id=81370>  
**Students can obtain the password by sending an email to the instructor**

## Learning objectives:

The objective of this Bachelor course is to enable students to learn about the history of German colonialism on the African continent, which still remains relatively unknown by contemporary Germans themselves. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge

- identify phases and spaces of German colonial history on the African continent: Brandenburg's involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, German Southwest Africa, German East-Africa, Togo, Cameroon.
- get a broad impression of memory politics in Berlin and become aware of traces of imperialism and colonialism in the urban landscape.

### Academic/Transferrable Skills

- retrace the genealogy of canonical terms: "colonialism", "genocide", "memory".
- start learning how to decolonise knowledge acquisition by acknowledging the influence of Black feminist theories of the colonised body (Weheliye), the presence of Black thinkers in the HU and the FU and their contributions (DuBois, Lorde), the authority of peoples affected by colonial legacies (Congress Restorative Justice after Genocide, Berlin Postkolonial) and by positioning oneself in the debate in order to avoid reproducing Eurocentric viewpoints.
- answer the question: what is memory studies today?  
     The critique of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* and its applicability to postcolonial sites of memory  
     Reflecting on the Holocaust as a blueprint but also a departure for remembering colonialism (Rothberg) as well as on its central position in cosmopolitan memory.
- connect different disciplinary fields of cultural studies: urbanity, theatre, poetry, grassroots politics, museums, and literature.

### Competencies

- Develop a conceptual project, engage creatively with academic material and occupy the space of absence (colonial amnesia).
- Experience of self-moderation and flattened hierarchies with "problem-based learning" (PBL) method for several sessions focusing on case studies.

### **Assessment portfolio:**

**(\*please note: final BP grades are due 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2018, so any written work needs to be handed in before that date to allow for grading)**

- Regular attendance, active participation (10%)
- Preparing and moderating one of the problem-based-learning (PBL) sessions with a short handout (1 page) and/or a short protocol (reading grid provided by the instructor). (20%)
- Final assessment (due 17.07.2018 !!!) (70%):

#### **Option 1:**

- Cultural memory practice: Through a medium (blog articles, video, photo project, artwork, brochure, performance), a student or a group (3 students max) remembers a moment, events, a particular feature of German colonial history, or people implicated in this history. The students are invited to connect their project with current local cultural and political debates on racism, genocide and museum collections.

**AND**

- Written or oral reflection on the project, engaging with self-positioning and challenges encountered (800 words max. or 15-minute-long presentation and 5 minutes Q&A).

**Option 2:**

- Final paper (around 4,000 words). For this assessment, students are encouraged to work inductively, departing from instances of memory practices and consequently developing or calling upon theoretical questions.

**Language requirements:**

min. English B2 and German A2

A high level of academic spoken and written English is required for this course (at least B2).

The course will be held in English and (almost) all texts are in English.

The course will also make use of German terminology, but students are not expected to be familiar with these terms. Towards the end of the semester, however, the voices of Afro-German activists will be introduced. The students will therefore have plenty of time to prepare these sessions. The discussions will still be held in English though.

Students who are eager to improve their German skills in writing will be encouraged to do so. The instructor can provide material suited to their language skills and their final projects. As a suggestion, a group project using both languages would be particularly interesting.

**Timetable (semester times: April 17<sup>th</sup>- July 20<sup>th</sup>):**

Session 1: 23.04.2018 **Course introduction and repartition of groups/tasks**

Information: every text will be uploaded to the moodle platform

Session 2-3: 30.04.2018 **Excursion - Traces in the urban landscape**

**\*\*\* Meeting at 14:00 sharp at U6 Bahnhof Seestraße \*\*\***

With a postcolonial tour with Berlin Postkolonial in the African Quarter in Berlin Wedding, and the text, the four colonial spaces (DSW, DOA, Togo and Cameroon) will be identified. Important historical figures will be introduced.

Reading: - Zimmerer, Jürgen. 2013. *Kein Platz an der Sonne : Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*. (excerpts)

Session 4-5: 14.05.2018 **Historical & theoretical background**

**Discussion:** The often obliterated history of the Brandenburg trade of enslaved Africans from the Gold Coast has reduced the extent of German colonialism to a period which has often been regarded as short and relatively negligible in comparison with British, Spanish or French imperialism. Here, the genealogy will be made complete again.

