

Berlin's Pop in Everyday Life and Culture – Laboratories in No-Man's-Land

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Start: 17.10.2017, Tuesdays, 10:00 – 12:00

Room: 0323-26

Language requirements: German, at least to level B1.1

1989: In summer the first Love Parade dances over the Kurfürstendamm. The wall falls in November. Berlin is open and upside down. Adventurers, curious people and seekers conquer the city in transition. They observe, design and experiment - with language, with art, with music, with lifestyle. A new - perhaps the first - pop culture made in Germany is emerging, which is looking for places other than theatres, concert halls and established forums of the so-called high culture. Their protagonists scratch in clubs, perform in empty houses and containers, experiment with new forms of writing on the Internet and new ways of life in everyday life. The question of what Pop in Germany is, can be and wants to be due to its specific cultural-historical situation (and what might distinguish it from the pop of other cultures) is explored in texts, films, art and music as well as in public space and in (contemporary witness) conversations strolling, reading and writing and analyzed in an intercultural comparison. In the end it is about traces and perpetuations of this time in the present, but also about counter-proposals, mainstream and commerce.

Learning Objectives:

- Formulation and critical reflection of own and foreign positions in an intercultural group situation.
- Critical reflection on the specific personal, historical and cultural conditions of an internationally used term.
- Extension of the German-speaking repertoire for reading and writing texts as well as for the presentation of self-researched works.
- Encouragement for a self-confident positioning of own questions and theses in
- a German-speaking international academic context.
- Enjoyment of critical engagement in the cultural life of Berlin.

Assessment (5 ECTS):

- Active participation in the seminar sessions and excursions (25 %)
- Production of three short (one page) texts (25%):
 - a). description of an artistic object,
 - b). Commentary of an event or a report of an everyday encounter,
 - c). Reflection on a literary extract
- Oral presentation (in groups) about an artist and his work (15 %)
- Essay (two pages) on a pop phenomenon (Music, Festival, Street Art, Fashion, Blogs) (20%)
- Preparation and presentation of a portfolio of work from the semester (15 %)

Seminar Sessions:

Tuesday, 17.10.2017

Introduction to the pop phenomenon: definition of the concept and intercultural comparisons.

Tuesday, 24.10.2017

Examples of German pop in the world of music (Schlager, Udo Lindenberg, Neue deutsche Welle)

Tuesday, 31.10.2017 (this session may need to be rearranged TBC)

Visit to the Hamburger Bahnhof:

Sources and examples of German popart (Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Fluxus, Sigmar Polke)

Task I: Follow up: Description of an artwork

Tuesday, 7.11.2017

Modern art and power: as example, Gerhard Schröder (Bundeskanzler a.D.)

Tuesday, 14.11.2017

Retrospektive : „Volkskultur“ or pop culture.

I. John Heartfield and the Collage (Berlinische Galerie)

Task II: Group presentations

Tuesday, 21.11.2017

II: Working class songs and hits of the 1920s.

Task II: Group presentations

Tuesday, 28.11.2017

III. Popular social criticisms: Populäre Sozialkritik: Feuilleton style texts of the 1920s and 1930s (Kurt Tucholsky / Gabriele Tergit)

Task II: Group presentations

Tuesday, 5.12.2017

Pop on television: MTV or Viva?

The German video channel Viva airs „Zu geil für diese Welt“

Tuesday, 12.12.2017

Documentary film: Lust & Sound in West Berlin (Talk with the producer Mark Reeder)

Task III: Diary entry/commentary on an event.

Tuesday, 19.12.2017

Why Berlin? Introduction to the pop literature of the 1990s: What makes it particular to Berlin.

(Samples, diaries, internet und the press)

Reading over the Christmas break.

Tuesday, 9.1.2018

Berlin pop culture at the turn of the century.

I. Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre: the pop writer caught between stellar ascent and loss of control.

Tuesday, 16.1.2018

II. Rainald Goetz: from the razor blade to the Büchner prize

Task IV: Written reflection on a literary extract.

Tuesday, 23.1.2018

Love-Parade at the crossroads of politics and culture: demonstration or techno party?

Topics for the essay determined (Expose)

Tuesday, 30.1.2018

Love-Parade at the crossroads of main stream and catastrophe: commercialation and location change.

Task V: Work on essay (due 6.2.2018)

Tuesday, 6.2.2018 (this session may take the form of an excursion TBC)

Pop today – Self expression or protest?: Poetry Slams, Youtube, Street Art

Tuesday, 13.2.2018

Presentation of the portfolios/work from the semester

Tuesday, 20.2.2018

Seminar evaluation.

Literature:

All compulsory texts/extracts will be made available.

For those who wish to browse or read in preparation can look at the following books. The seminar will work mainly with extracts.

- Christian Kracht: Faserland (1995)
- Rainald Goetz: Abfall für alle (1999) / Dekonspiratione (2002)
- Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre: Soloalbum (1998), Deutsches Theater (2001) / Auch Deutsche unter den Opfern (2010), Panikherz (2016)
- Bodo Morshäuser: Liebeserklärung an eine hässliche Stadt (1998)
- Wolfgang Ulrich: Mit dem Rücken zur Kunst, 2000
- Walter Benjamin: Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit (English: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction)