

Berlin – Portrait of a City. An Introduction to Creative Urban Research.

Instructor: Anna Blattner (anna.blattner@hu-berlin.de)

Schedule: Tuesday 10am – 14pm ct. (*biweekly*)

2 SWS – 5 ECTS

Various aspects characterize a city: its history, materiality, everyday life and politics – only to name a few. Research in the urban field requires methods that can adapt to a number of situations and can capture the changing natures of a city. For instance, the materiality of a street can hardly be analysed with the same means as the quotidian life of its inhabitants, being different every hour of the day.

The focus of the course is on urban research based on a creative methodology. Fields of study will include Sociology, Art, Philosophy, Literature, Geography and Urban Planning. In order to develop their own portrait of Berlin, participants will be introduced to a selection of creative methods of urban research such as walking, photography, mapping, soundscapes, observation and smell.

Each session of the course will consist of a *theoretical introduction* to a specific method with examples of research in which it has been used. This will be followed by a *practical part* in which students have to immerse themselves into the neighbourhood and use the discussed methods to gather information about the place.

Every two weeks we will investigate a different neighbourhood of Berlin, starting with the area around Hausvogteiplatz. As temperatures can be quite low during winter semester we might focus on neighbourhoods close to Hausvogteiplatz like Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg.

The course will be taught in English. However an A2 level of German is required as some of the core readings are in German and some knowledge of German will be helpful to communicate with passers-by and residents during the research.

To complete the course, participating students will have to put theory into practice and develop their own portrait of Berlin based on one or a combination of the methods we discussed in the seminar.

The seminar takes place biweekly on Tuesday from 10am to 14pm c.t.,. There might be some irregularities with the dates, therefore the exact schedule will be announced during the first session.

By the end of November students will be asked to introduce their research and their chosen method(s) to the group (in a short 5 min presentation). They will also have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss possible issues that may arise in their project.

The last session of the seminar is for students to present the results of the research they have done in Berlin. They will be encouraged to share the experiences they have made with their chosen method(s) and the obstacles they have encountered. Through the discussion with the group, the research project can be questioned and refined. The students will get a better understanding of the many queries in a research process and will become more confident in their own role as researchers.

Course requirements

- **Active participation** in class discussions and field trips.
- Doing the **readings** in advance of the respective classes and preparing two **discussion questions** on each text. You have to send me the questions the day prior to the class until 6pm.
- A casual **5 min presentation** introducing your research topic and the chosen method(s) to the group (end of November).
- A **10 min presentation** of the results of your research in our last session.
- A **research report** presenting your research and discussing the methods you were using and the theoretical background of your research. (7-10 pages, 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman size 12) to be submitted in class and to me by e-mail before our last session. I will communicate the exact date in our first session (Written work can be submitted in any of the following languages: English, German, French, Spanish).
- **Attendance Policy:** You may not miss more than 1 session. If you do know you have to miss a class, let me know in advance and we can arrange a make-up task, if necessary. In the case of illness or other unforeseen situations, do e-mail me as soon as possible. I would also require some written confirmation of the emergency. Do become familiar with public transport in Berlin and work out in advance how to get to the sites (addresses and public transport connections to them will be announced on moodle at least a week before the session.) Transportation difficulties are not an excuse for an absence. It is the students' responsibility to get to the sites on time.
- **Plagiarism Policy:** The presentation of another person's words, thoughts, ideas, judgements, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. The penalty for this is failure of the course.

All information concerning the seminar will be available on its moodle page. There you will find the exact **date, time, and place of each seminar**. All **required readings** will also be available through moodle.

Reading list

- Back, Les. „Listening with our eyes. Portraiture as urban encounter.“ In *Picturing the social landscape. Visual methods and the sociological imagination.*, von Caroline Knowles, 132-146. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Chronik*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988.
- Bridge, Garry und Sophie Watson. *The Blackwell City Reader*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.
- De Certeau, Michel. „Walking in the City.“ In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91-110. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Debord, Guy. „Theorie des Umherschweifens.“ In *Das große Spiel. Die Situationisten zwischen Kunst und Politik*, von Roberto Ohrt. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2000.
- Frers, Lars und Lars Meier. „Working with the Visual.“ In *Encountering Urban Places. Visual and Material Performances in the City*, 171-181. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007.
- Hiebsch, Maria Elisabeth, Fritz Schlüter und Judith Willkomm. „Sensing the Street. Eine sinnliche Ethnographie der Großstadt.“ In *Straße als kultureller Aktionsraum. Interdisziplinäre Betrachtungen des Straßenraumes an der Schnittstelle zwischen Theorie und Praxis.*, von Sandra Maria Geschke, 31-57. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009.
- Krusche, Jürgen. *Strassenräume Berlin Shanghai Tokyo Zürich. Eine foto-ethnographische Untersuchung*. Baden: Müller, 2011.
- Latour, Bruno. „A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk).“ *Eröffnungsrede des Networks of Designs* Treffens der Design History Society Falmouth*. Cornwall, 3. September 2008.
- Lutes, Kevin. *Berlin: City of Smoke*. Montréal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2008.
- Lynch, Kevin. „The Image of the City.“ In *The City Reader*, von Richard Le Gates und Frederic Stout, 98-102. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Moles, Kate. „A Walk in Thirdspace: Place, Methods and Walking.“ In *Sociological Research Online* 13 (4). 2008. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/4/2.html> (Zugriff am 15. 05 2014).
- Morad, Guy. „Memories“. In *Cargo. Comicreportagen Israel – Deutschland*. Berlin: avant-verlag, 2005.
- Rhys-Taylor, Alex. „Bear with me. I'm quite a quick walker but it's a long market.“ *Street Signs. Centre for Urban and Community Research Autumn* (2008).
- Scheppe, Wolfgang. *Migropolis. Venice / Atlas of a Global Situation*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009.
- Şenel, Aslihan. „Mapping as Performance.“ *Urbanistica Tre*, September - December 2013: 85-94.
- Sennett, Richard. „The Public Realm.“ In *The Blackwell City Reader. Second Edition*, von G. Bridge, & S. Watson, 261-272. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Sieverts, Boris. *A Guide to Visiting Cities*. 2007.
<http://www.monu.org/monu4/VisitingCities2.pdf> (Zugriff am 06. 05 2015).
- Simmel, Georg. *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1903 [2006].
- Truax, Barry. „Soundscape Composition as Global Music: Electroacoustic Music as Soundscape.“ *Organized Sound* 13 (2) (2008).
- Voggenreiter, Sabine. „Die Renaissance der "flânerie".“ In *En passant. Reisen durch urbane Räume: Perspektiven einer anderen Art der Stadtwahrnehmung*, von K. von Keitz, & S. Voggenreiter, 10-19. Berlin: Jovis, 2010.
- Whyte, William H. *City. Rediscovering the Center*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1988 [2009].