Reading: - Zaugg, Roberto. 2017. "Grossfriedrichsburg, the First German Colony in Africa? Brandenburg-Prussia, Atlantic entanglements and national memory."

**PBL session:** - Huyssen, Andreas. 2003. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia" in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. pp 11-29  
- Assman, Aleida. 2009. "How History Takes Place" in *Memory, History, and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts* pp 151-165.

Session 6-7: 28.05.2018 **The 1904-1908 genocides in German Southwest Africa**

**Discussion:** Retracing the birth of "genocide" as a concept

**Reading:** Lemkin, Raphael. 1944. "Chapter IX: Genocide". *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. pp 79 - 95.

**PBL session:** - Fusco, Coco. 2017. *Words May Not Be Found*. Script of the performance. Sophiensaele, KW Institute for Contemporary Art: 11 Mar. 2017.  
- Restorative Justice after Genocide. 2016. *Joint Resolution of the Delegates of the First Transnational Congress on the Ovaherero and Nama Genocides*. <http://genocide-namibia.net/2016/10/berlin-resolution-2016/>  
- Weheliye, Alexander G. 2014. "Bare Life: The Flesh". *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. pp 33-45.

Session 8-9: 11.06.2018 **Camps, anthropology, and multidirectional memory**

**Discussion:** Michael Rothberg, multidirectional memory and the implicated subject

**Reading:** - Rothberg, Michael. 2011. "From Gaza to Warsaw: Mapping Multidirectional Memory." pp 523-48.

**PBL session:**

- *Manufacturing Race* web project (<http://manufacturingrace.org/>): how does anthropology provide a connection between the Holocaust and German Southwest Africa? How is it portrayed? What are the assets of a multidirectional perspective of remembering racial anthropology? What are its limitations?

- Human remains and remembrance: how have the repatriations of human remains contribute to a greater acknowledgement of the genocides? What do these remains constitute?

**Reading:** - Biwa, Memory. 2012. 'Weaving the Past with Threads of Memory': *Commemorations of the colonial war in southern Namibia* (excerpts).

Session 10-11: 25.06.2018 **1. The Maji Maji War in bilateral postcolonial drama**  
**2. Human zoos and the memory of an Afro-German**

**Discussion:** Theatre companies Flinn Works (DE) and Asedeva (TZ) have put up the play *Maji Maji Flava*. The course facilitator will suggest a text from his current PhD thesis manuscript. Alongside, videos of the performance will provide an illustration on the performance. (The performance is actually supposed to be showcased in Berlin again in 2018. The theatre play could in that case provide a strong backdrop for a group project).

**PBL session:** The autobiography of Theodor Wonja Michael, an Afro-German

Reading: - Michael, Theodor Wonja. 2013. *Deutsch Sein und Schwarz Dazu. Erinnerung eines Afro-Deutschen* (excerpts).

- Strongly recommended: a visit to the exhibition *Zurückgeschaut* in the Museum Treptow (on your spare time).

Session 12-13: 09.07.2018 **Countering colonial mindsets in cosmopolitan Berlin: W.E.B. DuBois, Audre Lorde and May-Ayim**

**Discussion:** Intersectionality in Audre Lorde's essay.

Reading: - Lorde, Audre. 1984., "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference". *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. pp 114-123.

**PBL sessions:** W.E.B. DuBois at the Humboldt University and how he is remembered here.

Reading: - Gilroy, Paul. 1993. "'Cheer the Weary Traveller': W.E.B. DuBois, Germany and the Politics of Displacement". *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. pp 117-138.

*Farbe Bekennen* and the renaming of the Gröbenufer into May-Ayim Ufer.

Reading: - Ayim, May, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schulz. 1992. *Farbe Bekennen: afro-Deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*.

English Version: *Showing our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*.

Film viewing: *Hoffnung im Herz – Ein Film über May Ayim*

or

*Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years*.

### Important remarks

- ATTENTION: Please be aware that the course will address violent histories such as war and genocide, but also emotional topics such as racism, positionality and intersectional discrimination. The students are therefore encouraged to inform the lecturer of their sensibilities so that a safe space can be guaranteed for everyone, taking into account, but also regardless of, their language, origin, gender, class, skin, age, or abilities.
- Attendance policy is in compliance with HU rules: 80% attendance needed in order to pass; absences need to be excused and backed up by doctor's certificate, or other.