

Course Syllabus WS 2017-18  
**The Berlin Wall – History and Representation**

**Course description**

The Berlin Wall was a media star – right from the forceful closure of the Berlin borders on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1961 onwards. Its symbolic power during the Cold War did not end with dismantling it in 1990 and the loss of most of its relics afterwards. In fact, the “fall” of the wall produced another very influential climax of its worldwide visual representation, which added new meanings to the imagery of the Berlin Wall. It has since persisted as a complex symbol used in various contexts lending itself to various messages. These include the construction of memories of the Cold War period and the division of Germany and Berlin, but also usages as a symbol of the injustices of violent segregation and of threats to refugees in a more general sense. The course will give an overview of the history and iconography of the Berlin Wall as well as an introduction to recent German history. Developing skills of analyzing photographs and using them in the context of oral-history-interviews will be a special methodological focus.

Instructors:

Elena Demke, MA & Dr. Manfred Wichmann  
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Time and Place:

Weekly, Monday, 14-16pm in room 0323 at Hausvogteiplatz 5-7.

**Course requirements for 5 ECTS points**

The course requires a considerable bit of reading. To make it easier, all the readings will be compiled as PDF documents and made available as zip package for download or by e-mail. If no internet access is at hand, please contact the instructors for copies.

Please use as introductory text: Baker, 1993. Before the first session, please prepare a short list “My 5 most important facts on the history of the Berlin Wall” (1/2 page, for online-research you may use: [www.chronik-der-mauer.de](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de)).

- i. Active participation in class discussions.
- ii. Answering set questions on the prescribed reading (short notes, max. one page per session, questions will be published in moodle), to be uploaded in moodle no later than 2 days before each class.
- iii. One oral presentation in class (5 min plus accompanying hand-out for participants).
- iv. Final assignment: An academic essay including your original piece of empirical research regarding visual representations of the Berlin Wall.

- v. Attendance Policy: You may not miss more than 2 sessions. If you do know you have to 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, do e-mail us as soon as possible. We would also require some written confirmation of the emergency. Transportation difficulties are in general not an excuse for an absence.
- vi. 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.

## **Course sessions**

**Class 1:** Getting to know each other, discussing the structure and aims of the course.

Assignment for next class: Sälter, 2011

**Class 2:** Field trip to the Berlin Wall memorial in Bernauer Straße: Guided Tour of exterior and of the non-public deposit area hosting various original remnants.

Assignment for next class: Harrison 2003, Major 2010.

**Class 3:** The erection of the Berlin Wall and dividing of the city: Analyzing events that led up to it and reactions in East and West; debates in historiography.

Assignment for next class: Researching online-sources for images of the Berlin Wall that allow to contrast Eastern and Western perspectives.

**Class 4:** The erection of the Berlin Wall - imagery in East and West; Introduction into Visual History of the Berlin Wall

Assignment for next class: [Gerhard Paul](#), Visual History (english version),

Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 07.11.2011

[http://docupedia.de/zg/Visual\\_History\\_\(english\\_version\)](http://docupedia.de/zg/Visual_History_(english_version))

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.792.v1>

**Class 5:** Visual History: Methods, Questions, Gains – applied to the history of the Berlin Wall.

Assignment for next class: Lüdtker 1995; Major; Schneider 2005 (the latter is optional).

**Class 6:** Daily life in the divided city in the 1960s: The concepts “Agency” and “Eigen-Sinn” and their use in social science and historiography.

Assignment for next class: Researching online collections and databases for snapshots and privately taken images of the divided city.

**Class 7:** Daily life in the divided city in the 1970s and 1980s. Imagery in private photography, papers, picture books and comics.

Assignment for next class: Hertle 2009; Sarotte 2014.

**Class 8:** The fall of the Berlin Wall as a German and international media event: reconstruction of the event, using film documentaries and private video material.

Assignment for next class: Research in social media for examples of commemoration of or allusions to the Berlin Wall in the respective countries of origin of students, Sonnevend, 2016.

**Class 9:** The Fall of the Berlin Wall as an international iconic memory today: Examples presented by teachers plus students reporting from their online research/their own cultural backgrounds.

Assignment for next class: Researching and discussing online-resources on conducting “oral history interviews”.

**Class 10:** Photography as a tool in social research: Introduction to methods like photo-voice and photo-elicited interview and possible adaptations for researching into memory culture.

Assignment for next class: Start planning your final assignment – find a specific question and which literature you’ll use (1/2-1 page).

**Class 11:** Planning of final assignment: Detecting meanings of the Berlin Wall today using photos as a tool and/or object of study.

Assignment for next class: Further planning of your final assignment: personal time schedule, whom to involve, method of analysis (1 page).

**Class 12:** Feedback on plans, discussing open questions, with a special focus on methodological aspects.

Assignment for next class: Writing up your final assignment (essay, 10-12 pages, producing your own piece of empirical research), preparing a short presentation (5-10 min.) on your results.

**Class 13-14:** Presentations of final assignments

**Class 15:** Feedback, closure.

Final assignment: An extended academic essay (10-12 pages including bibliography and cover) on a specified question on meanings of the Berlin Wall today, using an adaptation of the discussed analytic methods.

## **Bibliography**

Frederick Baker, The Berlin Wall: Production, Preservation and Consumption of a 20th Century Monument, in: *Antiquity* 67 (1993), pp. 709-733.

Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet-East-German Relations 1953-1961*, Princeton 2003.

Hans-Hermann Hertle, The Fall of the Wall. The Unintended Self-Dissolution of East-Germany's Ruling Regime, In: *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, pp. 131-164, retrieved from:

<http://zzf->

[pdm.de/Portals/images/mitarbeiter/2009\\_04\\_08\\_CWIHP\\_Bulletin\\_12\\_Hertle\\_Fall\\_Wall.pdf](http://pdm.de/Portals/images/mitarbeiter/2009_04_08_CWIHP_Bulletin_12_Hertle_Fall_Wall.pdf)

Alf Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, Princeton 1995

Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power*, Oxford/N.Y. 2010

Gerhard Paul, Visual History, In: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte. Begriffe, Methoden und Debatten der zeithistorischen Forschung*, retrieved from:

[http://docupedia.de/zg/Visual\\_History\\_.28english\\_version.29?oldid=124081](http://docupedia.de/zg/Visual_History_.28english_version.29?oldid=124081)

Gerhard Sälter, The Berlin Wall explained in context: Rebuilding the Berlin Wall Memorial, in: *C'era una volta il muro. A vent'anni dalla svolta tedesca*, Rome 2011, pp. 191-207

Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse. The accidental opening of the Berlin Wall*, 2014

Peter Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, London 2005

Jens Schöne, *The Peaceful Revolution – The Path to German Unity*, Berlin 2009

Julia Sonnevend, *Stories without Borders. The Berlin Wall and the Making of a Global Media Event*, Oxford 2016