

Image and the City – Perspectives on Berlin

Semester:	Summer semester 2018
Course instructor:	Alessa Paluch, alessa.paluch@gmail.com
Subject area:	Cultural Studies
Credits:	5 ECTS
Time:	Tuesday 12 – 14h c.t. (c.t. – starts at 12:15)
Room:	0323

Course description:

Capital of Cool, City of Tolerance and (affordable) Hub of Creativity – Berlin's image is a very alluring one. The images of Berlin circulating in all kinds of media are just as interesting, but also surprisingly diversified. If this is true for contemporary Berlin it proves to be so even more in regard of its 20th century history: historic moments like the fall of the Berlin Wall are always also represented in images. But what do those images actually tell us? What do they mean and what do they want us to see?

Not just since the so called *Iconic Turn* academic research is highlighting the human urge for images and visualizations in its diverse variations. This seminar focuses on the double meaning of image as picture with a certain imaginative power (e.g. symbols, iconic images) and image as reputation. This double meaning reveals itself quite obviously in the context of the city, in this case: Berlin. The image(s) of Berlin is/are an interconnected mixture of past, present and hoped for future.

This seminar looks closer on some of these visualities – ranging from iconic photographs to music video clips to official marketing campaigns – and reflects their symbolic meaning and varying interpretations, their impact on Berlin's self-concept, identity, on its cultural scene and even on its economic value. To do so some basic concepts developed in the context of the Visual Culture Studies, with aspects of Art History, Film Studies, Metropolitan Studies, Tourism Studies and Social Science, are introduced.

The seminar aims to be an exercise in Visual Literacy (VL), enabling students to better understand, interpret and use images in their everyday life. Various methods, tools and strategies from VL are implemented, exercised and evaluated throughout the sessions.

To link content and form participants are asked to do a Visual Study Journal, documenting their learning aims, developments and achievements throughout the whole semester in a visual way. The educational concept of a Study Journal will be issued in class; no previous knowledge is required. At the end of the seminar this Visual Study Journal will be presented in a student organized exhibition.

Learning objectives:

This seminar wants to sensitize to the cultural meaning of images. It aims to provide the students with a better understanding of *how they read images*. This happens on the basis of the educational studies related concept of *Visual Literacy* (VL) on the one hand and its more cultural studies related critical reflection on the other (“Is it even possible to read an image like a text?”, “Is there something like a visual language? If so, is it a global language?”). Varying methods and tools from VL (e.g. Visual Thinking Strategy) are used and discussed throughout the sessions.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge

- analyze and interpret visualities based on varying analyzing tools from film studies, social science, communication studies and art history
- recall some key texts/theories of the Visual Studies like Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* or the Framing Effect in Communication Studies
- identify and contextualize diverse Berlin-focused Visualities and their history and historic meaning

Academic/Transferrable Skills

- Analyze and critically reflect on visualities like photojournalism and entertainment media
- Adopt and Proceed the educational method of a Study Journal to their studies
- Implement and Apply the Visual Thinking Strategy and other concept of Visual Literacy

Competencies

- recognize, interpret and employ the distinct syntax and semantics of different visual forms
- understand, produce and use culturally significant images and other visibilities

Assessment Portfolio

Preconditions for grading:

- Regular attendance, active participation (e.g. in Group Work)
- 2 Abstracts on selected Obligatory Reading
- Oral Presentation (between 5 and 10 minutes, with a PowerPoint-Presentation to share with the class)

Assessments (Graded 50/50):

- Written Visuality Analysis

The 2-3 pages long Image Analysis/Interpretation is based on interpretation concepts from cultural studies (not so much art history). It replaces the classical presentation and is therefore also to be presented in the classroom. The students can choose from a variety of imagery, which is always linked to Berlin and is part of the German cultural image-repertoire (*Kulturelles Bild-Repertoire*). Through this, students also encounter an elementary part of the German self-concept and self-image.

- Visual Study Journal

(Format: creative work, varying forms possible: video, blog, poster, book, etc. /how a study journal is done will be issued in class; no previous knowledge required)

Based on the didactic method of the Study Journal (*Lerntagebuch*) the students are asked to document their learning objectives, developments and successes for every single session – in this case in a (not exclusively, but especially) visual way. At the beginning and end of each session students get the time to work on their journal, guided by single questions, images or quotes. The task for students here is to transfer their written notes/ideas into something visual or visually representative. By collecting and choosing special images, tickets, snapshots etc. which highlight or symbolize their learning experience the students are arranging a creative work which reflects their learning throughout the whole seminar. Differing concepts, methods and forms of the Study Journal will be introduced throughout the seminar, so that students learn to cope with this self-learning concept. At the end of the seminar these so produced creative works are to be displayed in a student-organized exhibition.

Deadline for Assessments: **10th of July 2018**

Language requirements:

Min. English B2: a high level of academic spoken and written English is required for this course (at least B2). All literature will be provided in English. Though basic German (A-level) is recommended for dealing with some of the films, videos and music videos it is not a necessity.

The Study Journal is a special way to record and reflect the student's own learning process. Applied throughout the seminar students engage in a reflective, primarily language-based way with their educational aims and the seminar's content. By highlighting the visual aspect

of the journal students are encouraged to disconnect the learning experience from the spoken and written word and therefore from the struggle or (if native-speaker) the convenience of using the English language. Another level of reflection on the knowledge gained is hopefully stimulated and supported.

