Exploring Difficult Heritage through Berlin Museums

Semester: Summer semester 2019
Course instructor: Dr. Victoria Bishop Kendzia, vbishopkendzia@gmail.com
Subject area: Kultur und Gesellschaft / Culture and Society
Credits: 5 ECTS
Time: Tuesday 14-18 c.t.: 9/16/23 April, 7/14/21/28 May, 4 June
Room: 0323-26 (HVT 5-7)

Course description:

This anthropologically inflected course is interdisciplinary in nature. The aim of the course is to explore and critically analyse certain key aspects of Berlin’s difficult heritage. The focus is on two particularly visible and conflict-ridden aspects of this landscape, namely the Jewish narrative and the topic of migration. The exploration will be realized through a variety of museum visits and text analyses. The museums, which are to be understood as dynamic field sites, will be approached using ethnographic methods.

Learning objectives:

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to familiarize the students with how Berlin’s difficult heritage is represented in a variety of museums and/or memorial sites. In addition, they are to be equipped with ethnographic field methods in order to critically approach the sites, keeping in mind the contexts of power asymmetries. They will also develop their abilities to read and reflect on a variety of relevant academic literature.

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

Knowledge

- Understand, describe and identify key aspects of Berlin’s difficult heritage.
- Reflect critically on scholarly texts and field sites relevant to the Jewish Narrative in Germany and the topic of migration.

Academic/Transferrable Skills

- Use ethnographic field methods to explore settings and sites.
- Identify and reflect on the positionality of both scholarly authors and museum stakeholders.
- Communicate and discuss key ideas in difficult heritage.

Competencies

- Read the most recent and relevant theoretical and empirical research on the topics.
- Apply relevant theories and concepts in independent work to analyze further narratives and representational strategies.

Assessment portfolio:

All the following must be completed in order to pass the course. Each requirement is weighted equally.

I. Active attendance and participation in class discussions and field trips.
II. Doing the readings and preparing two to three discussion/content questions per reading in advance of the class, as assigned.
III. Participation in a group presentation about a field site/topic of your choice relevant to the course. Topic should be checked with the instructor in advance.
IV. An individually written research report with bibliography (8-10 pages, not including bibliography or photos), double-spaced, Times New Roman. Please send me your report by e-mail as a word or pdf. file only. Due date June 27th midnight, Berlin time. You may write in English, German, Spanish or French. Late papers will lose 2% of a grade per day late.

Language requirements:

English B2 required. English is the language spoken in class and the language of the required readings and presentations. German at any level is an asset, and would help in a more in-depth understanding of the field sites we explore.

Any written work may be submitted in English, German, Spanish or French.

Timetable:

There will be 8 sessions in total, each four hours long, in order to accommodate the museum visits.

09.04.2019. Class 1: In class session-Introduction

Introduction to the course, lecture on anthropological strategies and crises. Lecture on the Jewish Narrative in Germany, introduction to the “conversation walk” method.
16.04.2019. Class 2: Field Trip to the Jewish Museum Berlin (site subject to change and flexible to students’ needs)

We meet there in or near the Glass Court.

Address: Lindenstrasse 9-14, 10969 Berlin

Transit connection: Hallesches Tor U1/U6

Focus on using the conversation walk method.

23.04.2019. Class 3: In class session-Seminar on first visit and discussion of texts

Discussion of the results of the conversation walk at the site visit the week before.

Interview workshop on the issues that arise

Discussion of the readings:

Do note that you will have had to get your six discussion questions (two per text) to me by 21:00 Berlin time, the Saturday before the class (exact date tba) in order to fulfill requirement ii of the assessment criteria.

The three readings for this class are: Ostow 2007; Purin 2008; and Feldman and Peleikis 2014.

07.05.2019. Class 4: Field Trip to the German Historical Museum (site subject to change and flexible to students’ needs)

We meet there in the lobby inside main entrance off Unter den Linden

Address: Unter den Linden 2, 10117 Berlin

Use of field diary and a specific group assignment for this visit. We will discuss the student presentation guidelines and dates.

14.05.2019. Class 5: In-class session-Comparison of sites and discussion of texts

Discussion of the site visits to date. Comparison of interpretations. Lecture on Post-WWII migration to Germany.

Discussion of the readings:

Do note that you will have had to get your six discussion questions (two per text) to me by 21:00 Berlin time, the Saturday before the class (exact date tba) in order to fulfill requirement ii of the assessment criteria.

The three readings for this class are: Rothberg and Yildiz 2011; Partridge 2010; and Shooman 2016.
We will finalize student presentation dates and topics.

21.05.2019. Class 6: Field trip to a museum relevant to migration (site tba)
Use of ethnographic tools: conversation walk, field diary, interview.

28.05.2019. Class 7: Student presentations
Up to three can fit in the class time. We will have feedback and discussion on these.

04.06.2019. Class 8: Student presentations

Literature: All the required readings will be made available via Moodle. You will be able to self-enroll on Moodle. The password (course key) will be announced during the first class.

Required:


Suggested/Optional:


Remarks:

NB: This is a BA-level course. Preference will be given to BA-level students, should there be a waiting list. MA-level students who wish to take this course must discuss this in advance with the instructor (via email is fine), to ensure that the course meets their needs.

Attendance Policy:

You may not miss more than one session, as these are double sessions. If you do know that you have to miss a session in advance, let me know beforehand and we can arrange a make-up task, if necessary. In case of illness or other emergency, let me know as soon as possible and provide proof of the problem. I can be flexible with make-up tasks, provided I am kept informed. Do become familiar with the public transport system in Berlin. Transport 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, judgments, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes plagiarism. The penalty for this is failure of the course.