

Studies in German Film: Weimar Film
ENG 494, FMS 494, GER 494/598, SLC 494/598
Spring 2009
Thursday: Class Meeting – 6:40-9:30 pm
LL 013

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Course Texts (additional course readings made available as electronic texts)

Ian Roberts, *German Expressionist Cinema: The World of Light and Shadow* (London: Wallflower, 2008).
Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley, CA: U of California Pr, 2001).

Course Description and Goals

The Weimar Republic (1919-1932) has been described by many historians as the crucible in which the roots of National Socialism were forged. Although characterized by economic depression, political factionism and social decline, Weimar Germany also experienced a profound cultural growth. With artistic trends like Expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Dada and Bauhaus, artistic techniques such as photomontage, cabaret, mechanical music and serialized novels, and a panoply of ideologies marking each segment of the political landscape, the artistic role of film helped to articulate many of the advances that were making themselves felt within the artistic, political and economic arenas.

This course will examine a handful of films from this exciting period in German cinema production, with an eye to engaging issues of otherness/alterity/heterogeneity and its filmic depiction within the cinematic genres of horror, science fiction and suspense, with a possible foray into film melodrama. Here, the concept of otherness as an embodiment of prevalent gender, race, social, spatial and political constructs, will be explored. Within this constellation of critical discussion are set some of the key questions that will guide this course: In what ways does a popular culture medium like film capture the political, social, and economic atmosphere/ mood of the Weimar Republic? How do the filmic examples explored reflect the notion of otherness as emblematic of Germany's move into modernity?

Assignments

Participation/Discussion Boards	15%
Critical Response/Film Analysis Papers (2-3 pp. each)	15%; 5% each
Oral Presentation	15%
Midterm (take-home)	20%
Research Paper	35%

Discussion Boards: students will be asked to respond to discussion board prompts on the Blackboard coursesite associated with this course, and then post response(s) to another colleague's post. The goal here is to prepare you for that week's in-class discussion and will have a direct correlation with your participation grade. There will be 10 of these throughout the semester, and they are graded on a point system: 7 points for the initial post, and 3 points for the response to another post. Timeliness of posts is important here, and points will be reduced for late posts.

Oral Presentation: each student will participate in a solo or partnered oral presentation (suggested length: 15 minutes). Students will choose a particular essay or grouping of essays from the week's critical and theoretical material and provide an overview and analysis of them in relation to the films under discussion. Presenters should deal with critical positions, historical development of theoretical discourses, and close readings of particular films (with clips where appropriate) and should provide questions for class discussion.

Response Papers: students will submit short (2-3 page) responses to the film(s) and/or readings studied in the lead-up to the week the response paper is due. You will be asked to focus on course readings and films screened as part of class. Responses incorporating more than one text/approach should draw points of comparison or consider ways the articles contribute to your interpretations of course films. These should not involve doing any external research.

Research Paper: students will write one major paper employing a particular critical methodology (or combination of methods) to analyze a film studied in class (or one that you choose in consultation with me). All written work submitted for the course must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font, with 1" margins. I require a write-up of an essay proposal in which you outline the subject and critical approach your essay will take, as well as list any outside sources you've already located. You may consult with me, briefly in class or in office hours, regarding your ideas for the essay. Optional thesis statements can be submitted until one week before the essay due date. Undergraduate students will write a 10-12 page paper; and graduate students will write an 18-20 page paper.

Exam: the midterm will evaluate your knowledge and application of course materials. It will consist of essay questions asking you to engage with the theoretical and sociocultural materials we have read during the beginning part of the semester and relate these ideas to some of the film examples from the course. The midterm will be given as a take-home exam, picked up at the end of one class session, and due one week later at the beginning of that class session.