Timetable:

Session 1: 17.04.2018 Introduction

- Round of Introduction “Differing Images of Differing Cities”
- Visual Study Journal – What is it and how is it done?

Session 2: 24.04.2018 Your Image of Berlin

- Definitions of the concepts *Image*, *Relational Perception* and *Intrinsic Logic of Cities*
- Overview and Distribution of Presentations Topics

Session 3: 08.05.2018 Doing Image

- In-Depth Exploration of *Image* and *Image Making*
- Kevin Lynch’s “The Image of Cities”
- Group Work Analysis of selected Campaign Films

Obligatory Reading:

Bell, Daniel A./de-Shalit, Avner: Berlin. The City of (In)Tolerance. In: Dies.: The Spirit of Cities. Why the Identity of a City matters in a Global Age. p. 191 – 221

Session 4: 15.05.2018 What is Visual Literacy? Workshop

- Introduction of Visual Thinking Strategy
- Covered Imagery: Shahak Shapiras Yolocaust Project
- Text Work and Discussion on Susan Sontag *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Obligatory Reading:

Susan Sontag: Regarding the Pain of Others. Chapter 7. p. 104 - 113.

Session 5: 22.05.2018 Iconic Images I

- Definitions of the concepts *Iconic Images*
- Introduction of the concept *Photojournalistic Icons* by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites
- Covered Photos: *Flag Raising on Reichstag*, *Berlin Airlift*, *Leap into Freedom*

Obligatory Reading:

Hariman, Robert/Lucaites, John Louis: Performing Civic Identity. Flag Raising at Iwo Jima and Ground Zero. In: Ibid.: No Caption Needed. Chicago 2007. p. 93-136.

Session 6: 29.05.2018 Iconic Images II

- In-Depth Exploration of the concept *Photojournalistic Icons* by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites
- Covered Photos: *The Death of Benno Ohnesorg*, *Kennedys „Ich bin ein Berliner“*, *People dancing on the Berlin Wall*

Obligatory Reading:

Hariman, Robert/Lucaites, John Louis: Dissent and Emotional Management. Kent State. In: Ibid.: No Caption Needed. Chicago 2007. p. 137-170.

Session 7: 05.06.2018 Berlin Avantgarde

- *Berlin as Avantgarde-City from 1920s til today*
- Introduction to Systematic Film Analysis and Iconographic Image Description
- Covered Imagery: *Menschen am Sonntag*, *Symphonie der Großstadt*, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Street Scenes*, *Street Art (Blu's Murals)*

Session 8: 12.06.2018 The so called Berlin Film I

- Definition of "Berlin Film"
- Covered Films: *Wings of Desire*, *Lola rennt*

Obligatory Reading:

bell hooks: Representing Whiteness. Seeing Wings of Desire. In: Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.): The Visual Culture Reader. London 1998. p.338 – 343.

Session 9: 19.06.2018 The so called Berlin Film II

- Exercise of Systematic Film Analysis, Visual Thinking Strategy
- Covered Films: *Oh Boy*, *Victoria*

Session 10: 26..06.2018 The City in Music Videos

- *Exploration of music videos as a visual genre*
- Covered Music Videos: *Seed "Dickes B"*, *Beatsteaks "I don't care as long as you sing"*, *Sido "Mein Block"*, *Marteria "Lila Wolken"*

Obligatory Reading:

Peeters, Heidi: The Semiotics of Music Videos. It must be written in the Stars. In: Image and Narrative. Online Magazin of the Visual Narrative. 2004. [URL: <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/issue08/heidipeeters.htm>]

Session 11: 03.07.2018 Digital Berlin/Berlin as Lifestyle City

- Exploration of how Berlin is depicted in social media
- Covered Imageries: Instagram, Blogs like Stil in Berlin, Expats-Community-Sites like ExBerliner.com, etc.

Session 12: 10.07.2018 Bad Images of Berlin: What is not seen?

- Review of the concepts of *Image*
- Covered Imagery: Film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Zoo Station), News Cover of Neo-Nazis in Berlin and Rigaer Straße 94

Session 13&14: 17.10.2018 Final Session: Perspectives on Berlin

- *Presentation of the Students' Visual Study Journals*
- Exhibition with different display forms

Literature (Selection): (*available via moodle*)

bell hooks: Representing Whiteness. Seeing Wings of Desire. In: Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.): *The Visual Culture Reader*. London 1998. p.338 – 343.

Bell, Daniel; De-Shalit, Avner: *The Spirit of the Cities. Why the Identity of a City matters in a global Age*. Princeton 2011.

Colomb, Claire: *Staging the new Berlin. Place Marketing and the politics of urban reinvention post-1989*. London 2012.

Dikovitskaya, Margaret: Major Theoretical Frameworks in Visual Culture. In: Heywood, Ian et al. (ed.): *The Handbook of Visual Culture*. London 2012. p. 68 – 90.

Elkins, James: *Visual Studies. A skeptical Introduction*. New York 2003.

Hariman, Robert; Lucaites, John Louis: *No Caption Needed. Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago/London 2007.

Lynch, Kevin: *The Image of the City*. Cambridge 1960.

Peeters, Heidi: The Semiotics of Music Videos. It must be written in the Stars. In: *Image and Narrative. Online Magazin of the Visual Narrative*. 2004. [URL: <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/issue08/heidipeeters.htm> Accessed last 31st January 2018.]

Pugh, Emily: *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin*. Pittsburgh 2004.

Sontag, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York 2003.