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Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00 – 1:00, 3131 MLB

German 380 – Classics of Modernist Literature



Course Description:

As a third year German literature and language class, “Classics of Modernist Literature” offers an introduction to many of the canonical texts of German-language modernism, spanning from the 1890s to the 1940s. In addition to providing a historical and cultural background for this great spurt of literary production, the course will provide an overview of key texts across genre, geography, and gender. The course will also teach students how to approach and successfully read and analyze German literary fiction while learning important vocabulary and grammatical concepts to speak and write intelligently in German about literature in an academic context.

All texts will be available as PDFs on our Canvas course site. All readings and discussions in class will be conducted in German. Reading the original German versions of the texts supplied is highly encouraged, for we will be focusing on issues of language unique to the original German versions, which then become literally lost in translation. If the texts prove too challenging, please come to my office hours with the attempted text. Additionally, we will be going over linguistically difficult sections of text in class. Thus, each student is expected to complete all reading, writing, and homework assignments before each class, as well as to participate actively in discussions.

Requirements and Grading

20% Attendance and Participation

20% Homework (readings, worksheets, exercises, etc.)

30% Three Essays

10% Presentations

20% Final Project: Aphorism

Attendance and Participation Policy

Attendance is mandatory for all class periods. Excepting excused absences, students are expected to come prepared to class every day in order to receive full participation credit. Since this is a literature *and* language class, excellent participation does not mean participation free of error. Rather, a willingness to make and learn from our mistakes in the pursuit of literary analysis and discussion is encouraged. Coming to class having done the homework, read the readings, and prepared oneself to discuss the assigned literature is the mark of excellent participation. Additionally, each student will be required to post weekly on Canvas a few sentences in German about their impression of the assigned text as well as discussion questions.

The attendance policy is as follows:

If you have 4.5 - 7.5 absence hours, your Attendance and Participation grade will decrease by one full grade (e.g. a "A" becomes a "B")

If you have 8 - 10 absence hours, your Attendance and Participation grade will decrease by two full grades (e.g. a "A" becomes a "C")

If you have more than 10 absence hours at the end of the semester, your final course grade will be an E.

Excused absences and tardiness will count as one half of an absence hour.

Homework

The homework schedule for the semester is available on our Canvas course site. Homework is due the following class day. The majority of the homework will consist of German texts. Since our class discussions are predicated on the thorough reading thereof, missing or incomplete homework will affect your participation grade as well.

Essays

You will write a total of three short essays in German on literature we have covered in class. Essay prompts will be distributed two weeks before the essay due date.

Presentations

Every week, a pair of students will be assigned an outside text in English about the assigned German text. The pair will be responsible to read the text and to present a short summary of the most important points to the class so that we can all draw on the benefits of literary theory and academic insights into the texts. I will provide each pair with a few guiding questions in preparation for the presentation so that is easier to focus on the main points of the assigned text.

Final Project: Aphorism

Write three modernist aphorisms in the tradition of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. The topics and themes of each aphorism is your choice. Pay close attention to issues of form and word choice. A detailed rubric and list of expectations will be handed out a few weeks before the final project due date. You are highly encouraged to come to my office hours to discuss general ideas and the details of writing in this genre!

Course Policies

No electronic devices may be used during class time, including cell phones, tablets, and laptops. Paper dictionaries are highly encouraged!

Special Needs

Students with special needs or learning disabilities should contact the instructor within the first two weeks of class. Please visit <http://ssd.umich.edu/> for more information.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes taking credit for someone else's words, work, interpretations, or ideas (including from Wikipedia) without giving proper credit. Any instance of plagiarism in this course may result in a failing grade. Please see <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp> for more information.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Modernist Literature

Tag 1	Tag 2	Tag 3	Tag 4
Introduction	Grammar review	Discussion: What is modernism?	Pre-reading activities for <i>Chandos-Brief</i>
Review of syllabus and class policies	Vocabulary for talking about literature	Historical overview of modernism and historical context for <i>Chandos-Brief</i>	Group brainstorming of what to expect in text
Presentation sign-up	(https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/literaturwortschatz/)		

Week 2 – Chandos-Brief

Tag 5	Tag 6	Tag 7	Tag 8
<i>Chandos-Brief: Part I</i> Review of difficult grammar/vocabulary	<i>Chandos-Brief: Part II</i>	<i>Chandos-Brief: Part III</i>	Review of <i>Chandos-Brief</i> Discussion about main characteristics of modernism (pre-discussion from Week I and after text comparison)

Week 3 - Orientalism

Tag 9	Tag 10	Tag 11	Tag 12
Historical context about Vienna/Austro-Hungarian Empire around 1900 (lecture and group worksheets with historical timeline) Vocabulary review and practice for discussing orientalism	Pre-reading activities for Hofmannsthal Group brainstorming of what to expect in text	Excerpts from <i>Das Märchen der 672. Nacht</i> Group presentation on excerpts from Robert Lemon, <i>Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle</i>	Excerpts from <i>Das Märchen der 672. Nacht</i>

