

# URBAN ACTIVISM IN BERLIN

<b>Semester:</b>	Summer semester 2018
<b>Course instructor:</b>	Banu Çiçek Tülü/ Duygu Kaban
<b>Subject area:</b>	Social Studies
<b>Credits:</b>	5 ECTS
<b>Time:</b>	Monday 12 – 14 pm
<b>Room:</b>	0323-26

## Course description:

Berlin has a multi-layered and contradictory landscape; high-rise buildings and gated communities next to squats, dense urban areas next to a huge urban park, etc. Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, over 50 percent of the city's public housing stock has been sold to private investors and the city has become a highly desirable destination for international property investment (Holm 2007). The lack of affordable housing and a rise in the speculative real-estate market spur new discussions about gentrification. Meanwhile, inhabitants and newcomers fight for their rights in the city. The focal point of this course is an examination of the changes associated with urban development in Berlin and “counter actions” as urban social movements. This interdisciplinary course explores urban activism in Berlin through several lenses, including: housing, urban environmental activism, community gardening and political power relations in the city. From the perspective of urban activism, this course offers an analysis of the origin, context, and structure of theory of right to the city, urban commons, social justice, participation, grassroots organizing, and urban development policy. Within the broad theme of “urban activism”, the course focuses on the ways in which neighbourhood/inhabitant experiences and citizens' efforts collide to produce different forms of resistance within Berlin's political sphere.

## Learning objectives:

This interdisciplinary weekly seminar is open to students from across disciplines who have an interest in Berlin and its social, economic, and environmental analysis. The course will develop transferable skills, including the ability to argue effectively about intellectual issues, both orally and in writing –in English and German–, and to work together with others in a small group setting.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have:

- a strong theoretical and practical understanding of right to the city movement,

open city, contemporary urban activism against gentrification, alternative living options and environmental issues. This knowledge will come through the analysis of academic readings assigned every week in conjunction with class discussions and guided research.

- a comprehensive grasp of the cases for sustainable urban development as applied to social equity, urban social movements and activism, focusing on examples from Berlin
- Throughout the course, we also will introduce different presentation tools and focus several presentation techniques to enhance student's academic presentations (see: Final assignment).

## **Requirements**

This course has a two-fold mission:

1) To train students in theories about the “right to the city” and urban activism in Berlin with real city actors and organizations. a) Students will be given weekly readings (approx. 2-3 articles) and b) will engage with reading questions that encourage students to explore the issues with an in-depth perspective. These readings are the main material of the class in order to cultivate academic writing skills. c) In every session, there will be small groups to analyse the readings and to discuss the themes. These groups will analyse each text in order to understand the significance of narrowing the problem space, the construction of logical arguments, the reporting and interpretation of data. d) At the end of the class, we will combine results of the small groups.

The ability to communicate effectively in writing is one of the most important skills for educational and career success. Thus, we are focusing on our reading material and in-depth analysis.

As the class is open to all disciplines, we are aware that some students are not familiar with Urban and Social Studies terms. The reading questions given for every session will help students to understand these terms from different disciplines and they will become familiar with critical reading in academic context. Both the assigned articles and questions will be available through moodle.

2) To enable hands on learning through conducting at least two site visits either with neighbourhood organizations or activist groups whose work reflects the ways that theory translates to practice. By the end of the course, students will have been introduced to multiple city actors from Berlin's housing and community gardening scene. Our first site visit will be in Kreuzberg, where we will meet with Kotti&Co and Bizim Kiez. We will also visit squatted communities. Our second site visit will be to Prinzessinnengarten, UFA Fabrik, and the Tempelhofer Feld Community Garden. We will also go to Initiative Haus der Statistik and talk about the process of an innovative collective project. The students will develop their

research questions independently with support from the site visits where they will be able to take part in theoretical discussions and witness the tactics used by urban activists to advance their goals.

### **Integrated Language Learning:**

In our class, some core readings will be in German. Therefore, A2 German level is required. Our working language will be English. However, in small group discussions we will have German as our second language. We will choose up to 10 words for each session. One student will be asked to translate those words into German after every session. Thus, we create our own urban dictionary with the words and terms which we use in our academic readings and daily life as well. Besides, students will be asked to use these terms and words in the mini-project and final assignment.