Policies/Needs

Attendance and Late Work: Regular attendance and participation is crucial to your success in this course. **Since we meet only once per week to discuss reading and viewing materials, it is essential that you attend all course meetings.** Please consult with me in advance if you must miss class, and make arrangements to get notes or other missed material from a classmate. With only 13 face-to-face meetings, it is imperative that you make every effort to come to class on time, and remain for the duration of the class session. With this in mind, if you miss 3 class meetings, I will lower your final grade by one full letter (i.e. A- to B-). If you miss 4 or more class meetings, you will automatically fail the course. Excuses must be verifiable. If you miss four or more classes, you will not pass the course. Late assignments will be penalized. You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy: Turn off all cell phones, pagers, iPods or other devices that might beep before class. Use of computers in class should be limited to note taking (i.e. no web-browsing or eMail checking). Violation of this policy will adversely affect your grade.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: The aim of education is the intellectual, personal, social, and ethical development of the individual. The educational process is ideally conducted in an environment that encourages reasoned discourse, intellectual honesty, openness to constructive change and respect for the rights of all individuals. Self-discipline and a respect for the rights of others in the university community are necessary for the fulfillment of such goals.

According to the Student Academic Integrity Policy, every assignment that the student completes must be her/his own work and created specifically (only) for this class. Plagiarism is punishable by the university and ultimately may result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the entire course. Information on this policy can be found at:

- http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/judicial/academic_integrity.htm

Special Needs: If you are in need of special accommodation for assignments or exams, please communicate this to the instructor at the beginning of the semester to assure that your needs are met. In order to guarantee the necessary accommodation, you must present documentation from the Disability Resource Center, located in Mathews Center.

Problems: If anything is interfering with your work in the course, talk to me immediately. Problems can be addressed, but the end of the semester is probably too late to do so.

Course Syllabus

****Please use the online course syllabus on our Blackboard coursesite (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>) for any active links to the required readings and websites listed in the print version of this syllabus.****

[GEC = *German Expressionist Cinema*; WS = *Weimar Surfaces*]

Week 1 Introduction(s). Course Overview. Why Study Film? Why Weimar? Why Otherness?

- 01/22: **Readings Due:**
 1. Zygmunt Bauman, "The Making and Unmaking of Strangers" (PDF).
 2. Bruce Murray, "An Introduction to the Commercial Film Industry in Germany from 1895 to 1933" (PDF).

Week 2 Authority, the Familiar, and the Uncanny

- 01/29: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, dir. Robert Wiene, (1920). 76 min. [*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*].
Readings Due:
 1. Anton Kaes, "Modernity and its Discontents: Notes on Alterity in Weimar Cinema" (PDF).

2. Georg Simmel, "The Stranger" (PDF).
3. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (Web). (username: digit password: texts)
4. GEC, "Authority Overthrown, OR Lunatics in the Asylum: Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*," 23–34.

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 3 Legend, Ritual, and the Supernatural

- 02/05: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Der Golem. Wie er in die Welt kam*, dir. Paul Wegener, (1920). 91 min. [*The Golem. How He Came into the World*].

Readings Due:

1. Julia Kristeva "Approaching Abjection" (PDF).
2. Noah Isenberg, "Of Monsters and Magicians: Paul Wegener's *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (1920)" (PDF).
3. John Lechte, "Abjection" (PDF).

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1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 4 The Fantastic and the Monstrous Other

- 02/12: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, dir. F. W. Murnau, (1922). 81 min. [*Nosferatu. A Symphony of Terror*].

Readings Due:

1. Tsvetan Todorov, "Definition of the Fantastic" (PDF).
2. Thomas Elsaesser, "No End to *Nosferatu* (1922)" (PDF)
3. GEC, "Demons Without and Within: F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*," 35–51.

Critical Response Paper 1 Due (BY 2/15, MIDNIGHT): USING BLACKBOARD 'DIGITAL DROPBOX' (located in 'Tools' section) .

Week 5 Crime, Gangsters and the Seamy

- 02/19: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler. Ein Bild der Zeit*, dir. Fritz Lang, (1922). Part One: 155 min. [*Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler. A Picture of the Time*].

Readings Due:

1. E. Ann Kaplan, "Fritz Lang and German Expressionism: A Reading of *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler*" (PDF).
2. Gerald Feldman, "The Year of Dr. Mabuse: The Hyperinflation and German Society in 1922" (PDF).
3. Tom Gunning, "Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler* (1922): Grand Enunciator of the Weimar Era" (PDF).

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 6 Crime, Gangsters and the Seamy (cont'd.)