Week 4 – Urban Metropolis and Berlin

Tag 13	Tag 14	Tag 15	Tag 16
Historical context about Imperial Germany and Berlin around 1900 (lecture, film clip from <i>Berlin: Sinfonie einer Großstadt</i>) Activity:	Pre-reading activities for Walser Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	Excerpts from <i>Berlin gibt immer den Ton an</i> Group presentation on Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life"	Excerpts from <i>Berlin gibt immer den Ton an</i>

https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/berlin-1900/ Vocabulary review for discussing topic			
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Week 5 – Vision and “Learning to See”

Tag 17	Tag 18	Tag 19	Tag 20
Historical overview of mediums of vision in 19 th century (photography, panorama, film) Group activity for scientific timeline Vocabulary review for discussing topic ESSAY #1 DUE	Pre-reading activities for Rilke Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text Excerpts from <i>Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge</i> (https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/die-aufzeichnungen-des-malte-laurids-brigge/)	Excerpts from <i>Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge</i> Group presentation on excerpts from Andreas Huyssen’s <i>Miniature Metropolis: Literature in the Age of Photography and Film</i>	Excerpts from <i>Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge</i>

Week 6 – Sound and Hearing

Tag 21	Tag 22	Tag 23	Tag 24
Historical overview of technology and science of sound in 19 th century Group activity of listening to early phonographic recordings Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Pre-reading activities for Kafka Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	<i>Der Bau</i> Group presentation on Hendrik Zwaardemaker’s “The Sound-Proof Room”	<i>Der Bau</i>

Week 7 – Modernism and Gender

Tag 25	Tag 26	Tag 27	Tag 28
<p>Historical overview of women's rights in Germany</p> <p>Class discussion about gender and literature</p> <p>Vocabulary review for discussing topic</p>	<p>Pre-reading activities for Keun</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Das kunstseidene Mädchen</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Das kunstseidene Mädchen</i></p> <p>Group presentation on excerpts from Despina Stratigakos' <i>A Woman's Berlin: Building the Modern City</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Das kunstseidene Mädchen</i></p>

Week 8 – Sexuality in the City I

Tag 29	Tag 30	Tag 31	Tag 32
<p>Historical overview of in changing gender and sexual roles in 19th and early 20th centuries</p> <p>Discussion of "Battle of the Sexes"</p> <p>Vocabulary review for discussing topic</p> <p>ESSAY #2 DUE</p>	<p>Pre-reading activities for Musil</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Drei Frauen</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Drei Frauen</i></p> <p>Group presentation on excerpts from Alma Mahler, <i>Diaries (1898-1902)</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Drei Frauen</i></p>

Week 9 – (Homo)sexuality and the City II

Tag 33	Tag 34	Tag 35	Tag 36
<p>Historical overview of homosexual emancipation and culture in Germany</p> <p>Discussion of clips from <i>Anders als die</i></p>	<p>Pre-reading activities for Mann</p> <p>Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text</p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Der Tod in Venedig</i></p> <p>Group presentation on excerpts from Otto Weininger, <i>Sex and Character</i></p>	<p>Excerpts from <i>Der Tod in Venedig</i></p>

<i>Andern</i> (1919) (https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/anders-als-die-andern/) Vocabulary review for discussing topic			
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Week 10 – Sexuality and Violence

Tag 37	Tag 38	Tag 39	Tag 40
Overview of basic psychoanalysis Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Pre-reading activities for Mann Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	Excerpts from <i>Mario und der Zauberer</i> Group presentation on excerpts from Sigmund Freud, <i>Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality</i>	Excerpts from <i>Mario und der Zauberer</i>

Week 11 – Film

Tag 41	Tag 42	Tag 43	Tag 44
Historical overview of development of film/cinema as industry Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Pre-reading activities for Kracauer Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	“Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino“ Group presentation on Thomas Levin, “Introduction” from <i>The Mass Ornament</i>	“Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino“

Week 12 - Art and Aesthetics

Tag 45	Tag 46	Tag 47	Tag 48
Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	Excerpts from <i>Geschichten</i>	Excerpts from <i>Geschichten</i>

Pre-reading activities for Walser, comparison to his other texts read in course ESSAY #3 DUE	Excerpts from <i>Geschichten</i>	Group presentation on Walter Benjamin, “Robert Walser”	
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Week 13 – The Modernist Aphorism I

Tag 49	Tag 50	Tag 51	Tag 52
Historical/literary overview of the aphorism as a genre In-class reading of Lafontaine’s aphorisms followed by group work Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Pre-reading activities for Benjamin Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text	Excerpts from <i>Einbahnstraße</i> Group presentation on a selected short prose piece from Walter Benjamin, <i>Berliner Kindheit</i>	Excerpts from <i>Einbahnstraße</i>

Week 14 – Legacy of Modernism

Tag 53	Tag 54	Tag 55	Tag 56
Class discussion about main topics, these, genres, and authors covered in class Holistic summary of semester Vocabulary review for discussing topic	Pre-reading activities for Adorno Group discussion of genre and what to expect in text Excerpts from <i>Minima Moralia</i>	Excerpts from <i>Minima Moralia</i>	Excerpts from <i>Minima Moralia</i> Course conclusion and farewells FINAL PROJECT DUE