### **Assessment:**

There will be one mini-project that students will prepare during the semester and one final essay that will be due at the end of the semester. The mini project will focus on visual research on urban participation and activism. Students will be able to use the data gathered during the mini project for their final essay.

**Mini Project:** During the semester, students will be asked to photograph posters, stickers, banners in storefronts, windows or balconies, documenting current examples of urban participation, activism, housing issues, and/or counter actions to neoliberal real estate developments in Berlin. Students will enhance this visual data with short commentaries in which they will be able to apply the theories that are covered during the class meetings. The aim of this mini-project is to enhance the students' "selective perception" and introduce this term borrowed from urban psychology. After this, we are expecting the students to look to their environment more carefully and better understand the related topics and local voices in Berlin. This exercise will show the research effort and the learning progress of each student that they could share with their fellow students. At the same time, students enhance their knowledge in German - as some of the banners, graffiti(s) or stickers are in German. This way we will also support our integrated German learning process in the class.

**Final assignment:** Each student will prepare one final project:

An academic essay (1800 – 2000 words double spaced, Times New Roman, MLA-style citation) The final essay can be written in English, German, Spanish or Turkish. However, it must have an abstract (200 words) in German. **Deadline: 16th July 2018**

Students will present their final essay in class. They are welcome to use any kind of media in their presentations. Throughout the course, we will encourage students to focus on their

presentations to develop their own style. Nevertheless, we will introduce <https://prezi.com> to students as an alternative to PowerPoint, a creative tool for academic presentation techniques.

## **Grading**

### **Grading Attendance and participation 40%**

- Did the student come to class prepared and ready to take part in the discussion?

### **Reading and list of words in German 10%**

- Did students read the text and well enough to respond the reading questions in a meaningful matter?
- Did students prepare the German translation of the list of words?

### **Mini Project 10%**

- Did the student prepare the project according to the guidelines?

### **Final project 40%**

- Did the student follow the guidelines, submit each step of the project on time, and create a meaningful final project?

## **Course Requirements:**

1- Active Participation in class discussion.

2- Preparing the German translation of selected words (each session one student).

3- Presentation of your Mini-Project.

4- Final essay and presentation.

5- Attendance Policy: You may not miss more than 2 sessions – including site visits.

If you know that you will miss a class, let us know in advance and we can arrange a make-up task if necessary. In the case of illness or other unforeseen situations, e-mail us as soon as possible. We will require a written confirmation of the emergency or a doctor report. Arriving to class and meeting points of site visits is your responsibility. Please familiarize yourself with the schedule and routes of public transportation and be aware of Berlin's fast changing weather conditions.

## **In Class Expectations**

This is an invitation to students to create a non-hierarchical and equal classroom. Participation is a keyword for us but the engagement between lecturers and students is essential just like in a community. We are open to learning with and from you. Please be open-minded and refrain from engaging in or encouraging any type of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, transphobia, etc. As we support full diversity, you can contact us about any situation that we should be aware of, i.e. when you are not comfortable with: language, topic, our another colleague's behavior. We are both early-career academics who come from outside of Berlin and we are ready to share our knowledge and experiences with you regarding academic and social life, scholarships, how to survive in Berlin, etc.

Plagiarism is an act that we will not tolerate. Illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating will result in failure of the course. Please do not forget you study with scholars who value honest, open and intellectual inquiry. You can contact us any time if you need any support with your coursework.

## **Timetable:**

### **Session 1:    23.04.2018    **Introduction****

Thematic introduction, Moodle introduction, Presentation of participants and their backgrounds and motivations.

### **Session 2:    30.04.2018    **Right to the City****

- Harvey, David. (2012) "Henri Lefebvre's Vision." Chap. Preface in Rebel Cities: From the City to the Urban Revolution. 1-25. London, New York: Verso.

-Lebuhn, Henrik (2015): Between Neoliberal Governance and the Right to the City. Participatory Politics in Berlin and Tel Aviv, in: International Journal for Urban and Regional Research (IJURR), 39.4, 704-725, mit Adriana Kemp & Galia Rattner.

-Kotti & Co. (2014). Kotti & Co und das Recht auf Stadt, in: A. Holm (Ed.), Reclaim Berlin. Assoziation A.