- 02/26: **Screen in Class:** *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler. Inferno - Menschen der Zeit*, dir. Fritz Lang, (1922). Part Two: 115 min. [*Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler. Inferno - A Play About the People of Our Times*]

Readings Due:

1. Engelbrecht/Heller, "Night Figures of the City" (PDF).
2. Artur Landsberger, "The Berlin Underworld" (PDF).

Pick Up Take-home Midterm**myASU/Blackboard Assignment:**

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 7 Technology, Gender and Science

- 03/05: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Metropolis*, dir. Fritz Lang, (1927). 124 min.

Readings Due:

1. Willy Haas, "Metropolis." 1927 Review. (PDF).
2. Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*" (PDF).
3. Anton Kaes, "*Metropolis* (1927): City, Cinema, Modernity" (PDF).

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Take-home Midterm Due – Beginning of Class

Week 8 Spring Break (No Class)

Week 9 The City as Other: Urban Decadence vs. Rural Wholesomeness

- 03/19: **Screen in Class:** *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, dir. Walter Ruttmann, (1927). 62 min. [*Berlin: Symphony of a City*].

Readings Due:

1. Anton Kaes, "Leaving Home: Film, Migration and the Urban Experience" (PDF).
2. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (PDF).
3. WS: "Into the Mouth of the Moloch: Weimar Surface Culture Goes to the Movies," 142–190.

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 10 Female Sexuality/Male Anxiety

- 03/26: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Die Büchse der Pandora*, dir. G. W. Pabst, (1929). 133 min. [*Pandora's Box*].

Readings Due:

1. GEC: "Virgins and Vamps: G. W. Pabst's *Die Büchse der Pandora*," 71–88.
2. Barbara Hales, "Blonde Satan: Weimar Constructions of the Criminal *Femme Fatale*" (PDF).

Critical Response Paper 2 Due (BY 3/29, MIDNIGHT): USING BLACKBOARD 'DIGITAL DROPBOX' (located in 'Tools' section) .

Week 11 Sexual Emancipation and the New Woman

- 04/02: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *Mädchen in Uniform*, dir. Leontine Sagan, (1931). 90 min. [*Girls in Uniform*].

Readings Due:

1. WS: "The Display Window: Designs and Desires of Weimar Consumerism," 191–220.
2. Elsa Hermann, "This is the New Woman" (PDF).
3. Richard McCormick, "Coming Out of the Uniform: Political and Sexual Emancipation in Leontine Sagan's *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931)" (PDF)

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 12 Modernity and the Rise of the Serial Murderers

- 04/09: **Pre-Screen for Class:** *M: Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*, dir. Fritz Lang, (1931). 110 min. [*M: A City Searches for a Murderer*].

Readings Due:

1. Maria Tatar, "The Killer as Victim: Fritz Lang's *M*" (PDF).
2. WS: "The Display Window: Designs and Desires of Weimar Consumerism," 220–240.
3. Gabriele Tergit, "Fritz Lang's *M*: Filmed Sadism" (PDF).

Research Paper Proposal Due at Start of Class

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 13 Social Conditions and the Body Politic

- 04/16: **Screen in Class:** *Kuhle Wampe, oder Wem gehört die Welt?*, dir. Slatan Dudow, (1932). 69 min. [*Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World?*]

Readings Due:

1. Marc Silberman, "Whose Revolution? The Subject of *Kuhle Wampe* (1932)" (PDF).
2. Istvan Deak, "Political Groups, Social Classes, and Social Issues" (PDF).

Critical Response Paper 3 Due (BY 4/19, MIDNIGHT): USING BLACKBOARD 'DIGITAL DROPBOX' (located in 'Tools' section) .

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 14 Professor Out of Town (No Face-to-Face Meeting)

Week 15 Premonitions/Apparitions: The Rise of National Socialism | Course Wrap-Up

- 04/30: **Film Screening:** *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, dir. Fritz Lang, (1933). 122 min. [*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*].

myASU/Blackboard Assignment:

1. Please visit the Blackboard Coursesite to view and complete this week's discussion board assignment (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>).

Week 16

Finals Week

- 05/07: **Research Paper Due (Please turn in printed copy of your research paper by 5 p.m.)**