Short Description

Berlin is considered as multi-layered urban lab with contradictory landscape; luxury housing and big urban development projects next to squats, small urban garden projects, urban parks and green areas, etc. This interdisciplinary course explores Berlin through urban activism by considering many themes, including: urban social movements, grassroots, housing, alternative living options, participation, environmental problems, community gardening and political power relations in the city.

Course description:

Berlin is considered as multi-layered urban lab with contradictory landscape; luxury housing, big urban development projects next to squats, small urban garden projects, urban parks and green areas, etc. Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s till today, 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 Berlin through urban activism in with several lenses, including: housing, urban environmental activism, community gardening and political power relations in the city. In addition to that this course offers an analysis of right to the city, participation, social justice, urban resistance, grassroots organizing, and urban development policy. Within the broad theme of “urban activism”, the course focuses on the ways in which neighborhood/inhabitant experiences and citizens’ 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, political, 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. Upon successful completion of the course, students will have:

- a strong theoretical and practical understanding of ‘right to the city’ movement, reclaiming urban space, 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, different presentation tools will be introduced focusing on several presentation techniques in order to enhance student’s academic presentation skills (see: Final assignment).

Requirements and assessment:
This course has a two-fold mission:
1) To train students the 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 articles) b) and 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. The reading questions are not expected to answer directly, rather they guide students to contextualize both the issue and the writing style. c) In every session, there will be a discussion about the readings and we will analyze the themes together. With a guidance of small presentation, the students will 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 the results and thoughts. All presentations will be prepared in Prezi, so that students can see the different ways of using the program.

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

As the seminar is open to all disciplines, I am aware that some students are not familiar with Urban and Social Studies terms. Therefore, the reading questions given for every session will guide 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 one or two site visits either with neighborhood organizations or activist groups will be organized. The students will have the opportunity to listen the work of these groups which would be a useful way to translates the theory into practice. By the end of the course, students will have been introduced to multiple city actors from Berlin’s civil organization scene. 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 this course, some core readings will be in English and German. In order to understand the terms in German law and regulations, A2 German level would be really helpful. Our working language will be English. However, there will be terms in German and they will create our own urban dictionary with the words and terms which we use in our academic readings and daily life as well. Beside, students will be asked include this terms and words in the mini-project and final assignment.

Assessment:

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

Mini Project I:

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 include short commentaries this visual data in which they will be able to apply the theories that are covered throughout the course. The aim of this mini-project is enhance the students’ “selective perception” and introduce this term borrowed from urban psychology. After this, I expect the students to look to their environment more carefully and gain better understanding about 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 will also support our integrated German learning process in the class. Another mini-project will be about producing same kind of poster, sticker, banners for a selected activist group that they can use as visual material.

Mini Project II: It will be announced throughout the semester,

Final project:
Each student will prepare one final project. There are several options:
- 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 English.
- An academic poster
- Any kind of creative idea i.e. blog posts, video, preparation of any social media, etc.

Depending the student’s interest, the final project will develop during the semester. Students will present their final project in class. You are welcome to use any kind of media in the presentations. Throughout the course, I will encourage students to focus on their presentations to develop their own style. Nevertheless, I will introduce https://prezi.com to students as an alternative to PowerPoint, a creative tool for academic presentation techniques.

Course Requirements:
1- Active Participation in class discussion: Being present is not enough for an vibrant class discussion. The students expected to read the assigned article before coming to the class. The reading material is not dense but requires a bit of time. Please do your part and participate in the class. Your thoughts mean a lot!

3- Presentation of your Mini-Projects 1: Up to 5 the pictures with some notes, i.e where, when, what about. Mini-Projet 2: Some ideas, and we can collect them at the class.

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 me know in advance and I can arrange a make-up task if necessary. In the case of illness or other unforeseen situations, e-mail me as soon as possible. I 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 but the engagement between lecturer and students is essential just like in a community. I am absolutely open to learn 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 I support full diversity; you can contact me about any situation that I should be aware of, i.e. when you are not comfortable with language, topic, my or another colleague’s behavior. I am an early-career academic who is from outside of Berlin and I am ready to share my knowledge and experiences with you regarding academic and social life, scholarships, how to survive in Berlin, etc.

Plagiarism is an act that I will not abide. Illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating will result in failure of the course. Please do not forget you study with a scholar who value honest, open and intellectual inquiry. You can contact me anytime if you need any support with your coursework.

**Grading:**

- **Attendance and participation 40%**
  - Did the student come to class prepared and ready to take part in the discussion?

- **Required reading and preparation 10%**
  - Did students read the text and could respond the reading questions in a meaningful matter?
  - Did students complete assignments on time?

- **Mini Project 10%**
  - Did the student prepare the project following 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?

**Tools:** Moodle. The password of the course for moodle will be provided during the first session. The complete reading list and detailed syllabus will be online in moodle. Readings for every week will be uploaded as PDF file which you can easily download from moodle.
Timetable:
Session 1: Introduction (15.04.2020)
Session 2: Right to the City (22.04.2020)
Session 3: Site visit (29.04.2020)
Session 4: Different Forms of a City (06.05.2020)
Session 5: Reclaiming Public Space (13.05.2020)
Session 6: Housing Question – Gentrification (20.05.2020)
Session 7: Housing Question – Alternative Living Options (27.05.2020)
Session 8: Mini project 1 Presentations (03.06.2020)
Session 9: City and Minorities (10.06.2020)
Session 10: Gendered City (17.06.2020)
Introduction for final projects
Session 11: Environmental Struggle and Green Activism (24.06.2020)
Session 12: Urban Participation (01.07.2020)
Session 13: The Future (08.07.2020)
Session 14: Presentations (15.07.2020)

Selected Literature