Session 3: 07.05.2018 **Open City**

- Sennett, Richard. (2008) "The Open City." In *The Endless City*, edited by Ricky Burdett and Dejan Sudjic. 290-297. London: Phaidon.
- Allon, Fiona. (2013) "Litter and Monuments Rights to the City in Berlin and Sydney" *Space and Culture*, 16, no: 3, page(s): 252-260, September.
- Blokland, T., Giustozzi, C., Krüger, D. & Schilling, H. (Eds.) (2016) *Creating the Unequal City: The exclusionary consequences of everyday routines in Berlin*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Session 4: 14.05.2018 **Housing Question and Spatial Justice**

- Wagner, Martin (2015). *The Growing House*
- Blokland, T.V. & Barwick, C. (2015). Segregation durch Diskriminierung auf dem Wohnungsmarkt, in: Marschke & Brinkmann (Hrsg.): „Ich habe nichts gegen Ausländer, aber ...“, Berlin, S. 229-246.
- Holm, Andrej (2016). (Un)sozialer Wohnungsbau. Schwerpunkt der Berliner Verdrängungsdynamik. In: *Berliner Hefte zu Geschichte und Gegenwart der Stadt*, Vol. 2 (Die Legende vom Sozialen Wohnungsbau), 13-99.
- Bernt, M., & Holm, A. (2009). Is it, or is not? The Conceptualisation of Gentrification and Displacement and its Political Implications in the Case of Berlin Prenzlauerberg. *City*, 13(2-3), pp. 312-324.

Session 5: 28.05.2018 **Site Visit**

Session 6: 04.06.2018 **Unmapped Housing**

- Holm, A. & Kuhn, A. (2011) "Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin", in: *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research (IJURR)*, 35. Jg, Nr. 3, S. 644-658.
- Vasudevan, Alexander (2015) "Metropolitan Preoccupations: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin." Wiley-Blackwell.

Session 7: 11.06.2018 **Mini project 1 Presentations**

Session 8: 18.06.2018 **Environmental Question**

- Wunder, Stephanie. (2013). Learning for Sustainable Agriculture: Urban Gardening in Berlin. Support and Learning of Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture (SOLINSA).

- Endlicher, Wilfried (Ed.). (2011). Perspectives in Urban Ecology: Ecosystems and Interactions between Humans and Nature in the Metropolis of Berlin, Springer.

- Site Visit TBA

Session 9: 25.06.2018 **DIY Urbanism and Urban Commons**

- Actors of Urban Change, Urban Change Newspaper Nr. 3, Robert Bosch Stiftung in Cooperation with Mitost E.V.

- Colomb, Claire. (2015). "DIY urbanism' in Berlin: Dilemmas and conflicts in the mobilization of 'temporary uses' of urban space in local economic development" Paper presented 'Transience and Permanence in Urban Development' University of Sheffield, 14-15 January 2015.

- Dellenbaugh, Mary/Kip, Markus/ Bieniok, Majken/Müller, Agnes Katharina/Schwegmann, Martin (Hrsg.) (2015). Urban Commons. Moving Beyond State and Market. Basel/Berlin/Boston.

- Introduction for final projects

Session 10: 02.07.2018 **Gentrified City**

- Helbrecht, Ilse (Hg.) (2016). Gentrifizierung in Berlin: Veränderungsprozesse und Bleibestrategien. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

- Evers, A. & Ewert, B. (2013). "How to approach social innovations. Lessons from Berlin." Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Public Policy, 26-28 June, Grenoble,

- Holm, Andrej. (2016). Gentrification und das Ende der Berliner Mischung. In: von Einem, Eberhardt (Hg.): Wohnen. Markt in Schieflage - Politik in Not. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 191-231.

Session 11: 09.07.2018 **The Future**

- Novy, J. and Colomb, C. (2013). Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New 'Spaces of Hope'?. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37: 1816–1838.

- Lebuhn, Henrik (2017). Shifting Struggles over Public Space and Goods in Berlin. *Urban Activism between Protest and Participation*, in: Hou, Je; Knierbein, Sabine (Eds.): *City (Un)Silenced. Urban Protest and Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy*, New York and London, Routledge, 145-155.

- Blokland, T. (2017). *Community as Urban Practice*. Wiley.